INTRODUCTION

The land use permit program authorizes the occupancy of public lands for pipelines, communication lines, power transmission lines, and communication sites. In order to minimize disturbance, agency policy is to co-locate such uses, where feasible. Utility corridors are formally designated in order to provide for such use. Within the planning area, corridor management must comply with the objectives of the Management Area (MA) covering the areas crossed by these corridors, unless a specific exception is identified. Where pipeline, electric distribution line, and/or communication system line use cannot be co-located, individual authorizations are issued.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

LAWS

- ***The Energy Policy Act of 2005 Section 368***: This act directs the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, and the Interior to designate corridors, under their respective authorities, on Federal land in the 11 Western States (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) for oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines and electricity transmission and distribution facilities (energy corridors). A programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) titled, "Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Land in the 11 Western States" (DOE/EIS-0386) has been prepared, with the Department of Energy (DOE) and the BLM as co-lead agencies for this effort. The USFS is participating as a cooperating agency.
- ***The Telecommunications Act of 1996***: This act directs Federal departments and agencies to make available (on a fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory basis) property, rights-of-way (ROWs), and easements under their control for the placement of new telecommunications services.
- ***The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Title V***: This act provides the authority to "grant, issue or renew rights-of-way over, upon, under or through" lands managed by the BLM and the USFS. This act requires fair market value for uses on the public lands, and repealed sections of many previous acts.
- ***The Ditch Bill of 1986***: This act amends the Federal Land Policy and Management ACT (FLMPA), and authorizes permanent easements for agricultural water systems.

DESIGN CRITERIA

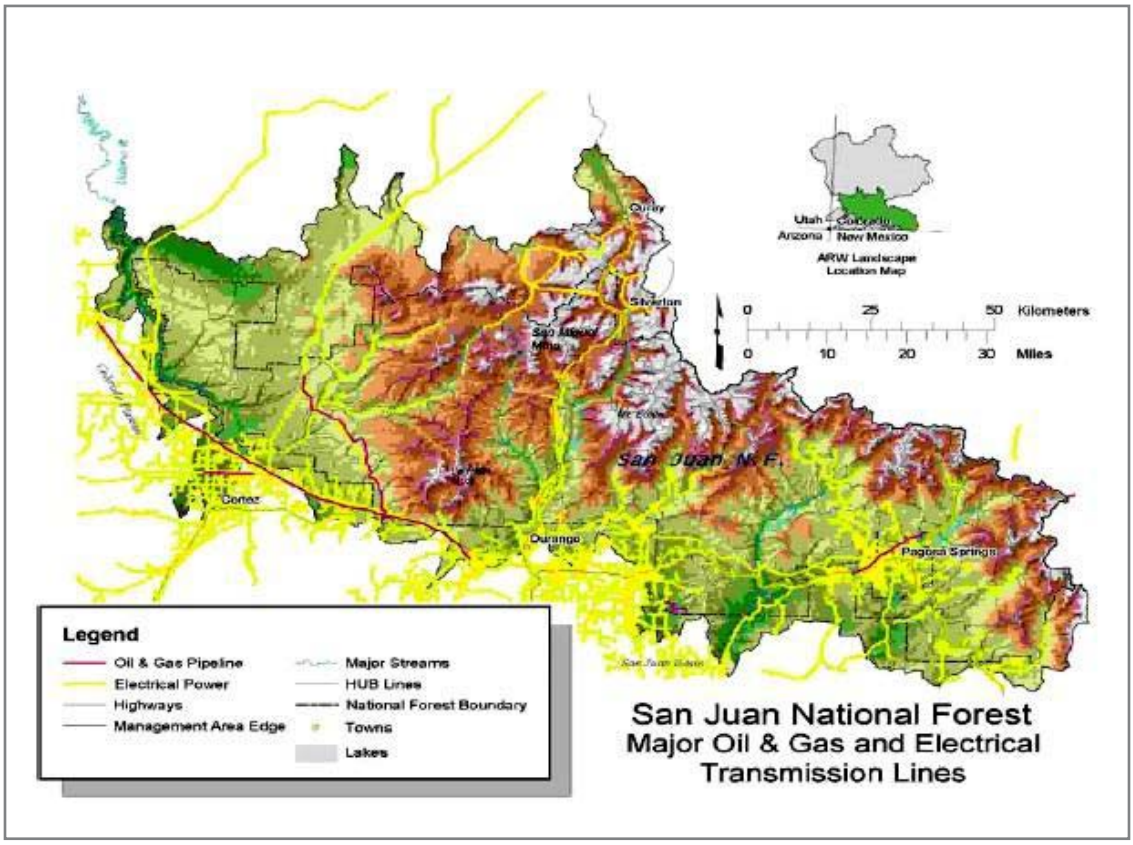
Management guidelines and design criteria describe the environmental protection measures that would be applied to all of the alternatives at the project level in order to protect, enhance, and, where appropriate, improve resources related to utility corridors and communications sites. Guidelines and design criteria are presented in Part 3 of Volume 2 of the DLMP/DEIS.

Existing Conditions and Trends

Utility Corridors, Major Rights-of-Way (ROWs), and Communications Sites

Major electrical transmission lines are found throughout the planning area (see Figure 3.24.1). Lines are most common along the southern boundary, concentrated from Cortez to Pagosa Springs. Some electrical transmission lines occur in the smaller headwater areas around Durango; however, these do not comprise a major portion of the lines.

Figure 3.24.1 – Major Oil and Gas and Electrical Transmission Lines



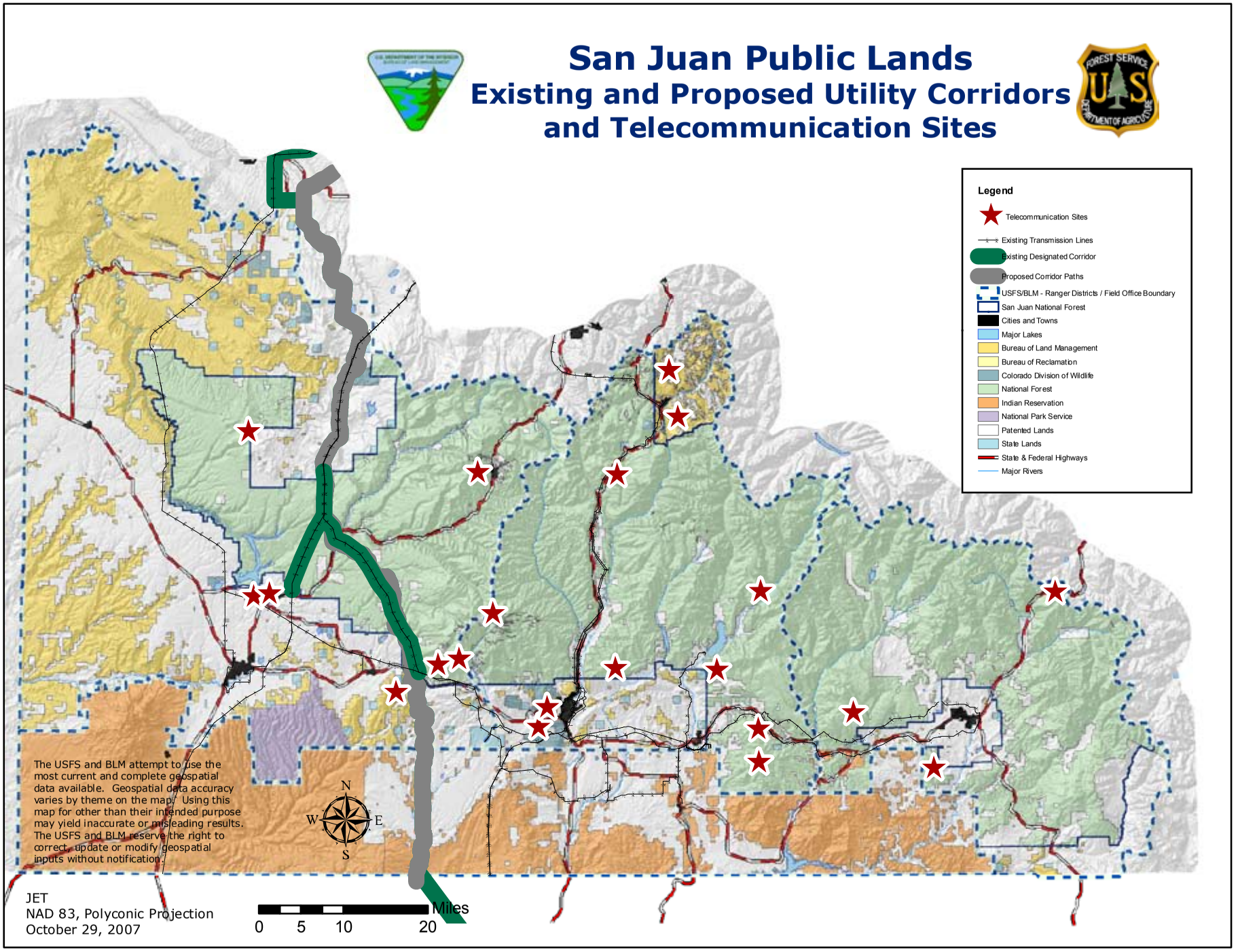
Currently, there are two designated corridors within the planning area (see Figure 3.24.2). They are the Trans-Colorado Pipeline and the Tri-State Electric Corridors (both cross the Dolores District). The Trans-Colorado Pipeline corridor was designated as a corridor in the 1992 amendment to the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) LMP.

In the BLM San Juan/San Miguel RMP, no corridors were designated. The RMP encouraged location of new transmission facilities along previously disturbed routes, as well as the sharing of ROWs for compatible transmission uses.

The West-Wide Energy Corridor Programmatic EIS (PEIS) evaluated utility corridors for inclusion in the nationwide designations authorized by Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Corridors across the planning area were directed to follow the existing corridor of the Trans-Colorado Natural Gas Pipeline. Corridor upgrades were limited to existing facilities (with measures instituted in order to protect unstable slopes and the visual resources related to the San Juan National Scenic Byway as it crosses the Dolores River Canyon and Lost Canyon).

Areas designated as utility corridors would be designed to be compatible with the management goals of the areas through which they pass. Expansion, as well as other actions, would not be approved if they did meet these requirements. The width of the corridors would be specified in the individual facility Special Use Permit or ROW authorization. Corridors would only be designated for transmission lines over 69 kilovolts and for pipelines more than 10 inches in diameter. Pipelines greater than 24 inches in diameter would require concurrence (simultaneous consent) by Congress prior to development. Local distribution lines and smaller pipelines would not be identified as corridors, and would normally be operated in conjunction with the existing road system (or with other previously disturbed areas) in order to minimize environmental impacts.

Figure 3.24.2 – Designated Utility Corridors, and Electronic and Communication Sites in Planning Area



In 1983, the Western Utility Group (WUG) identified potential and existing utility corridors that may impact the planning area.

The design and construction of the existing crossing of the Dolores River by the Trans-Colorado Pipeline has resulted in localized slope instability. The DLMP/DEIS addresses this specific issue, as well as the potential impacts related to pipeline corridors. The Trans-Colorado Pipeline Corridor is the only nationwide corridor crossing the planning area that is considered in the nationwide corridor study authorized by Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

In relation to the proposed alternatives, the number of corridors would not change.

Table 3.24.2 summarizes the combined total number of existing pipeline and electrical transmission miles, per stream mile, from the Aquatic, Riparian and Wetland assessment of the SJNF (USFS 2003). Watersheds highlighted in green are wholly located within the San Juan National Forest boundaries.

Table 3.24.2 – Transmission Lines and Streams

HUB6	HUB6NAME	Ratio of Total Miles Pipeline and Electrical Transmission Line to Miles of Valley Bottom Stream	Total Miles Pipeline and Electrical Transmission Line	Stream Density
140801020402	Upper Stollsteimer Creek	0.87	80.9	2.7
140801040604	Animas River-Spring Creek	0.80	16.2	2.1
140801070103	Upper Mancos Valley	0.77	31.0	2.6
140802020103	Hartman Canyon	0.69	73.2	3.1
140801070105	East Fork of Mud Creek	0.53	39.0	3.4
140801010307	Echo Canyon Reservoir	0.52	25.2	2.5
140802020106	Lower Alkali Canyon-Narraguinnep Canyon	0.48	49.9	3.3
140801010305	McCabe Creek	0.47	23.1	2.7
140801040901	Lower Florida River-Ticalotte	0.43	23.2	2.7
140801011503	Los Pinos River-Bayfield	0.37	29.7	2.2
140801050102	Mayday Valley	0.36	14.2	2
140801040502	Elbert Creek	0.36	12.3	1.9
140801011403	Lower Vallecito Creek	0.36	15.2	3.1
140801040504	Upper Animas Valley-Trimble	0.35	12.7	2.5
140801040603	Lower Lightner Creek	0.34	23.4	2.6
140801020401	Martinez Creek-Dutton Creek	0.33	23.9	2.9
140801011602	Middle Beaver Creek	0.32	17.3	3.3
140801020403	Stollsteimer Creek-Dyke Valley	0.31	13.7	2.7
140801010304	Upper Pagosa Springs	0.27	12.6	2.8
140802020201	Upper Yellowjacket Canyon	0.26	12.1	2.1
140801010406	Lower Rio Blanco-San Juan River	0.24	11.0	2.8
140801010306	Mill Creek	0.24	13.5	3.1
140801011703	Ute Creek	0.23	10.0	2.6

Electronic Sites and Existing Communication Sites of Federal Lands

Electronic sites are areas authorized for the location of facilities for communication by radio, television, microwave, and cell telephone systems. Generally, these sites are at the local topographic high points, depending upon maximum line-of-sight. Typically, sites are serviced by electric power lines and access roads. Some site users are individual users (due to space limitations, technical considerations, and/or security issues); other site users lease space in their structure and tower for multiple users. The existing electronic sites within the planning area are listed in Table 3.24.2. (Also, see Figure 3.24.1, Major Electric Transmission Lines, Pipelines and Communication Sites in Planning Area for a distribution of existing sites across the planning area.)

Any additional sites for commercial or agency use would require approval of a site plan. The site-plan specifications must comply with visual quality and other resource management objectives. The number of sites would not change by alternative.

Table 3.24.2 – Electronic and Communication Sites in Planning Area

SITE NAME	Latitude	Longitude	Elevation (ft ASL)
USFS Benchmark	37.76033	-108.5598	9,264
Menefee	37.31616	-108.2395	8,823
USFS Missionary	37.358166	-107.76966	9,860
USFS Kennebec	37.451	-108.03283	12,240
Kendall	37.78733	-107.63566	13,400
USFS Tuckerville	37.4895	-107.4585	11,640
USFS Grassy	37.3552	-107.5522	9,480
USFS Pargin	37.1885	-107.4577	8,910
USFS Devil	37.2807	-107.2605	9,922
USFS Oakbrush	37.1855	-107.0898	8,623
USFS Wolfcreek	37.4848	-106.8266	11,680
YellowJacket	37.2521	-107.4589	8,397
Coal Bank	37.6889	-107.7665	10,660
Spring Creek	37.1885	-107.4577	8,910
Caviness Mt.	37.3630	-108.1508	10,050
Dolores	37.4825	-108.5120	7,420
Escalante	37.4780	-108.5460	7,080
Expectation Mt.	37.6941	-108.0684	11,600
Parrott Peak	37.3750	-108.1028	11,740
Perins Peak	37.2906	-107.9170	8,287
Storm Peak	37.8672	-107.6549	12,979

Demand for Gas Gathering Lines and Electricity Distribution Lines

Oil and gas development in the Piceance Basin, Paradox Basin, and San Juan Basin would require gathering lines in order to transport product to major transmission pipelines; however, no new major pipelines are anticipated. Urbanization of private lands adjacent to major communities may see an increase in electric distribution lines, and an upgrade in major transmission lines already in existence.

Changes for Communication and Electronic Sites

The DLMP/DEIS alternatives address site compatibility, capacity, and scenic vista issues by Management Area (MA). Future communication and electronic facilities would be encouraged to use existing sites, within capacity and compatibility limits. All facilities would comply with visual resource and scenic standards for the desired future conditions, as identified for the various management areas, and in relation to the different alternatives. The increasing demand for cellular telephone coverage is driving up demand for cell phone relay towers. Visual concerns over the spread of towers to more and more topographic high points may increase. Older antenna towers are being replaced by higher and/or stronger towers (in order to accommodate more shared use and heavier equipment). Better technology is reducing the problem of interference, allowing more co-location of facilities.

Existing and new electronic sites on USFS-administered lands would require the approval of a site plan. The site plan specifications must comply with the MA objectives for the area of the proposed site. Under current policy, the BLM does not require formal site designation or site plans.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS

General Impacts

The MA objectives may affect (impact) the accessibility of lands for the location of pipelines, transmission lines, and communication sites. Alternatives B and C would propose additional areas in MA 3s (that are currently under MA 5s), which would restrict the amount of area in which expansion (to accommodate new utilities or electronic sites) could occur. Changing the availability and restrictions on utility routing and communication site use would restrict expansion as well. Generally, utility routes and communication sites would be compatible with MA 7 designations. With MA 1s and 3s (which would be the most restrictive), prohibiting development of permanent facilities, or requiring limits or prohibitions on road access, may place future demand (due to demographic changes) on existing sites and/or on private land.

MA 2s would require specific management plans that may impose site-specific closures or restrictions on alternative energy development. MA 4s would require development to be compatible with MA requirements, and may impose unacceptable site-specific costs. Generally, MA 5s and 7s would be compatible with facility development.

Local utilities would be encouraged to use existing pathways, which, under all of the alternatives, would be in MA 5s and 7s. Upgrades to existing corridor locations that pass through MA 3s, and across the Dolores River Canyon MA 2 area, may be allowed. They may, however, not accommodate additional linear utility routing needs. Site plans for communication sites would be developed for all existing locations. These site plans would identify compatible uses, visual management criteria, and allowable number of users. Any additional sites for public use would require designation, after appropriate environmental analysis and approval.

D***LMP/DEIS Alternatives***: Given the minimal expected level of demand for major new utility transmission facilities and new communication site development during the life of the approved LMP, there may be no measurable differences between alternatives. A scenario of deferred oil and gas leasing over the next 10 to 15 years may reduce demand for new oil and gas pipelines by a negligible amount. This is because the demand for new gathering pipelines would continue to increase, along with development, in the San Juan and Paradox geologic basins.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

For this analysis, the next 15 years constitute the time-frame for "reasonably foreseeable future" cumulative impacts in relation to utility corridors and communication sites. The demand for utility transmission facilities would be tied to energy development within the Paradox and San Juan Basins, with the resulting demand for the transmission of products and electrical power across the planning area. The designation of new communication sites within the planning area would be directly tied to demographic changes projected in southwestern Colorado (which is expected to increase over this 15-year period), with most requests for authorizations occurring in areas of higher-elevation terrain overlooking developing communities. There has been no specific need identified for new locations. This is because most suitable higher-elevation sites are already occupied, and may not be available for expansion.

There are no reasonably foreseeable future actions, specific to any particular alternative, that would impact utility corridors or communication sites.