Southwest energy plan open to comment

by UPI

SALT LAKE CITY - Energy corridors proposed for Utah's federal lands will face public comment.The proposed path includes some of Utah's most dramatic landscapes, and state residents will be able to weigh in Thursday at a public hearing in Salt Lake City. As in many areas of the United States, power demand is growing faster than the infrastructure can keep up, the Salt Lake City Tribune reported.An environmental-impact study released in November proposes 6,000 miles of corridors encompassing more than 3 million acres in California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming, the newspaper said. The project is a joint effort by the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service and the Energy and Defense departments. They're conducting a study to complete an environmental evaluation of energy highways for new electric transmission lines and oil and gas pipelines, the paper said. As mandated by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the EIS will result in automatic amendments to federal land management plans. However, proposals for new pipeline projects, transmission lines or utility retrofits will be analyzed in separate environmental studies that also will include the public. Officials said the study will allow government agencies to help improve supply and distribution of affordable energy, eliminate redundancy in environmental-compliance actions and allow for quicker approvals of large-scale energy projects, but conservationists fear environmental repercussions, the newspaper said.

Â© 2008 United Press International. All Rights Reserved.