

Restructuring meeting draws crowd

Most discourage changes in Western's marketing strategy

By Bob Fullerton

The start of a new year has traditionally been a time to reflect on the past and to consider changes for the future. Western is doing just that regarding the way that we market power. During the first week of the



Bob Fullerton sorts letters from the public on power allocation issues.

year, members of the public gathered at a meeting in Denver to give Western recommendations on how electric utility restructuring should impact our power allocation policies.

Twenty people provided oral comments addressing the effect of state retail competition statutes on how we sell electricity.

While most of the comments were from Western's customers and customer representa-

tives, an environmental group and a representative of Indian tribes also expressed opinions.

The majority discouraged Western from making fundamental changes to the way we

market power. Many emphasized that allowing retail access to electricity is a state decision that should not be overruled by the Federal government. Several expressed doubt regarding the legality of Western allocating power to retail loads, urging Western not to lose sight of our mission to market power at wholesale. Commenters generally opposed Western's possible involvement in retail power rate design and adjustment of allocation amounts during the contract term to reflect loss of load due to retail competition.

Others suggested that Western should adjust our marketing practices to recognize the future likelihood of increased retail wheeling. Western was encouraged to assist in the development of tribal utilities and to allocate power directly to retail Indian loads if utility formation proved unworkable. According to this speaker, the delivery of power allocated to Indian loads should be required as a condition for a distribution utility to continue to receive a preference power allocation.

More than 230 written comments were received during the consultation and comment period, which closed on Jan. 15. Western plans to consult with the Department of Energy before making a decision on these policy issues. The issues need to be resolved before further action is taken to complete marketing plans for the Central Valley Project, the Washoe Project and the Salt Lake City Area Integrated Projects.

(Note: Fullerton is the project manager for this public process.)