

California Geothermal Energy Collaborative  
**Transmission Planning Issues of Interest to Geothermal Development**

Monthly Briefing Update: **July 2005**

1. **The Southwest.** Wind power advocates are compiling a wind development plan to be incorporated into transmission planning for the SWAT/STEP region. Geothermal developers are invited to participate as well.

SWAT, the Southwest Area Transmission planning initiative, has focused on infrastructure development in AZ and NM. As of June 2005, SWAT will now become the planning work group for WestConnect, a regional transmission entity working to facilitate development of a wholesale market across the greater Southwest. STEP, the Southwest Transmission Expansion Plan, is a forum for cooperative development and review of the regional upgrades necessary to support flows from AZ and NV into Southern California.

Geothermal (and other renewable resources) can submit information on the MW capacity and approximate interconnection location of development projects planned in the period to 2015. This can help ensure that planned transmission upgrades take geothermal generating capacity into account.

The SWAT/STEP footprint includes Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado, southern Utah and southern Nevada. One of the objectives is to link the work of the New Mexico Wind Transmission Task Force to broader regional transmission planning, in order to make New Mexico renewable resources—geothermal included—deliverable to load centers in Arizona, southern Nevada and California.

Renewable energy development targets for the SWAT/STEP region will also be rolled up into the WECC-wide expansion planning now underway by the Seams Steering Group-Western Interconnection (SSG-WI). SSG-WI planners need a basis for estimating how many MW of geothermal projects can plausibly be developed—given adequate transmission—in the 2008-2015 planning period. ([www.ssg-wi.com](http://www.ssg-wi.com)).

The SWAT/STEP wind/renewables development plan is being led by West Wind Wires, an advocacy group working to get transmission access for wind power projects. Tom Acker at Northern Arizona University is leading the compilation of this project development plan. Developers planning geothermal projects in the region are encouraged to contact Dr. Acker to learn how to participate in this planning ([tom.acker@nau.edu](mailto:tom.acker@nau.edu)).

2. **STEP.** The next meeting of the Southwest Transmission Expansion Plan will be August 9, 2005, 9:00 AM-3:00 PM, at the Sempra headquarters building, 101 Ash Street, San Diego. Developers whose projects may affect, or be affected by flows from Arizona and/or southern Nevada into California may find useful information about planned regional transmission upgrades.

Current STEP projects include the Palo Verde-Devers #2 line and west of Devers upgrades; East of the River upgrades; the Colorado River Transmission Group; the Palo Verde-Yuma #2 project; Imperial Valley series capacitor upgrade and Imperial Valley phase shifter; new SDG&E 500 kV line into San Diego. STEP meetings include updates on SWAT planning, and on WATS (Western Arizona Transmission Studies). STEP goals, information about STEP projects and meeting agendas are at: [www.caiso.com](http://www.caiso.com).

3. **Northwest Nevada.** Sempra Energy is developing the 1,450 MW Granite Fox coal plant in Gerlach, Nevada, 110 miles north of Reno. Sempra proposes to tap the Pacific DC Intertie (PDCI) to transmit plant output to Southern California. Sempra has said that it would reserve 200 MW of transmission capacity of its (to-be-negotiated) allocation on the PDCI for renewable energy. A recent Sempra study shows substantial economic benefits to northern Nevada during plant construction and operation.

A Western Resource Advocates study released the same week warns that by taking up most of the excess capacity now available on the PDCI, the Granite Fox plant could delay development of geothermal and wind projects in northern Nevada indefinitely. WRA cites studies by the California Energy Commission which estimate that northern Nevada could produce 800 MW of geothermal power and 1,000 MW of wind power. WRA concluded that geothermal and wind development could produce larger economic benefits than the Granite Fox plant, without the negative environmental impacts of coal development. WRA produced the study on behalf of the Nevada Clean Energy Coalition, which opposes Granite Fox.

4. **RMATS.** The Governors of Wyoming and Utah will convene a stakeholder meeting in September 2005 to formally launch Phase II of the Rocky Mountain Area Transmission Study (date and location to be determined). The Governors have released a draft charter for RMATS Phase II work, which lists its goals, principles and operating procedures. This charter will be offered for ratification by stakeholders at the September meeting.

Much of the work is expected to focus on the Frontier Line proposed by the Governors of Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California to bring Mountain State coal and renewable resources to load centers in Utah, Nevada and California. The Wyoming Infrastructure Authority will contribute to the funding RMATS II work, which is scheduled to be completed by September 2006.

---

Monthly Briefing Updates are a service of the California Geothermal Energy Collaborative. For more information on the issues and programs discussed here, contact:

David Olsen, California Geothermal Energy Collaborative  
[olsen@avenuecable.com](mailto:olsen@avenuecable.com)  
805-653-6881