



Idaho Greater Sage-Grouse Implementation Plan Conformance Review



GRSG Plan Amendment Conformance:

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Project Name: Midpoint to Hydra 138 kV Transmission Line Renewal, Idaho Power Company, IDI-14990.

Project Type: Existing transmission line ROW renewal and amendment to increase ROW width.

Location: Approximately ½ mile north of the Highway 93/700 North Road Junction, on the west side of Highway 93. This is approximately 7.3 miles south of Shoshone, Idaho along Highway 93.

Boise Meridian,
T. 7 S., R. 17 E.,
sec. 10, NE¼SE¼ and SE¼NE¼;
sec. 11, NW¼SW¼ and S½NW¼.

**Conservation
Area:**

Idaho Desert Conservation Area (MD SSS 1)

Designation: General Habitat Management Area (MD SSS 2)

Area of Impact: Description: Approximate 4.66 acre area that is 0.77 miles (4,059 feet) long and 50 feet wide. Document NEPA ID: DOI- BLM-ID-T030-2011-0042-CX

Adaptive Management:

Neither BSUs within the Conservation Area are engaging adaptive management actions. This project is outside of both BSUs and Priority or Important Habitat Areas.

Disturbance Cap: This project is outside of Priority or Important Habitat Areas and is not subject to the disturbance cap.

Allocation: This project is considered a major ROW and General Habitat Management Areas are considered Open areas for these types of actions.

Management Decisions Authorizing Activity:

The following Management Decisions likely apply to this project and a rationale has been provided describing why they do or do not apply to this specific project.

MD SSS 7: GRSG habitat within the project area will be assessed during project-level NEPA analysis within the management area designations (PHMA, IHMA, GHMA). Project proposals and their effects will be evaluated based on the habitat and values affected.

Idaho Power Company conducted a biological survey of the project area and prepared a plant and wildlife survey report, which was subsequently approved by the Shoshone Field Office prior to the implementation of the ARMPA. However, upon reviewing the survey, the Shoshone Field Office wildlife biologist exclaimed that although the report indicated the project area does not contain suitable habitat for the greater sage-grouse, the project occurred in mapped sage-grouse Preliminary General Habitat. The wildlife biologist concluded "reauthorization and maintenance of the subject distribution line is not expected to result in any measurable direct, indirect or cumulative adverse effects to greater sage-grouse or its habitat. An assessment for another project in the same vicinity was also referenced as part of the wildlife clearance.

MD SSS 31: Co-locating new infrastructure within existing ROWs and maintaining and upgrading ROWs is preferred over the creation of new ROWs or the construction of new facilities in all management area. Colocation for various activities is defined as:

- Electrical Lines – Installation of new ROWs adjacent to current ROWs boundaries, not necessarily placed on the same power poles.

The proposal is a renewal of an existing right-of-way for a transmission line. There will be no new infrastructure.

MD SSS 32: Incorporate RDFs as described in **Appendix C** in the development of project or proposal implementation, reauthorizations or new authorizations and suppression activities, as conditions of approval (COAs) into any post-lease activities and as best management practices for locatable minerals activities, to the extent allowable by law, unless at least one of the following conditions can be demonstrated and documented in the NEPA analysis associated with the specific project:

- a. A specific RDF is not applicable to the site-specific conditions of the project or activity;
- b. A proposed design feature or BMP is determined to provide equal or better protection for GRSG or its habitat; or
- c. Analysis concludes that following a specific RDF will provide no more protection to GRSG or its habitat than not following it, for the project being proposed.

See comments in the RDF section below.

MD SSS 33: Conduct implementation and project activities, including construction and short-term anthropogenic disturbances consistent with seasonal habitat restrictions described in Appendix C.

Secured by terms in the Master Agreement (BLM-MA-ID-001) as referenced by stipulation 1 in Exhibit A of the grant. [V(C)2-3]

2. *When activities are proposed within an existing ROW grant and under existing authorized uses, and in an area of suspected or known special status species habitat and or species presence, IPC will conduct a records search of IPC records, and IDFG Natural Heritage Program records, to determine the species and/or habitat that could be potentially affected. When habitat or a species is present, measures will be taken to minimize impacts including: following seasonal/timing restrictions, monitoring by an IPC biologist and or botanist,*

flagging, staking and / or fencing. As a courtesy, IPC biological/ botanical staff will advise the IPC ROW Team Manager of the record search results and of measures to be taken to avoid impacts to the species or its habitat.

3. *To the extent practical, IPC is responsible to minimize the impact to Idaho BLM sensitive species (including candidate species) and/or federally listed species and designated critical habitat on authorized ROW, regardless of when the ROW was granted.*

MD SSS 34: RDFs and seasonal habitat restrictions will not be required for emergency or short-term activities necessary to protect and preserve human life or property.

Secured by terms in the Master Agreement (BLM-MA-ID-001) as referenced by stipulation 1 in Exhibit A of the grant. [V(C)2-3]

MD VEG 3: Require use of native seeds for restoration based on availability, adaptation (ecological site potential), and probability of success (Richards et al. 1998). Non-native seeds may be used as long as they support GRSG habitat objectives (Pyke 2011) to increase probability of success, when adapted seed availability is low or to compete with invasive species especially on harsher sites.

The proposed project would not have any new construction requiring restoration. Upon relinquishment or termination, the authorized officer shall approve a termination and rehabilitation plan to comply with the above management decision (see stipulation 3 in Exhibit A of the grant).

MD LR 2: PHMA: Designate and manage PHMA as ROW avoidance areas, consistent with MD SSS 29 and subject to RDFs and buffers (Appendices B and C). IHMA: Designate and manage IHMA as ROW avoidance areas, consistent with MD SSS 30 and subject to RDFs and buffers. GHMA (Idaho and Montana): Designate and manage GHMA as open with proposals subject to RDFs and buffers.

See comments in the RDF section below. The buffer distance for tall structures is within 2 miles of leks. The nearest identified lek is in excess of 6 miles from the project site.

MD LR 11: As opportunities and priorities indicate work with existing ROW holders to retrofit existing towers and structures consistent with RDFs described in **Appendix C**.

See comments in the RDF section below.

Applicable Required Design Features (MD SSS 22 and Appendix C):

The following RDFs likely apply to this project and a rationale has been provided describing why they do or do not apply to this specific project.

RDF 40: Utilize available plant species based on their adaptation to the site when developing seed mixes. (Lambert 2005; VegSpec).

The proposed project would not have any new construction requiring restoration. Upon relinquishment or termination, the authorized officer shall approve a termination and rehabilitation plan to comply with the above required design feature (see stipulation 3 in Exhibit A of the grant).

RDF 44: Utilize techniques to introduce desired species to the site such as drill seeding, broadcast seeding followed by a seed coverage technique, such as harrowing, chaining or livestock trampling, and transplanting container or bare-root seedlings.

The proposed project would not have any new construction requiring restoration. Upon relinquishment or termination, the authorized officer shall approve a termination and rehabilitation plan to comply with the above required design feature (see stipulation 3 in Exhibit A of the grant).

RDF 48: Utilize post-treatment control of annual grass and other invasive species.

Secured by terms in the Master Agreement (BLM-MA-ID-001) as referenced by stipulation 1 in Exhibit A of the grant, and stipulations 14 and 15.

RDF 53: Above-ground disturbance areas would be seeded with perennial vegetation as per vegetation management.

The proposed project would not have any new construction requiring restoration. Upon relinquishment or termination, the authorized officer shall approve a termination and rehabilitation plan to comply with the above required design feature (see stipulation 3 in Exhibit A of the grant).

RDF 52: Where technically and financially feasible, bury distribution powerlines and communication lines within existing disturbance.

The proposed project is an existing distribution line. This RDF is not applicable to the existing project.

RDF 71: Control the spread and effects of non-native plant species (Gelbard and Belnap 2003, Bergquist et al. 2007, Evangelista et al. 2011). (E.g. by washing vehicles and equipment.)

Secured by terms in the Master Agreement (BLM-MA-ID-001) as referenced by stipulation 1 in Exhibit A of the grant, and stipulations 14 and 15.

RDF 80: Fit transmission towers with anti-perch devices (Lammers and Collopy 2007).

Secured by terms in the Master Agreement (BLM-MA-ID-001) as referenced by stipulation 1 in Exhibit A of the grant, including the Appendix D, Avian Protection Plan dated March 2011.

RDF 88: Utilize existing roads, or realignments of existing routes to the extent possible.

The proposed project renews a right-of-way for an existing power line. IPC uses existing roads to access and maintain the subject power line. Access is not secured within the grant.

RDF 99: Include objectives for ensuring habitat restoration to meet sage-grouse habitat needs in reclamation practices/sites (Pyke 2011).

The proposed project would not have any new construction requiring restoration. Upon relinquishment or termination, the authorized officer shall approve a termination and rehabilitation plan to comply with the above required design feature (see stipulation 3 in Exhibit A of the grant).

RDF 102: Restore disturbed areas at final reclamation to the pre-disturbance landforms and desired plant community.

The proposed project would not have any new construction requiring restoration. Upon relinquishment or termination, the authorized officer shall approve a termination and rehabilitation plan to comply with the above required design feature (see stipulation 3 in Exhibit A of the grant).

Mitigation Required:

No new habitat loss is authorized as a result of this renewal. Therefore no mitigation is required.

Conclusion:

Based on the above review, this project is in conformance with the Approved Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment (Sept 2015) and the NEPA process should continue.