Drop-in Learning Sessions
Estes-to-Flatiron Draft
Environmental Impact Statement

September 23 & 24, 2014
Purpose and Need

• Western Area Power Administration proposes to rebuild the electric transmission lines between Estes Park and Flatiron Reservoir.

• The transmission line rebuild project is needed to:
  – Ensure reliable and cost-effective electricity is provided to Estes Park, Loveland and other Front Range communities.
  – Improve transmission safety by updating facilities and rebuilding 60-70+ year-old transmission lines to be compliant with current standards.
  – Improve access for emergencies and line/ROW maintenance
EIS Process

Notice of Intent

Public Scoping

Alternatives Development

Draft EIS and Drop-In Meetings

45-Day Comment Period & Public Hearings

Final EIS and NOA

Forest Service Objection/Resolution Period

Records of Decision

We are here!
What’s in the EIS?

• Alternatives considered and measures taken to minimize adverse effects

• Affected Environment
  – Description of the existing environmental conditions for physical, biological, and human resources.

• Environmental Impacts
  – Direct and indirect impacts of each alternative

• Cumulative Impacts
  – Environmental impacts of the project when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
How Scoping Comments Were Addressed

Impacts of new ROW acquisition
• The amount of new ROW required was calculated for each alternative
• The amount of ROW that would be decommissioned was calculated
• The number of landowners affected by each alternative was determined

Impacts on viewsheds, including travel corridors, residential areas and recreational sites
• New routing alternatives were developed to avoid issues identified during scoping
• New design alternatives were developed, including underground construction and lower structure heights
• Visual simulations were prepared from 14 sensitive viewpoints
• Project-specific design criteria were developed to minimize impacts
How Scoping Comments Were Addressed

Impacts of road construction
• An additional transportation study was completed to identify the length of road construction in areas with difficult constructability
• Access road needs were more specifically identified

Impacts on recreational uses and experiences
• Simulations and visual analyses were conducted from major recreational use areas
• Impacts on Pole Hill Road OHV use were analyzed
How Scoping Comments Were Addressed

Impacts on protected areas
• The number of protected areas crossed by each alternative was determined

Impacts on existing infrastructure, e.g. Upper Thompson Sanitation District
• Re-routes were developed to avoid conflicts with this facility

Other Issues
• Impacts on all other identified issues were analyzed, e.g. human health, wetlands, wildlife, and special status species
Alternatives
Alternatives
Transmission Line Structures

115-kV Single Circuit Wood Pole
H-Frame Structure
Alternative D and No Action

115-kV Double Circuit Single Pole
Standard Steel Structure
Alternatives A, A1, A2, B, C, C1

115-kV Double Circuit Single Pole
Standard Steel Short Structure
Alternatives A, A1, A2, B, C, C1
Above Ground Construction Methods
Vegetation Management

- Active vegetation management of the ROW is required to meet reliability, public safety and regulatory requirements such as those defined by the National Electric Safety Council (NERC)
- Western is required to take a more proactive approach to vegetation management, one that controls vegetation growth and fuel conditions that threaten its transmission lines
- Vegetation management practices will range from none in areas with compatible vegetation to regular treatments (every 2-6 years) to remove trees and other vegetation that is incompatible within the ROW
- Mitigation measures will be implemented in visually sensitive areas to reduce the effects of vegetation management activities.
Agency Preferred Alternative

• Selection of the agency preferred alternative will seek to balance Western’s need for system improvements with environmental and land use considerations
• The agency preferred alternative will be determined after comments on the Draft EIS are analyzed
• Western has not chosen an agency preferred alternative
Land Use Impacts

- Alternative B requires the least amount of new ROW (42 acres), Alternative D the most (177 acres)
- All alternatives except D and No Action consolidate ROW and reduce transmission line length
- The number of landowners affected by ROW construction ranges from 19 (Alt. B) to 48 (Alt. A1)
- All alternatives relocate the existing line located in Newell Lake View subdivision where there is inadequate ROW
Recreation Impacts

• Impacts primarily result from visual changes to the setting
• Alternatives B, C, and C1 would have greater impacts on the setting at Pinewood Reservoir
• Alternatives C and C1 would significantly affect OHV use on a portion of Pole Hill Road
Visual Impacts

• All alternatives would result in minor to moderate adverse effects with localized strong visual changes

• All alternatives except Alternative D and No Action would result in beneficial effects due to ROW consolidation and removal of one of the existing lines

• Alternatives A2 and C1 reduce impacts near Estes Park through underground construction
Other Impacts

- Alternative D would require the greatest amount of new roads on NFS land for permanent access (1.9 miles)
- Alternative D has the greatest distance through NFS lands with difficult construction (1 mile)
- The number of protected area crossings ranges from 4 (.6 miles) to 7 (3.5 miles), with Alternatives D and No Action having the most
Other Impacts

• Sensitive species impacts would be minor
• Potential impacts to wetlands would be minimized through avoidance and limiting any disturbance within 100 feet of a stream
• All alternatives except D and No Action would lower EMF as measured at the edge of the ROW
Draft EIS Process

• **Draft EIS Review**
  – Western will hold public hearings and open houses to provide information on the Draft EIS analyses and gather public input.
  – Agencies and the public will have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS during a 45-day public review period.
  – Comments can be provided to Western through mail, email or during the public hearings.

• **Objectives for Draft EIS Review**
  – Provide a forum for the public to provide comments on, or to ask questions about, the findings of the Draft EIS.
  – Obtain comments on the adequacy and completeness of the EIS, corrections of errors, and input useful for selecting an agency preferred alternative.
How to make your comment count

• Be clear, concise and relevant
• Things to comment on: the proposed alternatives, the assessment of the environmental impacts, proposed mitigation.
• Solution oriented and provide specific examples
• Include facts (e.g. comparative impacts, issues of most concern, information on resource tradeoffs, information on the relative values attached to resources)
• Include supporting rationale that would aid in reaching a decision
• Reference the name of the Draft EIS and include your name, address, telephone number and organization represented (if applicable)
• NEPA isn’t a voting exercise -- don’t simply provide an expression of preference for one alternative versus another
Next Steps

• Open Houses & Public Hearings:
  – Loveland: October 29\textsuperscript{th}
    • Rialto Theater, 228 East 4th Street
  – Estes Park: October 30\textsuperscript{th}
    • Estes Park Conference Center, 101 South St. Vrain
  – Open house: 4:30pm-6pm Public Hearing: 6pm

• Comment period ends:
  – Comments must be post marked by: November 14th, 2014
How to comment

• Comments can be made orally at the public hearings, in writing at the drop-in meetings or public open houses, mailed or emailed to the address provided below.

• Send your comments to:

  Mark Wieringa
  Western Area Power Administration, A7400
  PO Box 281213
  Lakewood, CO 80228-8213
  Email: RMR_EstesFlatironEIS@wapa.gov