STATE OF COLORADO
Bill Owens, Governor
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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For Wildlife-
For People

January 8, 2001

Tom Ryon
Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc.
5231 South Quebec Street
Greenwood Village, CO 80111

Dear Mr. Ryon:

At your request I have reviewed the material you faxed me regarding the two transmission line projects (Loveland and Fort Collins to Rawhide). I understand the project consists of upgrading existing lines and will entail erecting new support poles and lines in some areas. I believe that the proposed upgrade along these two routes pose little potential to negatively impact wildlife or wildlife habitat, however, I do have some recommendations.

Based on our phone conversation (1/3/01), it is my understanding that no wetlands will be impacted. If any wetlands may be impacted at anytime, I recommend first contacting the U.S. Army Corps (303-979-4120) for consultation.

A prairie dog town near the Valley Substation (Loveland Project) is mentioned in the written material and you mentioned on the phone that this town would not be impacted. I provide the following comments in the event that this plan changes such that part or all of the prairie dog town would be impacted. Since prairie dogs are present at this site then surveys are needed for Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, and Western Burrowing Owls. All bird species are protected by the law and killing one is illegal. The Bald Eagle (Federally and State Threatened) and Ferruginous Hawk (State Special Concern) use prairie dog towns for feeding and the Western Burrowing Owl (State Threatened) live in prairie dog holes. The following should be observed if there will be any disturbance to prairie dog towns:

- If soil disturbance is to occur between March 1 and October 31, the area should be checked for the presence of Burrowing Owls prior to any earth-moving taking place. The owls are susceptible to being buried and killed in their holes by construction activity during the nesting season.

- If soil disturbance is done between November 1 and February 28, it is very unlikely that owls would be present since they migrate out of the state during the winter.

The Division of Wildlife is willing to work with the applicant on prairie dog trap/transplant efforts. I am hopeful that the applicant is willing to consider live removal of the prairie dogs from sites that may negatively impacted.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, Greg E. Walcher, Executive Director
WILDLIFE COMMISSION, Bernard L. Black, Jr., Chairman • Rick Enstrom, Vice-Chairman • Philip James, Secretary
Members. Tom Burke • Mark LeValley • Marianna Raftopoulos • Robert Shoemaker • Olive Valdez

It is my understanding that the proposed project may significantly impact suitable mountain plover habitat. I am concerned that the proposed project may significantly impact nesting mountain plovers if surface disturbance to the site occurs during the breeding season. Note that the mountain plover is currently being proposed for federal listing as a threatened species. Mountain plovers are found primarily in the arid grasslands of the Great Plains and nesting plovers choose shortgrass prairie grazed by prairie dogs, bison, or cattle, overgrazed tall grass, and fallow fields on fragmented prairie (Knopf 1996). Since mountain plovers migrate out of Colorado after the breeding season, I feel that construction of the proposed facility will have few if any long-term negative effects on this bird species if disturbance to the ground surface takes place outside of the breeding season. I highly recommend that any potential disturbance to suitable mountain plover habitat take place sometime between September 1 and April 15 to assure no negative impacts to the mountain plover during any of its breeding activity from courtship through fledged young. Additionally, I highly recommend that the of impacted land be restored and allowed to revert to its former use. Ideally this restoration will be monitored for at least three years following initial planting of grass seeds (I recommend little bluestem, blue grama, and buffalo grass species) and proper measures will be taken during this time to control for noxious weed species.

Numerous raptor species may potentially nest on transmission line poles/towers. I suggest that the applicant check all poles/towers that are to be removed/replaced for the presence of raptor nests prior any disturbance. If nests are found I recommend leaving intact all nest structures and support structures (trees, rocky outcrops, cliffs) and minimize disturbance to the area until after the breeding season. I would like to request that the Division of Wildlife be contacted immediately if the applicant does locate a raptor nest on any all poles/towers that are to be removed/replaced. In doing so, the Division of Wildlife can then successfully work with the project manager(s) so as to minimize disturbance to the wildlife during the raptor breeding season.

The Division of Wildlife appreciates this opportunity to comment on this project. If you have any questions, please contact me at (970)472-4435. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mike Sherman

Scott Hoover Acting NE Regional Manager
by Mike Sherman, Field Habitat Biologist

Cc: Rick Moss, NE Senior Habitat Biologist
Dave Clarkson, Area Wildlife Manager
Katie Kinney, Area Wildlife Manager