

https://www.gjsentinel.com/news/western_colorado/decision-on-shale-project-right-of-way-may-be-made/article_c835807e-5d7f-11e8-8a24-10604b9f6eda.html

6 hrs ago

Decision on shale project right of way may be made in early July

By DENNIS WEBB

The Bureau of Land Management has released its final analysis for a proposed utility right of way for a northeast Utah oil shale project near the Colorado border, meaning a decision on the proposal could come in early July.

The agency has completed a final environmental impact statement for the proposed Enefit American project about 40 miles south of Vernal and 25 miles southwest of Rangely. Its decision on the proposal could come after July 2, before which the public has a final opportunity to comment on the proposal.

The project would include about 10 miles of oil pipeline, 19 miles of water supply pipeline, eight miles of natural gas supply pipeline, 29 miles of power lines, and an upgrade of about five miles of road. The BLM says in a news release that construction of the pipelines, power lines and road "could contribute 85 to 110 jobs over several years."

Enefit is seeking the approval in support of its proposed South Project, which would entail mining and retorting oil shale on about 7,000 to 9,000 acres in Uintah County, Utah.

That project would involve private land, and minerals owned by Enefit, which says it is hoping to produce 50,000 barrels of oil per day for up to 30 years.

A decision on the mine project itself would be up to the state, not the BLM.

"It is expected that the South Project will continue to full buildout regardless of the BLM's decision on the Utility Project," the BLM says in its final analysis.

"The Applicant already has vehicular access to its land, water can be trucked in to the South Project site, and product can be trucked out. The Applicant also can negotiate access to natural gas supplies and electricity from an existing pipeline and power lines that cross the company's private property."

In its draft EIS, the BLM cited environmental impacts that would result from things such as truck traffic if the corridor isn't approved.

Western Resource Advocates is part of a coalition of conservation groups that are opposing the corridor proposal and Enefit's shale project more generally.

"At its peak, this proposal will likely produce more climate changing pollution than any other plant in America, will use tremendous amounts of precious water, and will generate massive amounts of air pollution in an area already shown to be out of compliance with federal clean air regulations,"

the group says on its website.

In a news release on its website, Enefit hailed the completion of what it called the "long-awaited" environmental impact statement.

It also indicated that, "assuming there are no unforeseen, last-minute issues raised in the public comments," the corridor will be approved.

It said a 30-day period will then follow for appealing the decision, which it expects environmental groups and others will do.

"To date, however, all concerns raised by third parties throughout the EIS process have been resolved to the BLM's satisfaction, so we're optimistic that any appeals will not be successful," the company said in its release.

For more on the project and how to comment, visit go.usa.gov/csa9j.

Last year the BLM granted Enefit a five-year extension of its oil shale research, development and demonstration lease on 160 acres of federal land next to its private property.

That lease includes a provision allowing it to be expanded by 4,960 acres if the company meets certain terms.