

Feds give priority review to Wyo. energy projects

BOB MOEN - Associated Press - Associated Press

The decision by the federal government to give priority review to three Wyoming wind generation projects and two transmission line projects bodes well for the state's burgeoning renewable energy industry.

"It's good news for renewable energy generation and transmission in Wyoming for sure," Kara Choquette, spokeswoman for Power Co. of Wyoming, a subsidiary of Denver-based Anschutz Corp., said Monday.

The Anschutz Corp. has transmission and wind generation projects in Wyoming on the fast track. The company is proposing to build a 1,000-turbine wind farm in Carbon County in southern Wyoming and a 725-mile transmission line from Wyoming to Nevada.

Last week, the Bureau of Land Management announced it has placed three proposed Wyoming wind generation projects on its list for fast-track permitting review. In October, two planned Wyoming power transmission lines that fall under the purview of several federal agencies were identified for accelerated review.

Any such projects built on federal land are subjected to time consuming environmental and other types of study in order to get the required permits.

Loyd Drain, executive director of the Wyoming Infrastructure Authority, said it's difficult right now to say exactly how much time will be shaved off individual projects, but he says any time saved is a plus.

"Time will tell if their efforts pay off, and we're certainly encouraged and hopeful that they will — both for transmission and some of these generation projects," Drain said. "Any time saved at all will be helpful to what we're trying to do here in Wyoming."

He noted that just an environmental review of a transmission line can take up to five years.

While being placed on the federal priority review list doesn't help speed up environmental studies, it does help save time when it comes to better coordination between agencies involved in the entire review process, Drain said.

"Just better coordination between field offices and between agencies could shave a few months off of the process," he said.

Drain said developers of the projects deserve credit because the federal fast-track review only includes projects that are serious endeavors.

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