

For Immediate Release

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Over 20 Organizations File Petitions for Rehearing Challenging the Department of Energy's National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designations

November 5, 2007, Washington DC- Environmental and historic preservation groups, filed Petitions for Rehearing challenging the US Department of Energy's final designation of two National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors, the Mid-Atlantic Corridor and the Southwest Corridor. Eight states are included in DOE's final Mid-Atlantic Corridor: New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia, and in the Southwest Corridor, California and Arizona. This final designation was made effective immediately on October 5, 2007. A provision of the 2005 Energy Policy Act recommended in the Cheney energy plan and added by the Bush Administration, amends the Federal Power Act, and instructs the Department of Energy to conduct a Congestion Study of the transmission grid, and designate National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors over areas of the country which are found to be electrically congested. NIETC designation allows utilities access to federal eminent domain to obtain right of way for interstate transmission lines.

The Department of Energy's corridor designations span 10 states and over 220 cities and counties. Within the Mid-Atlantic designation, several multi-state transmission projects had been proposed prior to DOE's final designation with the expectation that the entire East Coast would be designated as an area for federal condemnation. These proposals provide a new market for some of the nation's oldest coal fired power plants- plants which have been the subject of multiple air quality and environmental lawsuits.

[See map of power plants.](#)

"In designating the first corridors, the Department of Energy failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act. These environmental laws are important tools to protect human health, ecosystems and community values" said Chris Miller, President of the Piedmont Environmental Council, one of the organizations that filed a Petition for Rehearing.

"The power companies have told the Department of Energy they want these transmission line corridors stretching all the way to Ohio and West Virginia because of "increasingly strict environmental controls" along the East Coast. But we can't allow power companies to exploit long-distance corridors in an attempt to literally run away from our most

progressive environmental laws" said Cale Jaffe, Staff Attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center.

"DOE's sweeping decision dramatically undermines state efforts to address global warming and other important environmental problems," said Mark Brownstein, an energy policy expert at Environmental Defense. "New interstate transmission lines are like superhighways for the oldest and dirtiest coal-fired power plants, and the federal government has made it a whole lot easier to put one in your backyard."

"Rather than take the time to study alternatives, and work with states to craft a balanced energy future, DOE has rushed to a decision that favors big coal. There are better ways to do transmission planning, and we are hoping that DOE goes back to the drawing board and works with us, and others, to do it right."

"The corridor designations threaten thousands of open space properties that have been protected with public funds from local, county, state and federal agencies, raising the specter that public monies will have been spent to protect critical lands only to have those lands condemned by private interests," said Molly Morrison, President of the Natural Lands Trust, a Pennsylvania land conservation organization.

According to Brent Schoradt of the California Wilderness Coalition "the NIETC designation threatens over 400,000 acres of roadless forest land in southern California. Power corridors in these wild places would degrade recreational opportunities for millions of Californians while increasing the risk of catastrophic wild fires."

The Southwest transmission corridor covers 45 million acres and threatens extraordinarily special public lands, including the Sonoran Desert National Monument and the Kofa National Wildlife in Arizona, California's Carrizo Plain National Monument, and the Havasu National Wildlife Refuge, which straddles the border of both states," said Nada Culver of The Wilderness Society. "Legislation introduced by Senator Reid would both spur development of renewable resources and specifically exempt these types of places from development, which is a blueprint the Energy Department should follow."

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