

Appendix F

Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments

- Appendix F-1: Proposed RMP and MFP Amendments
- Appendix F-2: Proposed Forest Plan Amendments

Appendix F-1
Proposed RMP and MFP Amendments

Appendix F-1

Proposed RMP and MFP Amendments

Gateway West Transmission Line Project

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Submitted To:

Bureau of Land Management

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AOI	area of inconsistency
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CA	Conservation Agreement
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPM	environmental protection measure
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
FO	Field Office
Gateway West	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
HEA	Habitat Equivalency Analysis
I	Interstate
KOP	Key Observation Point
kV	kilovolt
LUP	land use management plan
MFP	Management Framework Plan
MP	milepost
NCA	National Conservation Area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NF	National Forest
NHT	National Historic Trail
NOI	Notice of Intent
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
ORV	outstandingly remarkable value
Project	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROW	right-of-way
SR	State Route
SRBOP	Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area

SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Protection Plan
TES	threatened, endangered, and sensitive
US	U.S. Highway
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	visual resource management
WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council
WSR	Wild and Scenic River
WWE	West-wide Energy

1 Introduction

The Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project) starts in Wyoming at the Windstar Substation. Segment 1W follows the West-wide Energy (WWE) corridor and an existing 230-kilovolt (kV) line. The existing line would be rebuilt and a second 230-kV line would be built parallel to the existing line. The Project then proceeds as a single-circuit 500-kV line from Aeolus to Populus (Segments 2, 3, and 4). At Populus, the Project splits into two single-circuit 500-kV roughly parallel paths. Segments 5, 6, and 8 follow a more northerly route toward the Hemingway Substation through the Borah and Midpoint Substations, while Segments 7 and 9 follow a more southerly route through the Cedar Hill Substation to the Hemingway Substation. Segment 10 provides an interconnection between the Cedar Hill and Midpoint Substations and also provides an interconnection between the more northerly and more southerly routes.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has identified a Preferred Route for the Project. The Preferred Route includes the Proposed Route (as modified between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements [EISs]) for Segments 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 10. The Preferred Route for Segment 5 includes the Segment 5 Proposed Route and incorporation of Alternatives 5B and 5E. The Preferred Route for Segment 7 includes the Segment 7 Proposed Route and incorporation of Alternatives 7B, 7C, 7D, and 7G. The Preferred Route for the Segment 8 includes the Segment 8 Proposed Route and incorporation of Alternative 8B, and the Preferred Route for Segment 9 includes the Segment 9 Proposed Route and incorporation of Alternative 9E (Figure 1-1).

The Project would cross federal lands managed by the BLM. Actions that occur on these lands, including the granting of rights-of-ways (ROWs) under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), are guided by decisions recorded in the applicable Resource Management Plan (RMP) or Management Framework Plan (MFP) for each unit. The BLM has determined that the Preferred Route for the Project would not conform to certain aspects of the Green River, Kemmerer, Cassia, Jarbidge, and Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP) RMPs, and the Twin Falls, Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills, and Kuna MFPs (refer to Conformance Tables for each MFP and RMP in the Administrative Record). Amendments would also have been needed if certain alternative routes had been chosen. These are discussed below by RMP/MFP. Plan and route changes, discussed below, eliminated some conformance issues discussed in the Draft EIS. The new Pocatello RMP (approved July 2012) replaces the Malad MFP discussed in the Draft EIS. Approval of a project-specific proposal that is inconsistent with the existing land use plan requires that a land use plan amendment be completed (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1 [BLM 2005a]¹). Any decisions to amend a plan would be made concurrent with a decision on the Project. In October 2012, the BLM amended the Rawlins RMP, revising the Visual Resource Management (VRM) classification for BLM-managed lands in the Chokecherry-Sierra Madre Decision Area (BLM 2012c). The Preferred Route for Segment 2 would cross through this area.

¹ See Chapter 7 of the Final EIS for full reference information.

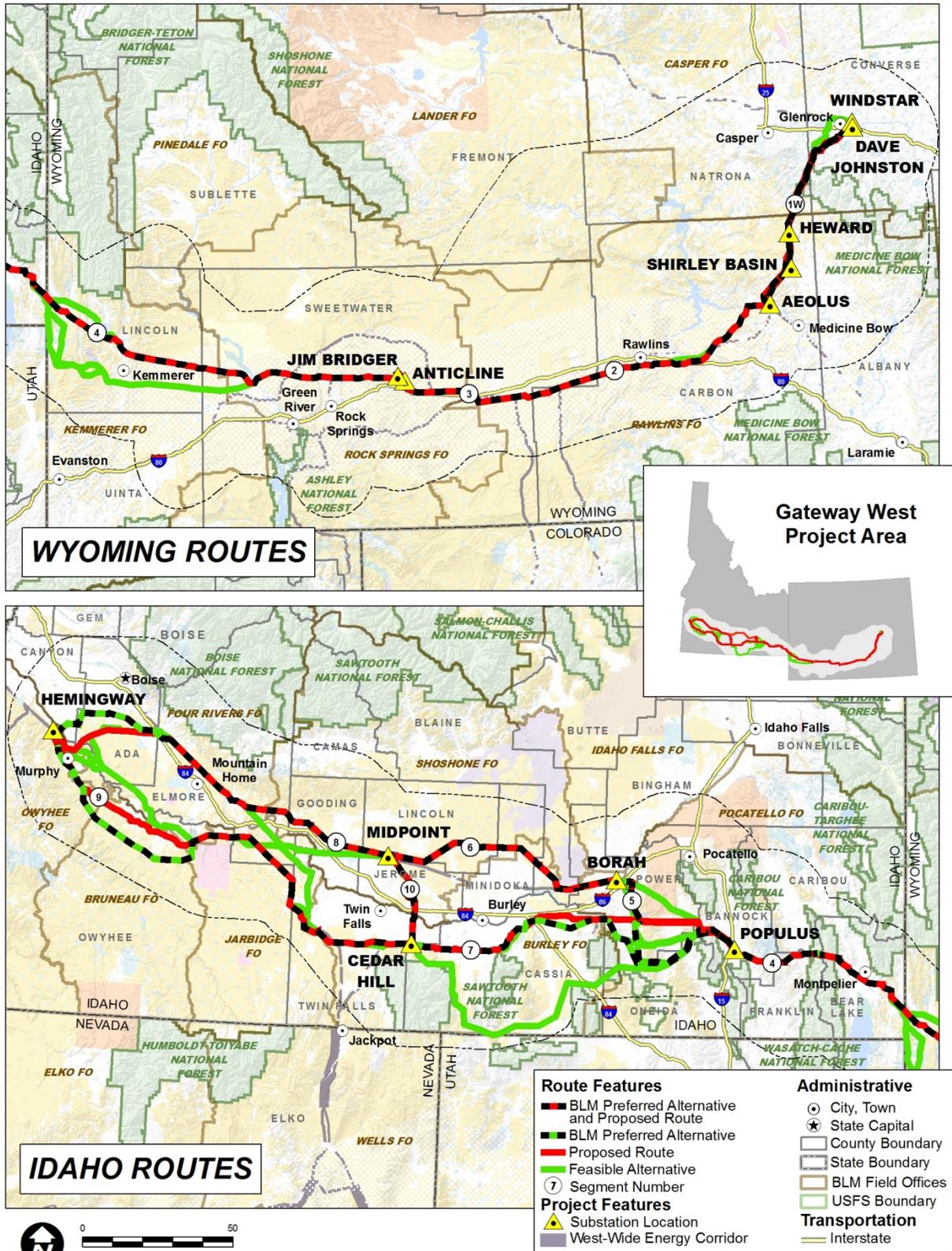


Figure 1-1. Project Overview

2 Planning Process

The planning action is to consider amending eight BLM land use management plans (LUPs) as a part of the EIS. This action is being considered under the BLM 1600 manual guidance (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1), Wyoming State BLM instruction memoranda, and the planning regulations published as Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) (including 1610.5-5, Amendments). Scoping meetings have been held for this Project, where the public, as well as state, local, tribal, and federal governments, were invited to participate in the planning process. Public scoping was initiated with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register on May 16, 2008 (73 *Federal Register* 28425).

The NOI was followed by a series of nine public meetings held in 2008. Four of these meetings were held in Wyoming and five were held in Idaho. Multiple meetings were also held between 2008 and 2009 with private landowners located within 2 miles of the Project's Preferred Route and Route Alternatives. The public has been given the opportunity to comment on and provide additional information regarding the Project, including the possibility of BLM Plan amendments, during these meetings. This public input has brought to light additional issues and prompted more comprehensive analysis, which has been included in the Final EIS.

A report (Land Use Plan Consistency Analysis, 2010) was compiled to document compliance with the 20 federal land use plans that provide direction for federal lands crossed by the Proposed Action or Action Alternatives. This report was included as Appendix F in the Administrative Draft EIS submitted to the BLM and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service for review on March 15, 2010. From this analysis, needs for potential amendments were identified and analyzed based on planning issues and criteria.

Public meetings were held in 17 locations (12 in Idaho, 1 in Nevada, and 4 in Wyoming) following publication of the Draft EIS. Numerous meetings were also held with local governments and citizen task forces. Comments on the proposed amendments were considered in this analysis (Appendix L of the EIS).

2.1 Planning Issues and Criteria

The NOI listed the planning issues the BLM anticipated and invited the public, other federal agencies, as well as state, local, and Tribal governments to identify additional concerns or issues during scoping meetings and the comment period that followed.

2.1.1 Planning Issues

The issues identified through public scoping and used to develop alternatives are as follows:

- Objection to location on private lands ("If the project is for the general public good, it should be on public lands.");
- Reliability and proposed separation distances of transmission lines;

- Avoiding sensitive areas such as National Monuments and Wildlife Refuges, military operating areas, National Conservation Areas (NCAs), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), and State Parks;
- Effects to Native American traditional cultural properties and respected places;
- Effects to paleontological resources;
- Effects on wildlife habitat, plants, and animals including threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species;
- Effects to visual resources and existing viewsheds;
- Effects to National Historic Trails (NHTs) and their viewsheds;
- Land use conflicts and consistency with land use plans;
- Effects to soils and water from surface-disturbing activities;
- Effects to agriculture lands;
- Effect on local and regional socioeconomic conditions; and
- Management of invasive plant species and effective reclamation

2.1.2 Planning Criteria

The following general planning criteria are being considered in the development of the proposed plan amendments:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA);
- Existing laws, regulations, and BLM policies;
- Plans, programs and policies of other federal, state and local governments, and Indian Tribes;
- Public input;
- Future needs and demands for existing or potential resource commodities and values;
- Past and present use of public and adjacent lands;
- Environmental impacts;
- Social and economic values;
- Public welfare and safety; and
- President's National Energy Policy.

3 Proposed Amendments

Amendments to BLM's management plans would be needed to bring the Project into compliance with the applicable RMPs and MFPs for BLM-managed lands crossed by the Project. Instances where the Project may not be in conformance with applicable RMPs and MFPs include:

- Developing a new ROW outside of approved corridors,
- Crossing NHTs,

- Crossing ACECs,
- Allowing surface disturbance near scenic rivers,
- Changing VRM classifications, and
- Allowing the Project where it would not conform with established VRM classes.

Effects on visual resources were determined through the use of computer modeling, field visits, and site-specific knowledge by local BLM staff. The analysis and effects determinations on visual resources are documented in Appendix G-1 for the Green River, Kemmerer, Cassia, Jarbidge, and SRBOP RMPs and the Twin Falls, Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills, and Kuna MFPs. These proposed amendments reference the analysis, maps of the locations (referred to as areas of inconsistency [AOIs]), photographs, and simulations included in Appendix E and Appendix G-1. The visual analysis pertains only to the public lands, as the BLM does not establish visual management objectives for lands it does not administer.

3.1 Casper RMP

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Casper Field Office (FO), including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Casper RMP approved in December 2007. The RMP identifies VRM classes and manages visual resources based on these VRM classes. Portions of the proposed Project were identified as inconsistent with the Casper RMP. However, proposed amendments included in the Draft EIS to the Casper RMP associated with Segments 1E and 1W are no longer included. Amendments associated with Segment 1E and Alternative 1E-C are no longer relevant because these routes are no longer being considered. The small parcels of BLM-managed land shown as VRM II in the Draft EIS (crossed by Segment 1W) were determined by the Casper FO to be incorrectly mapped. The correct designation is VRM III; therefore, the proposed amendments for these parcels are not needed. Also, a Plan Maintenance Action reclassified the WWE corridor, which contains an existing 230-kV transmission line, as VRM Class IV (BLM 2012d), eliminating the need for the Bates Creek amendment to accommodate Segment 1W.

3.2 Rawlins RMP

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Rawlins FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Rawlins RMP approved in December 2008. The RMP manages visual resources based on mapped VRM classes as shown on Map 2-50 of the Rawlins RMP. The RMP also includes objectives limiting disturbance of active raptor nests. The BLM has determined that no plan amendments would be required to meet RMP requirements; conflicts can be resolved using the administrative process outlined in the Rawlins RMP (refer to Appendix 1 of the Rawlins RMP: Mitigation Guidelines for Surface-Disturbing and Disruptive Activities).

3.3 Green River RMP Amendment

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Rock Springs FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Green River RMP approved on August 8, 1997. The RMP includes objectives for visual resources in the vicinity of the Project. The RMP also includes objectives limiting disturbance of active raptor nests. Project components and buffers would be within protective buffer distances listed in the RMP; thus, the Draft EIS indicated that the Project would not conform to the Green River RMP. However, the BLM has determined that no plan amendments would be required to meet RMP requirements on raptor buffers; conflicts can be resolved using the administrative process outlined in the Green River RMP (refer to Appendix 2 of the Green River RMP: Mitigation Guidelines for Surface-Disturbing and Disruptive Activities).

3.3.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Green River RMP

The Preferred Route along Segments 3 and 4 would cross through the Green River Management Area. Approximately 24 miles of Segment 3 are within the Planning Area, 10.5 of which cross BLM-managed land. Approximately 65 miles of Segment 4 are within the Planning Area, 30 of which cross BLM-managed land.

The location of the Preferred Route was identified to comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These include, but are not limited to, TES species, sensitive lands, cultural resources, and visual resources.

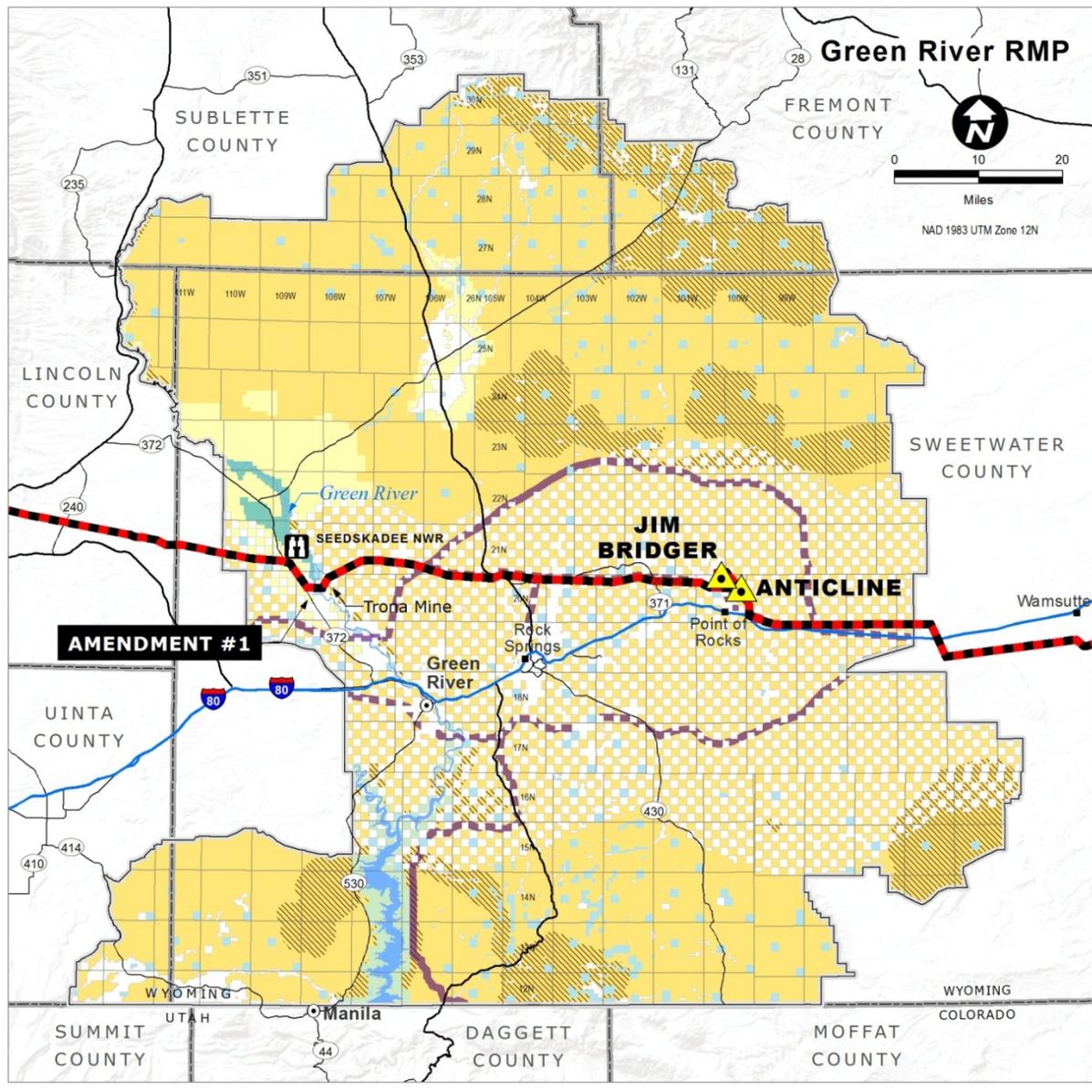
The Preferred Route is not in conformance with the direction provided in the Green River RMP for visual resources. Therefore, the land use plan would have to be amended if this route is selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Green River RMP has the following Visual Resource Management Objectives: “1) maintain or improve scenic values and visual quality; and 2) establish priorities for managing the visual resources in conjunction with other resource values (Green River RMP1997, page 21).”

Management Actions for reaching these objectives emphasize the following with regards to visual resources:

“Management actions on public lands with a Class II visual resource management classification must be designed to blend into and retain the existing character of the natural landscape.”

The Project, as currently designed, is not in conformance with the visual resources requirement discussed above. The purpose of the proposed amendment, Amendment #1, is to modify the visual resource management action, such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would conform to the Green River RMP. Figure 3.3-1 shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the Green River RMP and where Amendment #1 would apply.



Legend

- BLM Preferred Alternative and Proponent Proposed
- BLM Preferred Alternative
- Substation
- West-wide Energy Corridor (WWEC)
- VRM I
- VRM II

Land Status

- Bureau of Land Management
- National Forest
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- State

- State Wildlife, Park, Recreation or Other
- Private
- Water

Figure 3.3-1. Preferred Route and Green River RMP Planning Area

3.3.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Preferred Route and the Route Alternatives considered within this planning area are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figures A-5 and A-6 of the Final EIS show the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segment 4.

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route through the Green River Planning Area follows the Proposed Route for Segments 3 and 4.

Segment 3 of the Preferred Route consists of one single-circuit 500-kV line that follows an existing transmission corridor within the area managed by the Green River RMP. No alternatives were identified for this segment.

Segment 4 of the Preferred Route is 197.6 miles long and generally follows existing transmission lines. It consists of a single-circuit 500-kV line between Anticline Substation in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, and Populus Substation in Power County, Idaho.

Within the Green River RMP boundary, the WWE corridor extends in a southwest direction and provides no feasible option for an east-west connection between the Anticline and Populus Substations. It was not practical to follow the WWE corridor in this area, and thus the Preferred Route deviates from this designated corridor. The Preferred Route in Segment 4 crosses 0.8 mile of BLM-managed land with a VRM Class II designation in Section 10, Township 20 North, Range 109 West (T. 20 N., R. 109 W.). This partial section of public land lies approximately 0.4 to 1 mile east of the river.

Alternatives 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E: Four Route Alternatives to Segment 4 of the Preferred Route cross the Green River RMP area. Alternatives 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E all follow the same route within the Green River RMP area. They deviate from the Preferred Route approximately 14 miles from where the Proposed Route exits the western edge of the Green River RMP boundary. Within the Green River RMP boundary, these follow the same general westerly direction.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.3.3 Proposed Plan Amendment to the Green River RMP

The Preferred Route along Segment 4 would require a plan amendment to the Green River RMP regarding visual resources in order to grant a ROW for the Project across lands managed under the Green River RMP.

Proposed Amendment #1 for Segment 4 of the Preferred Route would amend management action for visual resource impacts (changes in italics) to read:

“Management actions on public lands with a Class II visual resource management classification must be designed to blend into and retain the existing character of the natural landscape. *Allow the construction and placement of the Gateway West Transmission Line on public land classified as VRM Class II in section 10, T. 20 N., R. 109 W.*”

3.3.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.7.2.2 and 3.7.2.3 for effects on special status plant species; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status wildlife species; and Sections 3.17.3.2 and 3.17.3.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

For the majority of its length, the proposed powerline routes for Segments 3 and 4 within the Green River Planning Area parallel either existing powerline or road corridors, however, just east of the Green River, the route leaves the existing corridor and turns southwest to avoid the Seedska-dee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). This results in the route crossing the VRM Class II land. The VRM Class II area is located next to a trona mine and would add additional industrial elements to this landscape.

The amendment for visual resources would impact the ability to meet RMP Objective 1. It would adversely affect the scenic values of the landscapes of the Green River and views from the Seedska-dee NWR. Segment 4 would cross the Green River (on private land) approximately 4 miles south of an existing transmission line crossing and would create additional visual disruption. If the transmission line is built it will add contrast to the existing landscape and indeed alter the scenic quality of the area, and the Visual Resource Inventory would likely need to be adjusted. Environmental protection measures (EPMs) such as using non-reflective materials (VIS-1, VIS-2, and VIS-9) and siting the line to minimize visual impacts (VIS-6, VIS-8, and VIS-11) would reduce impacts of the Project but would not be able avoid them completely.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 in Chapter 2 and discussed in detail in Section 3.2 of Chapter 3.

3.4 Kemmerer RMP Amendment

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Kemmerer FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Kemmerer RMP approved on May 24, 2010. The RMP identifies areas where new utility corridors are not permitted, including NHTs and special wildlife habitat, and identifies VRM classes and objectives for visual resources. Portions of the Project do not conform to the Kemmerer RMP. However, amendments associated with the Proposed Route considered in the Draft EIS are no longer included because the Preferred Route has been revised to follow the Alternative 4A route.

3.4.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Kemmerer RMP

The location of the Preferred Route was developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These include, but are not limited to, TES species, sensitive lands, NHTs, other cultural resources, and visual resources. Several alternative route segments are also being considered (see below). Taking these factors into consideration in the development and selection of the Preferred Route still resulted in areas where the Project would not conform to the direction provided in the Kemmerer RMP. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the following requirements of the Kemmerer RMP:

“Decision 5010 – Heritage Resources – Protect the physical evidence of NHTs designated under the National Trails System Act (ruts and traces, graves, campsites, landmarks) that exist on lands within federal jurisdiction by prohibiting all surface-disturbing activities that do not benefit the preservation and (or) interpretation of trails within the following distances: (1) Class 1 segments: ¼-mile on each side of trail segments and within a ¼-mile radius of gravesites and landmarks. (2) Class 2 segments: 500 feet on each side of trail segments and within a 500-foot radius of gravesites and landmarks. (3) Class 3 segments: 100 feet on each side of trail segments and within a 100-foot radius of gravesites and landmarks. Crossings at right angles to trails could be permitted on a case-by-case basis. This could require boring beneath the trail trace. (see Glossary for definitions of NHT and Class Segments).”

The indicative roads show new access roads would be needed within 0.25 mile of Class 1 segments of NHTs (four locations for the Preferred Route and one location for Alternative 4F). Amendment #2, for the Preferred Route, is proposed to address the nonconformance with Decision 5010 of the Kemmerer RMP.

“Decision 6051 – VRM Class II areas – A visual corridor extending up to 1 mile on either side of the Sublette Cutoff and the Slate Creek Cut-off north of U.S. Highway 189 and east of Slate Creek Ridge in consideration of NHT views. The northwest portion of the Planning Area...”

The Preferred Route and Alternative 4F would cross this area. Amendment #3 is proposed, for the Preferred Route, to address this nonconformance with Decision 6051 of the Kemmerer RMP.

Decision 6054 – VRM – manage the viewsheds of NHT segments as follows:
(1)(a) Preserve the viewshed within 3 miles of Class 1 segments north and east of U.S. Highway 30 and west of the Hams Fork river (Tunp/Dempsey Trail area), where the visual characteristics of the setting contribute to the eligibility of the site, by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not dominate the visible area to detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the trail setting. Design ROW to preserve the visual integrity of the settings consistent with the BLM visual resources handbook and manual.

(1)(b) Preserve the viewshed within 1 mile of Class 1 segments outside of the Tunp/Dempsey Trail area and the checkerboard land pattern area, where the visual characteristics of the setting contribute to the eligibility of the site, by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not dominate the visible area to detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the trail setting. Design ROW to preserve the visual integrity of the settings consistent with the BLM visual resources handbook and manual.

(1)(c) On Class 1 trail segments within the checkerboard land pattern area, manage the viewshed to preserve the existing character of the landscape within the federal section where the trail occurs.

(2)(a) Preserve the viewshed within ½ mile of Class 2 segments that exist in blocked federal lands west of U.S. Highway 189 (south of Kemmerer) and south of U.S. Highway 30 by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not attract the attention of the casual observer.

(2)(b) On Class 2 trail segments outside of the area described in (2)(a) manage the viewshed to preserve the existing character of the landscape within the federal section where the trail occurs.

The Preferred/Proposed Route in Segment 4, followed by Alternative 4F, would affect mostly higher quality (Class 1 and 2) trail segments. Alternatives 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E would, however, affect only those trail segments for which the historic setting has been compromised or destroyed (Classes 3 and 4). The Proposed Route and five alternatives are not in conformance with the Kemmerer RMP and would require a land use plan amendment. Amendment #4, for the Preferred Route, is proposed to address the nonconformance with Decision 6054 of the Kemmerer RMP.

Decision 7014 – Rock Creek/Tunp Special Designations – Manage the Rock Creek/Tunp area of significant resource concern with the objective of preserving and enhancing the critical wildlife habitats and cultural values that occur within the area...

Restrict all new ROW actions to existing disturbance zones.

No net loss of habitat function allowed from any construction activity within the boundaries of the management area. Successful re-establishment or improvement of habitats could offset any new disturbance areas.

Pursue opportunities to reclaim existing roads not necessary to attain management objectives. Restrict OHV use to existing roads and trails. No off-trail travel is allowed without prior approval from the authorized officer...

Manage NHTs and sites, settings, and all surface-disturbing activities to retain the existing character of the landscape in federal sections so developments do not dominate settings to detract from the feeling or sense of the historic period of use..."

The Preferred Route would cross the Rock Creek/Tunp area of significant resource concern. This area currently restricts new ROWs and surface-disturbing activities to protect the natural and historic character of the area. Amendment #5 is proposed to

address the nonconformance of the Preferred Route with Decision 7014 of the Kemmerer RMP.

The Project, as currently designed, is not in conformance with the visual, biological, and cultural resources requirements discussed above. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to modify the resource management actions, such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would conform to the Kemmerer RMP. Figure 3.4-1 shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the Kemmerer RMP. Amendments #2, 3, 4, and 5 address the nonconformance issues discussed above. These amendments are discussed in Section 3.4.3, below.

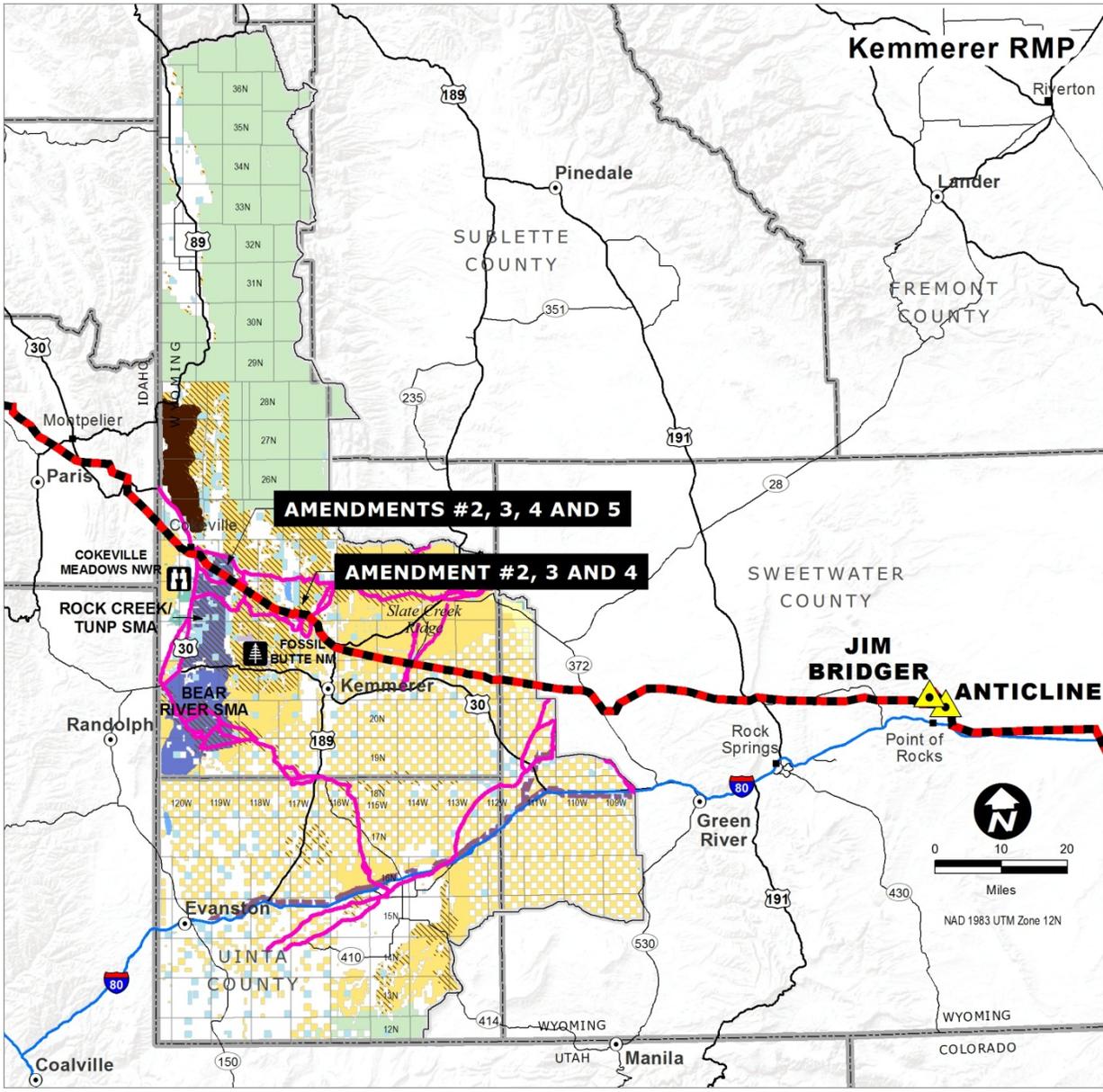
3.4.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Project would consist of one single-circuit 500-kV line between the Anticline Substation and the Populus Substation near Interstate 15 (I-15) in southern Bannock County, Idaho, a portion of which crosses lands managed under the Kemmerer RMP. This segment generally follows an existing transmission line corridor. Appendix A, Figures A-5 and A-6 of the Final EIS show the Preferred Route and Route Alternatives for Segment 4 in Wyoming and Idaho, respectively.

Segment 4 of the Preferred Route would use 500-kV single-circuit lattice towers between 145 and 180 feet tall (Figure B-3, Appendix B of the Final EIS). Where practical, the proposed single-circuit 500-kV line was routed to follow the existing 345-kV transmission corridor (with a minimum 1,500-foot separation from the centerline of the nearest existing line). The Project is needed to supplement existing transmission lines and relieve operating limitations, increase capacity, and improve reliability in the existing electric transmission grid.

Preferred Route (Alternative 4A): The Preferred Route through the Kemmerer Planning Area follows the Proposed Route for Segment 4. The Proposed Route (which was revised to follow Alternative 4A as analyzed in the Draft EIS) follows existing transmission lines except for two short deviations in the vicinity of the two U.S. Highway (US) 30/State Route (SR) 89 crossings. As a result, this route requires 13.0 miles of new ROW. This route maximizes paralleling of the existing 345-kV route, minimizes new ROW requirements, and affects the least amount of sage-grouse core area; however, it crosses Class 1 and 2 NHTs, VRM Class II area, the Rock Creek/Tunp Special Designations area and the Rock Creek big game winter range area, is subject to Special Status Plant restrictions, and crosses a BLM-designated Special Management Area. This route was specifically requested by the Office of the Governor of Wyoming² for detailed analysis.

² Office of the Governor of Wyoming. 2009. Letter to W. George, BLM, from A. Clark, Special Advisor to the Governor, concerning Gateway West Segment 4 NEPA alternatives. July 14.



Enlarged Area Above

Legend

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| BLM Preferred Alternative and Proponent Proposed | Special Management Area (SMA) | Bureau of Reclamation |
| Substation | Bureau of Land Management | State |
| West-wide Energy Corridor (WWEC) | National Forest | State Wildlife, Park, Recreation or Other |
| Historic Trail | National Park Service | Private |
| VRM I | Fish and Wildlife Service | Water |
| VRM II | | |

Figure 3.4-1. Preferred Route and Kemmerer RMP Planning Area

Alternative 4B: This 100.2-mile-long alternative is based on the route alternative originally proposed by the BLM Kemmerer FO. Concerns about that alternative voiced by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were used to modify this alternative to change the crossing of the Cokeville Meadows NWR and avoid higher-quality wildlife habitats to the south. The route would depart from the Preferred Route at milepost (MP) 52, near the Seedska-dee NWR and proceed in a generally westerly direction, crossing active trona mines to the area south of the intersection of US 30/SR 89 south of Kemmerer. The alternative would proceed north and then west, close to US 30/SR 89 and would pass close to the entrance to Fossil Butte National Monument. It would cross a portion of the BLM-designated Bear River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). This alternative would cross the Cokeville Meadows NWR, and then continues north for 16.0 miles, generally following the east side of the Wyoming/Utah and then the Wyoming/Idaho state lines. Alternative 4B angles northwest across the state line into Idaho north of Garret Creek. This route would cross Class II and III NHTs.

Alternative 4C: This 101.6-mile-long alternative is co-located with Alternative 4B to Section 30, Township 21 North, Range 118 West where it turns west and then north, parallel to the east side of US 30/SR 89 and Cokeville Meadows NWR for 11.5 miles before turning northwest and crossing the highway and the NWR about 5 miles south of the existing 345-kV transmission corridor. The route turns north along the Idaho/Wyoming border for about 3.0 miles and then turns northwest across the state line. This alternative route would cross the NWR north of current NWR-managed lands, although still within the established boundary, the Bridger Creek and Rock Creek big game winter range, Class II VRM, the Bear River Divide and Rock Creek/Tunp Special Designations areas, and it would also cross portions of the BLM-designated Bear River and Rock Creek SRMAs along US 30/SR 89. This route crosses Class 3 NHTs. In addition, this route would be subject to Special Status Plant restrictions.

Alternative 4D: This 100.8-mile-long alternative is the same as Alternative 4B except within Township 21 North, Range 118+117 West. It varies in this area to increase the distance between the route and the Fossil Butte National Monument. Alternative 4D would be farther to the south. This alternative was requested by the manager of the Fossil Butte National Monument to reduce the visibility of the proposed transmission line as viewed from the monument. From point 4l it would follow the same alignment as Alternative 4B and rejoin the Preferred Route at point 4e. This alternative route would cross Bridger Creek big game winter range and Class 3 NHTs. In addition, portions of the route cross lands that may have wilderness characteristics.

Alternative 4E: This 102.2-mile-long alternative is the same as Alternative 4D to point 4b.6. From point 4b.6 this alternative would turn north and follow the same alignment as Alternative 4C. This alternative route would cross Bridger Creek big game winter range and crosses Class 3 NHTs. The portion of the route shared with Alternative 4D crosses lands that may have wilderness characteristics.

Alternative 4F: This 87.5-mile-long alternative was originally identified by the Proponents. However, over the course of several agency scoping meetings the Preferred Route was identified as having fewer impacts. The Proponents have adopted the suggested route and requested that the original route segment be carried through

detailed analysis as a feasible alternative. Alternative 4F diverges from the Preferred Route, which follows an existing transmission line, at MP 512 of the Preferred Route. Segment 4 of the Preferred Route continues to the south, following the existing transmission lines, while Alternative 4F stays slightly north of the Preferred Route, passing just south of Viva Naughton Reservoir. The route then turns north for about 5 miles, then back to the northwest for about 12 miles before rejoining the Preferred Route at MP 129.4. This alternative route crosses the Rock Creek big game winter range, Class 1 and 2 NHTs, Dempsey Ridge SRMA, and Class II VRM.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.4.3 Proposed Plan Amendments to the Kemmerer RMP

NHT Protection

The Kemmerer RMP protects NHTs. New access roads would occur within 0.25 mile of Class 1 segments (four locations along the Preferred Route).

Decision #5010, National Historic Trails Physical Protection, prohibits surface disturbing activities within ¼ mile of Class 1 trail segments. The preferred route would not conform to this decision.

Proposed Amendment #2 for Segment 4 of the Preferred Route would amend Decision #5010 to add the following text:

“Allow the Gateway West Project to cross the Sublette NHT in section 11, T. 23 N., R. 118 W. Place towers as far from the trail as feasible.”

Mitigation: Trails would be crossed at, or close to, right angles. Towers would be placed as far from the trail as feasible, or micro-sited to reduce visibility. No disturbance to trail traces permitted. Additional mitigation to be determined through the Section 106 process.

Visual Resource Management

The Kemmerer RMP Decisions 6051 and 6054 protect visual resources and determine visual management objectives for VRM Class II areas and Historic Trails and Places. These decisions would be rewritten to allow the development of this project.

Decision #6051 designates a VRM Class II visual corridor to either side of the Sublett Cutoff and Slate Creek Cutoff. The Preferred Route crosses land mapped as VRM Class II in these areas. The transmission line would not be consistent with this VRM class.

Proposed Amendment #3 for Segment 4 of the Preferred Route would amend Decision #6051 to add the follow text:

Allow the Gateway West Project without changing the VRM class for areas north and east of highway 30/State Highway 89 affected by the route.

Mitigation: Where the route would be visible on timbered slopes, limit tree removal to those portions of the right-of-way where it is required for safety, rather than from the entire ROW, in order to avoid creating a linear feature on the landscape. Vegetation removal requirements will consider Appendix A, Key Standards Relating to Electric System Reliability and Safety, of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Edison Electric Institute (2006).

In specific sensitive areas (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHTs), the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations designated.

Mitigation for NHT crossings will be determined through the Section 106 process. These measures may include micro-siting to place the line behind topographic features, replacing insulators with new ones made of non-reflective materials, and replacing conductors using non-specular wire to reduce visibility from Key Observation Points (KOPs) in highly visible places. This mitigation measure would be implemented once the Gateway West lines are operational. These mitigation measures would be especially pertinent where the new transmission line is visible from NHTs in the locations listed below:

Preferred Route: (1) Within view of White Hill on Class 1 Sublette NHT on the west side of the Hams Fork River valley, where the routes would create a visual impact where they are co-located on top of Commissary Ridge and where they cross the valley; (2) Within view of the Class 1 Sublette NHT on top of Dempsey, Tunp, Rock Creek & Stoffer Ridges, in Rock Creek Valley, and in Sublette Flats where the route would create a dominant visual impact where it crosses the ridges. Where structures are proposed in deeply incised valleys not dominantly visible from the trail, special design characteristics would not be required; and (3) Within view of three variants of Class 2 Sublette NHT in T. 23 N., R. 116 W., federal Sections 32 (all) and 33 (S½).

Decision #6054, Class 1 and 2 NHT Viewshed Preservation, requires preservation of the viewsheds within 3 miles of Class 1 segments in the Tunp/Dempsey Trail area and within 1 mile of Class 1 trail segments outside the Tunp/Dempsey area. The viewshed is protected within ½ mile of Class 2 trail segments west of U.S Highway 189 and south of U.S. Highway 30, and the viewshed for Class 2 trail segments outside of this area should be managed to protect the existing character of the landscape. Viewsheds for Class 3 trail segments are to be managed according to the VRM Class for the area. The Preferred Route would not meet these requirements and an amendment would be needed.

Proposed Amendment #4 for Segment 4 of the Preferred Route would amend Decision #6054 to add the following text:

Allow the Gateway West Project where it would otherwise be in conflict with the historic viewshed preservation management actions. Micrositing and mitigation measures will be implemented to minimize visual impacts to affected historic sites and trail segments.

Mitigation to be determined through the Section 106 process.

Special Management Areas

The Preferred Route would cross the Rock Creek/Tunp area of significant resource concern. This area currently restricts new ROWs and surface-disturbing activities to protect the natural and historic character of the area. Decision #7014 restricts all new ROWs in this area to existing disturbance zones as well as managing NHTs and sites to retain the existing character of the landscape such that developments do not dominate the settings. The Preferred Route would not meet these requirements and an amendment would be required.

Proposed Amendment #5 for Segment 4 of the Preferred Route would amend Decision #7014 to add the following text:

Allow the Gateway West Project where it would otherwise be in conflict with the management objectives of Decision 7014. Micrositing and mitigation measures will be required to minimize impact to affected areas and resources.

Mitigation: Where the route would be visible on timbered slopes, limit tree removal to those portions of the right-of-way where it is required for safety in order to avoid creating a linear feature on the landscape. Vegetation removal requirements will consider Appendix A, Key Standards Relating to Electric System Reliability and Safety, of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Edison Electric Institute (2006).

In specific sensitive areas (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHTs) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations designated.

Consider micrositing to place the transmission line behind topographic features to reduce visibility from sensitive areas, replacing insulators on the Bridger Powerlines with new ones made of non-reflective materials, and replacing conductors on the Bridger Powerlines using non-specular wire to minimize their visibility from KOPs in highly visible places. This mitigation measure would be implemented once the Project lines are operational. This mitigation measure would apply where the selected route is in conflict with NHT viewshed requirements.

Mitigation for sage-grouse will be determined by the USFWS. This may include measures such as: modifying fences within one mile of the transmission line with FireFly Grouse Flight diverters or other similar fence diverters to prevent sage-grouse mortalities and implementing site-specific reclamation such as transplanting sagebrush seedlings in sage-grouse habitat.

Additional mitigation to be determined through the Section 106 process.

3.4.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.7.2.2 and 3.7.2.3 for effects on special status plant species, Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status wildlife species; and Section 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

These amendments would impact the ability to meet the RMP objectives of preserving historic sites and viewsheds. The presence of a high-power transmission line within view of NHTs and historic sites would adversely affect visitor experiences and the historic character of the landscape. EPMS such as use of non-reflective materials (VIS-1, VIS-2, and VIS-9) and micrositing would aim to reduce the impact of the Project on trail users (VIS-6, VIS-7, and VIS-11). The transmission line would cross the NHT, and thus would impact the historic character of place at the crossing location. Mitigation and micrositing would be used to limit this impact (VIS-11); however, at the crossing location, Project components would be visible to users of the trail.

Allowing the Project to cross the Rock Creek/Tunp area of significant resource concern could have impacts on the resources this area was designated to protect. The presence of Project components could directly impact sage-grouse by disturbing habitat and mortality through collision with project structures. EPMS such as implementing site-specific reclamation for improving sage-grouse habitat and modifying fences with flight diverters would be implemented to reduce Project impacts to sage-grouse in these areas (TESWL-16). No guy wires would be used in occupied sagebrush obligate habitat (TESWL-11). Impacts to cultural and historic resources could be partly mitigated by micro-siting tower placement to minimize impacts to sensitive areas (VIS-11). Additional mitigations could include replacing insulators and conductors on the Bridger Powerline to reduce the current impacts of the existing powerline and thus mitigate for the additional impacts of an additional powerline in the same area. The Project components would be composed of non-reflective materials (VIS-1, VIS-2, and VIS-9).

Land clearance for ROWs would result in loss of forest cover, increased fragmentation and edge habitat; which would impact wildlife by changing the ratio of cover to open space. Loss of nesting and perching habitat would occur as well as cover from predators. These effects on wildlife are further discussed in Sections 3.10 and 3.11 of the Final EIS.

Maintaining VRM Class II provides protection from additional development. Future projects would be required to go through an amendment process.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.4.5 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

Portions of several Route Alternatives would not be in conformance with requirements of the Kemmerer RMP. The Decisions that would need to be amended are presented below, followed by the proposed language for the amended decision in italics.

NHT Protection

The following amendment to Decision #5010 – Heritage Resources would be needed to protect NHTs if Alternative 4F is approved:

Allow the Gateway West Project to cross the Sublette NHT in section 12, T. 23 N., R. 114 W. Place towers as far from the trail as feasible.

Mitigation for impacts to NHTs would be as discussed above in Section 3.4.3 of this appendix.

Visual Resource Management

The Kemmerer RMP Decisions 6051, 6053, and 6054 protect visual resources and determine visual management objectives for VRM Class II areas and Historic Trails and Places. These decisions would be rewritten to allow the development of this project.

Alternatives 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E, and 4F cross land mapped as VRM Class II. The transmission line would not be consistent with this VRM class.

The following amendments to Decision 6051 – VRM Class II Designations would be needed if one of these alternatives is approved:

Alternatives 4B, 4D: Reclassify the VRM Class designation to VRM Class III in the portion of the planning area south and west of U.S. Highway 30 (the highway) beginning on a north-south line along the high ridgeline approximately ¼ mile west of the current active coal leases (west of the town of Kemmerer); south along the high ridgeline to the ridgeline behind the active coal leases in Sec 25, T. 21 N., R. 117 W.; then west following the high points of the topography approximately 3 miles south of the highway to Sec 28, T. 21 N., R. 118 W.; then north-west following the high points of the topography within approximately 3 miles of the highway to Sec 18, T. 21 N., R. 118 W.; then north-west following the high points to within approximately ½ mile of the highway in Sec 12, T. 21 N., R. 118 W.; then west to the junction of U.S. Highway 30/State Highway 89.

Alternatives 4C, 4E: Reclassify the VRM Class designation to VRM Class III in the portion of the planning area south and west of U.S. Highway 30 (the highway) beginning on a north-south line along the high ridgeline approximately ¼ mile west of the current active coal leases (west of the town of Kemmerer); south along the high ridgeline to the ridgeline behind the active coal leases in Sec 25, T. 21 N., R. 117 W.; then west following the high points of the topography approximately 3 miles south of the highway to Sec 28, T. 21 N., R. 118 W.; then north-west following the high points of the topography within approximately 3 miles of the highway to Sec 18, T. 21 N., R. 118 W.; then north-west following the high points to within approximately ½ mile of the highway in Sec 12, T. 21 N., R. 118 W.; then west to the junction of U.S. Highway 30/State Highway 89. For routing north and east of Highway 30/State Highway 89, allow the Gateway West Project without changing the VRM class for areas affected by the route.

Alternative 4F: Allow the Gateway West Project without changing the VRM class for areas affected by the route.

Mitigation for impacts to visual resources would be as stated above in Section 3.4.3 of this appendix and as described below.

Mitigation for NHT crossings will be determined through the Section 106 process. These measures may include micro-siting to place the line behind topographic features, replacing insulators with new ones made of non-reflective materials, and replacing conductors using non-specular wire to reduce visibility from KOPs in highly visible places. This mitigation measure would be implemented once the Gateway West lines are operational. These mitigation measures would be especially pertinent where the new transmission line is visible from NHTs in the locations listed below (depending on the selected route).

Alternative 4F: (1) Within view of White Hill on Class 1 Sublette NHT on the west side of the Hams Fork River valley, where the Route 4F would create a visual impact where they are co-located on top of Commissary Ridge and where it crosses the valley; (2) Within view of the Class 1 Sublette NHT on top of Dempsey and Rock Creek Ridges and Tunp Range, and in Sublette Flats where the route would create a dominant visual impact where it crosses the ridges. Where structures are proposed in deeply incised valleys not dominantly visible from the trail, special design characteristics would not be required; (3) Within view of the Class 1 Dempsey-Hockaday NHT in Dempsey Basin where the route would create a dominant visual impact, especially at the crest of the Hams Fork Plateau; and (4) Within view of three variants of Class 2 Sublette NHT in T23N, R116W, federal Sections 32 (all) and 33 (S½), where co-located with the Proposed Route.

An amendment to Decision 6054 – Class 1 & 2 NHT Viewshed Preservation would be needed if Alternative 4F is approved. The necessary amendment and associated mitigation would be as described above in Section 3.4.3 of this appendix.

Special Management Areas

An amendment to Decision 7014 – Special Management Areas would be needed if Alternatives 4C or 4E are approved. The necessary amendment and associated mitigation would be the same as described for the Preferred Route in Section 3.4.3 of this appendix.

Effects

Alternatives requiring amendments that are the same as those for the Preferred Route would have effects as described above in Section 3.4.4 of this appendix. However, in areas where the VRM class is changed from Class II to Class III, an amendment would result in the area being managed at a lower protection level. Amending the RMP to lower the VRM classification may encourage additional development in the area. Future projects may be more likely to route through the reclassified area as it would have fewer management restrictions than Class II areas. This could further impact the scenic quality of the area, which is currently rated as medium and had a scenic quality of B in the Visual Resource Inventory. Viewshed analysis for the area indicates that the project would not be visible to most mapped historic trails, which are present to the north and south of the proposed reclassified areas for Alternative 4B through 4E.

Allowing the construction of the Project without changing the VRM class would affect the ability to meet VRM Class II management goals for the area. Locations where the Project would be allowed but the VRM classification left unchanged would result in visual impacts due to the Project, but provide protection from additional development. Future projects would be required to go through an amendment process regarding impacts to visual resources.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the Final EIS.

3.5 Pocatello RMP

Decisions recorded in the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b) guide actions that occur within its Planning Area on lands managed by the Pocatello FO. The Pocatello RMP replaces both the Malad MFP (1981) and Pocatello RMP (1988) and contains management for land-use activities including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA. The RMP prohibits new transmission line towers within 2 miles of occupied leks and protects scenic and cultural resources.

No amendment is needed for the Preferred/Proposed Route in Segment 4 or the Segment 4 Route Alternatives that cross the Pocatello FO. No amendment is needed for the Preferred Route for either Segment 7 or Segment 5 in the Pocatello FO; however, some Route Alternatives would impact scenic resources.

The Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b) states that new infrastructure, including major powerlines, will be placed at least 2.0 miles from occupied leks or other important sage-grouse habitats. The Preferred and Alternative Routes would be within 2 miles of occupied leks; thus, the Project would not conform to the RMP. The alignment for the Project was selected based on minimizing impacts to sage-grouse resources, and coincides with the WWE corridor. A Habitat Equivalency Analysis (HEA) was also conducted for this routing. Because analysis has shown that moving the route north or south would result in a larger impact to the sage-grouse resources, the BLM Pocatello FO has stated that the 2-mile lek restriction can be waived. A memo, signed by the manager, was submitted to the Administrative Record stating the above decision on September 5, 2012. The memo states that after conferring with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Pocatello FO believes the Preferred Route should be used. It references Action LR-6.1.5 of the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b), which encourages use of existing corridors, and Action FW – 1.18, which states that “The Authorized Officer may waive or adjust these restrictions when conditions warrant” and proceeds to waive the 2-mile lek avoidance for three leks that Rocky Mountain Power was concerned about. The memo discusses the fact that the Preferred Route would parallel an existing powerline. Because the alignment of the route has been planned to minimize impacts, and analysis has shown moving the route north or south would result in more adverse effects, this restriction has been waived and no amendment regarding sage-grouse leks would be required.

At the time the Draft EIS was published, the Malad MFP was the most current approved RMP and had a requirement under management objective L.2 stating: “Future major utilities will be routed across public lands within the corridor systems as located.” This

requirement would have applied to Segments 5 and 7 of the Preferred and Proposed Routes, as well as Alternatives 5A and 7A. This requirement is no longer in effect under the new Pocatello RMP. Therefore, an amendment would no longer be needed.

The Malad MFP, which was the current LUP at the time the Draft EIS was published, contained a management objective for Cultural Resources emphasizing the following:

“Establish a protective corridor of 330 feet on visible segments of the Hudspeth Cutoff Trail. Continue adequate stipulation on permits, leases etc. to protect the trail.”

This language is no longer contained within the LUP for the management area with the approval of the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b) and an amendment is no longer needed.

No amendments would be required for the Preferred Route. Amendments associated with the Route Alternatives are discussed below.

3.5.1 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Proposed Routes along Segments 4, 5 and 7 as well as Alternatives 4B, 4G, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, 5E, 7A, 7B, and 7K would cross through the Pocatello RMP Planning Area (however, Alternatives 4G, 5C, 5D, and 5E would not cross through BLM-administered lands within the Pocatello RMP planning area). The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Pocatello RMP. Several alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and the Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figures A-5, A-6, A-7, and A-9 of the Final EIS show the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segments 4, 5 and 7, respectively.

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route through the Pocatello Planning Area follows Segment 4 of the Proposed Route, Segment 5 of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 5B and 5E, as well as Segment 7 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 7B. The Preferred Route follows Alternatives 5B and 7B instead of the Proposed Route where the Proposed Route crosses the Deep Creek Mountains. The Preferred Route along Segment 4 includes one single-circuit 500-kV transmission line, approximately 67 miles of which is within the Pocatello RMP Planning Area between the Idaho/Wyoming border and the Populus Substation, approximately 6 miles crossing BLM-administered land. The Preferred Route along Segment 5 includes one single-circuit 500-kV transmission line (approximately 72 miles of which is within the Pocatello RMP Planning Area, approximately 14 miles crossing BLM-administered land) between the Populus Substation and the Borah Substation, located southwest of American Falls, Idaho. The Preferred Route along Segment 7 includes one single-circuit 500-kV transmission line (approximately 60 miles of which is within the Pocatello RMP Planning Area, 8 miles crossing BLM-managed land) between the Populus Substation and the Cedar Hills Substation near the county line between Cassia and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho.

Alternatives: Alternative 4B crosses through approximately 3 miles of BLM-administered lands within the Pocatello RMP. Segment 5 (54 miles) and Segment 7 (49 miles) of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 5A (10 miles), 7A (7 miles), and 7K (6

miles) cross through BLM-administered lands within the Pocatello RMP. The Proposed Route along Segment 5 enters lands managed by the Pocatello RMP west of Robin. This route proceeds in a westerly direction through the Deep Creek Mountains and then turns north towards Borah Substation. Alternative 5A is located roughly parallel to and south of the Proposed Route through the Deep Creek Mountains. These alternatives impact more private land but avoid high-quality forested habitat and VRM Class II lands.

The Proposed Route along Segment 7 parallels the Segment 5 Proposed Route from the eastern boundary of lands within the Malad Planning Area through the Deep Creek Mountains. The Segment 7 Proposed Route then continues in a westerly direction and leaves the Malad planning area between Rockland and Heglar's Canyon. Alternative 7A parallels Alternative 5A and the Segment 5 Preferred Route through the Deep Creek Mountains prior to turning in a northwesterly direction towards their interception with Proposed Route along Segment 7. Alternative 7K was proposed by the Southern Idaho Task Force to avoid private agricultural lands that would be impacted along the Proposed Route.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.5.2 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

No amendments are proposed for the Preferred Route or Route Alternatives for Segment 4, or for the Preferred Route in Segments 5 and 7, as has been discussed above. Land use plan amendments would be needed if the Segment 5 or 7 alternative routes, the Proposed Routes for Segment 5 or 7, are selected. The Segment 5 Proposed Route would cross 2 miles of VRM Class II and 2.8 miles of VRM Class III land and would not be consistent with the visual management goals for these parcels. The Segment 7 Proposed Route would cross 1.3 miles of VRM Class II and 2.9 miles of VRM Class III land and would not be consistent with the visual management goals for these parcels. The remaining alternatives located within the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b) boundary either are not located on BLM-administered lands or would not require a plan amendment. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

Approximately 54 miles of Segment 5 are within the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b) Planning Area, 11 miles of which cross BLM-managed land. Approximately 49 miles of Segment 7 is within the Pocatello RMP Planning Area, 7.5 miles of which cross BLM-managed land. Alternatives 5A (8.6 miles), 5B (8.8 miles), 7A (7.2 miles), 7B (7.7 miles), and 7K (6 miles) would all cross the BLM-managed lands of the Pocatello RMP. While Alternatives 5C, 5D, and 5E would cross this area as well, they would not cross through BLM-administered lands within the Pocatello RMP.

The location of the Proposed Route was identified to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These resources include, but are not limited to, TES species, sensitive lands, cultural resources, and visual resources.

Because the Project is not consistent with the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b), land use plan amendments would be needed if the Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7. Segment 5 crosses 2 miles of VRM Class II and 2.8 miles of VRM Class III land and would not be consistent with the visual management goals for these parcels. Segment 7 crosses 1.3 miles VRM II and 2.9 miles VRM Class III land and would not be consistent with the visual management goals for these parcels. The remaining alternatives located within the Pocatello RMP boundary are either not located on BLM-administered lands, or would not require a plan amendment. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Pocatello RMP management objectives for new utilities, on pages 43, 44, and 47 of the Approved Resource Management Plan, emphasize the following:

“Objective SS-1.3. Maintain or improve the quality of sensitive species habitat by managing public land activities to support species recovery and the benefit those species. (ARMP – 43)

Action SS-1.3.6. To the extent possible and to promote conservation, Greater sage-grouse habitat (Figure 4) will be managed consistent with the Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (IDFG 2006) or any future revisions/amendments and or current BLM guidance. Appropriate actions, conservation measures and guidelines that may be considered include, but are not limited to:

- New infrastructure facilities/structures (e.g., major power transmission lines, power distribution lines, communications towers, and temporary meteorological towers) requiring permanent surface occupancy will be sited in a manner that avoids sage-grouse habitat to the extent possible and will be placed at least 2.0 miles from occupied leks or other important sage-grouse seasonal habitats as identified locally. (ARMP – 47)”

The alignment for the Project was selected based on minimizing impacts to sage-grouse resources, and coincides with the WWE corridor. An HEA was also conducted for this routing. Because analysis has shown that moving the route north or south would result in a larger impact to the sage-grouse resources, the BLM Pocatello FO has stated that the 2-mile lek restriction can be waived. A memo, signed by the manager, was submitted to the Administrative Record stating the above decision on September 5, 2012. The memo states that after conferring with Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Pocatello FO believes the Preferred Route should be used. It references Action LR-6.1.5 of the Pocatello RMP (BLM 2012b), which encourages use of existing corridors, and Action FW – 1.18, which states that “The Authorized Officer may waive or adjust these restrictions when conditions warrant” and proceeds to waive the 2-mile lek avoidance for the three leks Rocky Mountain Power was concerned about. The memo discusses the fact that the preferred route would be paralleling an existing powerline.

At the time the Draft EIS was published, the Malad MFP was the most current approved RMP and had a requirement under management objective L.2 stating: “Future major utilities will be routed across public lands within the corridor systems as located.” This requirement would have applied to Segments 5 and 7 of the Proposed Route, as well as Alternatives 5A, 5B, 7A, and 7B. This requirement is no longer in effect under the new Pocatello RMP. Therefore, an amendment would no longer be needed for this. The Malad MFP also contained a management objective for Cultural Resources stating: “Establish a protective corridor of 330 feet on visible segments of the Hudspeth Cutoff Trail. Continue adequate stipulation on permits, leases etc. to protect the trail.” This language is no longer contained within the LUP for the management area with the approval of the Pocatello RMP and an amendment is no longer needed.

The Pocatello RMP management objective for Visual Resources emphasizes the following (ARMP page 53):

“Goal VR-1. Maintain scenic qualities consistent with the management of resources and uses.

Objective VR-1.1. Manage visual resources according to established guidelines for Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes.

Action VR-1.1.1. Public lands will continue to be managed according to the following

VRM class designations (Figure 6):

Class I - 11,200 acres

Class II - 78,600 acres

Class III - 221,000 acres

Class IV - 303,000 acres

Action VR-1.1.2. The visual resource contrast rating system will be used during project level planning to determine whether or not proposed activities meet VRM objectives.

Action VR-1.1.3. Mitigation measures will be identified to reduce visual contrasts with rehabilitation actions identified to address landscape modifications on a case-by-case basis.”

Segments 5 and 7 of the Proposed Route cross areas classified as VRM Class II and VRM Class III in the Deep Creek Mountains, where the Project would not conform to the VRM objectives of the Pocatello RMP. Segment 5 also crosses a VRM Class II parcel adjacent to the Snake River; however, analysis by showed that the area that would be crossed is inundated, and thus the Pocatello FO determined no amendment would be needed.

The amended RMP decision (changes in italics) for the ROW would read:

Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project without changing the VRM classification. Mitigation measures have been identified to reduce visual contrast and rehabilitation actions identified to address landscape modifications on a case-by-case basis (see Table 2.7-1 of the Final EIS for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project).

Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.7.2.2 and 3.7.2.3 for effects on special status plant species; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status wildlife species; and Section 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

The Proposed and Alternative Routes would cross big game crucial winter range for deer. A bald eagle nest would be within 1 mile of Segment 5 of the Proponents' Proposed Route. Steep terrain would mean a high risk of soil erosion during construction activities for portions of the route through this area. The Proponents' Proposed Route for Segment 5 would come within 1 mile of the Bowen Canyon Bald Eagle Sanctuary, resulting in the potential for indirect effects due to noise and dust disturbance. Stream crossings could result in increased risk of sedimentation in rivers during construction and extreme events which could affect spawning and rearing success for aquatic organisms downstream.

Amending the VRM classification to allow the Project would result in a disruption of the scenic quality in the parcels crossed. Views of the Deep Creek Mountains, the Snake River, and views from the Arbon Valley would all be affected by this amendment. The transmission line would be visible and in contrast to the scenic quality of the surrounding landscape. Recreational users at beaches and boating areas around American Falls Reservoir, and Massacre Rocks State Park would be affected due to additional human-made intrusions on scenic views (a large pipeline bridge crosses the river 200 yards east of the proposed transmission line crossing), while the presence of the transmission lines could affect the historic surroundings for visitors to the Oregon NHT.

While construction of a powerline without changing the VRM class would affect the ability to meet the RMP objectives, it would maintain existing restrictions on additional development. Future projects would be required to go through an amendment process and additional impacts would be analyzed.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the Final EIS.

3.6 Cassia RMP Amendment

The Cassia RMP, approved on January 24, 1985, guides actions that occur on lands managed by the Burley FO south of the Snake River in south-central Idaho. These actions include the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA. The RMP limits new ROW to existing facilities/localities within Management Area 11 (Cotterel Mountain). No amendment is needed for the Preferred Route, which incorporates Alternatives 7C, 7D, and 7G. The Proposed Route would cross the RMP Management area outside existing localities and therefore would not conform to the Cassia RMP. Amendments associated with Alternatives 7H, 7I, and 7J are no longer included because these Route Alternatives are no longer being considered.

3.6.1 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The transmission line would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross several parcels of BLM-managed land covered by the Cassia RMP. Several alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figure A-9 of the Final EIS shows the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segment 7.

Approximately 70 miles of Segment 7 of the Preferred Route (which includes Segment 7 of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 7D and 7G in this area) would be within the Cassia RMP Planning Area, 14 miles of which would cross BLM-managed land. Alternative 7E would cross approximately 1.9 miles of BLM-managed land. Approximately 62 miles of Alternative 7K would cross BLM-managed land within the Cassia RMP Planning Area. The Preferred Route and Route Alternatives 7E and 7K would cross through Management Areas designated by the Cassia RMP, including Management Areas 2 through 13.

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route through the Cassia RMP Planning Area follows the Proposed Route for Segment 7 and Alternatives 7C, 7D, and 7G. The Preferred Route includes a single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the Populus Substation and the proposed Cedar Hill Substation near the county line between Cassia and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho.

No east/west utility corridors cross the Cassia Planning Area. The Proposed Route would cross the eastern boundary of the Planning Area in Section 12, Township 10 South, Range 29 East and follow a generally westward route to the Cedar Hill Substation near the northwest corner of the Planning Area; however, the Alternative 7D alignment used by the Preferred Route would avoid Management Area 11 where new ROWs are limited to existing facilities/localities.

Alternatives: Alternative 7K would cross the eastern boundary of the Cassia Planning Area in Section 26, Township 13 South, Range 29 East and proceeds westward. Alternative 7K turns southwest in Section 36, Township 13 South, Range 27 East and then west before turning north in Section 17, Township 16 South, Range 22 East. The route would cross Goose Creek just south of Lower Goose Creek Reservoir and continues north just east of the Sawtooth National Forest (NF) boundary. The route enters the Sawtooth NF near the northwest corner of the Cassia Division and proceeds west for approximately 6 miles before again crossing into BLM-managed lands in the Cassia Planning Area. The route continues northwest until it rejoins the Preferred Route at the proposed Cedar Hill Substation. Alternative 7E is a 4.5-mile alternative to a portion of Segment 7 of the Preferred Route in the Water Canyon area. Segment 7 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 7F are also variations to portions of the Preferred Route.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required.

The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.6.2 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

Because Segment 7 of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 7E and 7K are not in conformance with the direction provided in the Cassia RMP, the plan would need to be amended if any of these routes are selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Cassia RMP limits ROWs to existing facilities and locations within Management Area 11. The Cassia RMP management direction for Management Area 11 (which encompasses the Cotterel Mountain range) includes the following:

“Limit rights-of-way (ROWs) to existing facilities/localities;”

The Proposed Route, as currently designed, is not in conformance with the ROW management direction discussed above. An amendment would be needed to modify the management direction, such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would conform to the Cassia RMP.

Route Alternatives to the Preferred Route would require amendments to the Cassia RMP where they do not conform to management objectives for visual resources and management directs restricting ROWs to existing corridors.

This limitation would need to be amended to allow development of this Project ROW located within Management Area 11. The amended decision would read (changes in italics_):

“Limit rights-of-way to existing facilities/localities; *allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project.*”

The Cassia RMP management direction for Management Areas 3, 4, and 12 includes the following management objective:

“Consideration of scenic values will be included in the analysis of all activities involving alteration of the natural character of the landscape. The degree of alteration allowed is determined through an inventory process which results in the classification of all public lands into one of five Visual Resource Management classes, each class allowing for a different degree of modification.”

The Project would not be in conformance with VRM objectives if either Alternative 7E or 7K is selected. Alternative 7E would cross an isolated parcel managed as VRM Class II, and VRM Class II and III areas within the Goose Creek Area would be crossed by Alternative 7K.

The Cassia RMP management direction for Management Area 11 includes the following objective:

“Preserve scenic values in the Goose Creek Travel Zone (within 0.5 mile of the Goose Creek Road between Wilson Pass and the Utah border.”

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to 1) modify the ROW restriction in Management Area 11, 2) modify limitations for the Goose Creek scenic area, and 3) change the visual resource classification for areas associated with the transmission line. These modifications would allow the Project to conform to the Cassia RMP.

Alternative 7K, if selected, would require a plan amendment allowing the Project to cross the Goose Creek area. A one-time allowance without changing the VRM class is recommended. The transmission line would not be in conformance with the VRM Class II designation. The proposed amendment (changes in italics) would read:

“The Gateway West Transmission Line Project will be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classifications.”

If either Alternative 7E or 7K is selected, plan amendments to the Cassia RMP would be needed. The Cassia RMP protects visual resources. These protections would be rewritten to allow the development of this Project. Alternative 7E would cross land mapped as VRM Class II and Alternative 7K would cross land mapped as VRM Class III. The amended VRM decision would read (new language in italics):

For Alternative 7K, which would affect the area discussed in Appendix G-1 as AOI CA-2:

“VRM classes are designated as shown in the Cassia RMP; however, areas associated with the Gateway West Transmission Line Project will be reclassified as follows: 1,381 acres Cottonwood Creek area from VRM III to VRM IV.”

For Alternative 7E, which would affect the area discussed in Appendix G-1 as AOI CA-3:

“VRM classes are designated as shown in the Cassia RMP; however, areas associated with the Gateway West Transmission Line Project will be reclassified as follows: 39 acres in the Spring Canyon area from VRM II to VRM III.”

Both Alternatives 7E and 7K would cross land managed under the Cassia RMP where it would not conform to the management direction limiting ROWs to existing facilities/localities. The amended RMP decision that would be associated with the selection of either Alternative 7E or Alternative 7K (changes in italics) for the ROW located within Management Area 11 would read:

“Limit rights-of-way to existing facilities/localities; allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project.”

Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

If the amendment associated with the Proposed Route is approved, other transmission lines proposed for this general area could choose to follow this same route; however, any additional transmission lines would be required to go through the amendment

process for this RMP direction because the amendment only applies to the proposed Project. The amendment allowing a new ROW outside the existing corridors could result in cumulative impacts from future development, such as additional impacts on visual, wildlife, plant, cultural, and vegetation resources.

Changing the VRM classes would have direct impacts on the visual resources. If Alternative 7E or 7K is selected, and the proposed amendments to the RMP are approved, other transmission lines proposed for this general area could choose to follow this same route. These additional lines could be located adjacent to the Project without requiring additional visual amendments to the RMP, if approved through the NEPA process. This could result in cumulative effects to resources in addition to the effects of the Project itself.

The amendment in the Goose Creek area would have a visually altering effect on the scenic and historic experience of viewers. Micrositing could be used to limit this impact and towers would be constructed outside the 660-foot buffer around the historic trail. However, the scenic qualities of mountain ranges and wide expanses would be interrupted by the transmission line, were the amendment approved. This would also be the case for the Spring Canyon, and Cottonwood Creek areas.

Alternative 7K would cross mule deer winter range (see Section 3.10 of the EIS). There are also leks located along the Route Alternatives (see Section 3.11 of the EIS).

The crossing of steep slopes and highly erodible soils by these alternative routes may also result in effects to the existing environment. Construction activities such as culvert installation for stream crossing, road building, and tower installation have the potential to result in soil loss. Mitigation measures and best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to reduce erosion and sedimentation impacts. Specific EPMs for this Project include routine and corrective operations and maintenance activities in streams with sensitive fish species such as culvert installation, bank stabilization, and ford location throughout the year (OM-16). Culverts on BLM-administered land will be designed to meet BLM Gold Book Standards (FISH-1). Riparian vegetation management will be conducted following EPMs such as OM-17, OM-19, and OM-20. In addition, water quality EPMs such as meeting National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements (WQA-1, WQA-2, and WQA-3) and following Stormwater Pollution Protection Plans (SWPPPs) and BMPs (WQA-4 through WQA-12) will avoid and minimize impacts to water resources.

There are known raptor nests within 1 mile of the Proposed Route and Route Alternatives for Segment 7. Amending the RMP is needed for the Project to be built with these alignments; therefore, impacts to these resources would only occur if the plan amendment were approved. Alternative 7K impacts a high number of raptor nests. Impacts from the Project could include nest abandonment and loss of young as well as decreased hunting and breeding success. The creation of edge habitat could also increase foraging habitat for species preferring edge habitat for hunting. All reasonable measures will be taken to avoid and limit negative impacts. These measures include conducting pre-construction and aerial surveys (WILD-8), annual documentation of nesting activity on Project towers (WILD-12), avoiding vegetation clearing during the breeding season and leaving any areas with active nests undisturbed until the young

have fledged (WILD-9), maintaining snags where practical at the edges of the corridor (WILD-10), and additional mitigation measures as detailed in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

Additional mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.7 Twin Falls MFP Amendment

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Burley FO within the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA and VRM Class management, are guided by decisions recorded in the Twin Falls MFP approved in 1982 and the 1989 Salmon Falls Creek ACEC designation amendment. The MFP does not permit powerlines to the east or west of the two corridors, and the 1989 amendment restricts activities within the designated Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. Segment 9 of the Preferred Route and Alternative 9A would not conform to the Twin Falls MFP.

The Preferred Route 9 would cross the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC and eligible Wild and Scenic River (WSR).

No amendment for this area was proposed in the Draft EIS because it was thought that crossing the WSR at the proposed location would not be consistent with WSR management goals. An alternative crossing of the river (Alternative 9C) would avoid the eligible WSR and the ACEC. The alignment for Segment 9 was adjusted to cross just north of the road crossing at Lilly Grade and adjacent to an existing distribution line. The Burley FO has stated that the WSR classification at this location is “Recreational” and that this crossing would not have a negative effect on the outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) for that classification. Amendments for crossing the ACEC and VRM Class II lands are therefore provided in the Final EIS.

An amendment to the VRM decisions permitting the Project without reclassifying the VRM class would be needed if Segment 9 of the Preferred Route is selected. Additionally, amendments to the ACEC restrictions permitting the crossing of the ACEC and to the MFP to construct a transmission line outside of existing corridors would be needed.

3.7.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Twin Falls MFP

The Project’s Preferred Route 9 and Route Alternatives 9A and 9B would cross through areas managed by the Twin Falls MFP. The route locations were selected to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These include, but are not limited to, TES species, sensitive lands, cultural resources, and visual resources.

The Project would not conform to the Twin Falls MFP and land use plan amendments would be needed if the Segment 9 Preferred Route or Alternative 9A is selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Twin Falls MFP restricts future major power transmission lines to the corridors designated in the MFP. Connecting lines between these corridors are permitted,

however major powerlines to the east and west are not. The Twin Falls MFP L-4 decision for Lands emphasizes the following:

“L-4.1 Allow future major power transmission lines (line of at least 46-138 kV which originate and terminate outside of the MFP area) to be constructed within the recommended corridors. Also allow construction of transmission lines between the corridors. Do not permit power lines to the west or the east of the two corridors. Exempt service lines from restriction.”

The Gateway West Transmission Line Project would not be within the designated corridors and would cross the MFP from east to west.

Amendment #6 would allow the Project outside of the two existing corridors.

The Twin Falls MFP Amendment in 1989 designating the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC prohibits the utilities from crossing of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. The 1989 Plan Amendment to the Twin Falls MFP regarding the establishment of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC states the following:

“2. The ACEC is subject to the following resource management restrictions: (1) exclude livestock grazing, (2) avoid all utility rights-of-way, (3) close to agricultural entry, (4) close to all motorized vehicle use, and (5) prohibit mechanized fire suppression equipment.”

The 1989 amendment also states that management of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC in the Twin Falls Resource Area would be the same as for the Jarbidge Resource Area.

Amendment #7 would allow the Project to cross the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC.

The Twin Falls MFP direction for Visual Resources emphasizes the following:

“VRM 1.1 Manage Salmon Falls Canyon between the Salmon Falls Dam and Lilly Grade for natural ecological change in accordance with a VRM Class I designation. This designation would include only the area from rim to rim. Manage the canyon from Lilly Grade to Balanced Rock under a VRM Class II designation.

VRM-1.2 Designate 12,695 acres as VRM Class II. This Class requires management activities to be designated and located to blend into the natural landscape and not to be visually apparent to the casual visitor. The following resource management guidelines shall apply:

- 1) Range Management – Juniper and sagebrush removal must be made to simulate adjacent natural openings. Fences, water developments, etc., would require construction with mostly hand tools and be of natural materials. No red fence posts allowed.
- 2) Structures – Structures must incorporate the natural lines, colors, and materials of the natural landscape, skylined structures would be prohibited.
- 3) Roads – Required roads must be concealed by vegetation, follow natural landforms, and be seeded as soon as possible. Overland “roads” may be necessary in some areas to protect the scenic values. Cut and fill

areas that exceed 5 feet will generally not be accepted unless the fill can be replaced and vegetation established in 2 years.”

“VRM-1.3 Designate 32,819 acres as VRM Class III. (see overlay D.5). This class provides the management activities may be evident to the casual visitor; however, the activity should remain subordinate to the visual strength and natural character of the landscape.”

Amendment #7 would allow the Project to cross VRM Class II lands.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to modify the ROW, visual resource management designations, and ACEC restrictions such that the Project would be consistent with the Twin Falls MFP. Figure 3.7-1 shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the Twin Falls MFP and where Amendments #6 and #7 would apply.

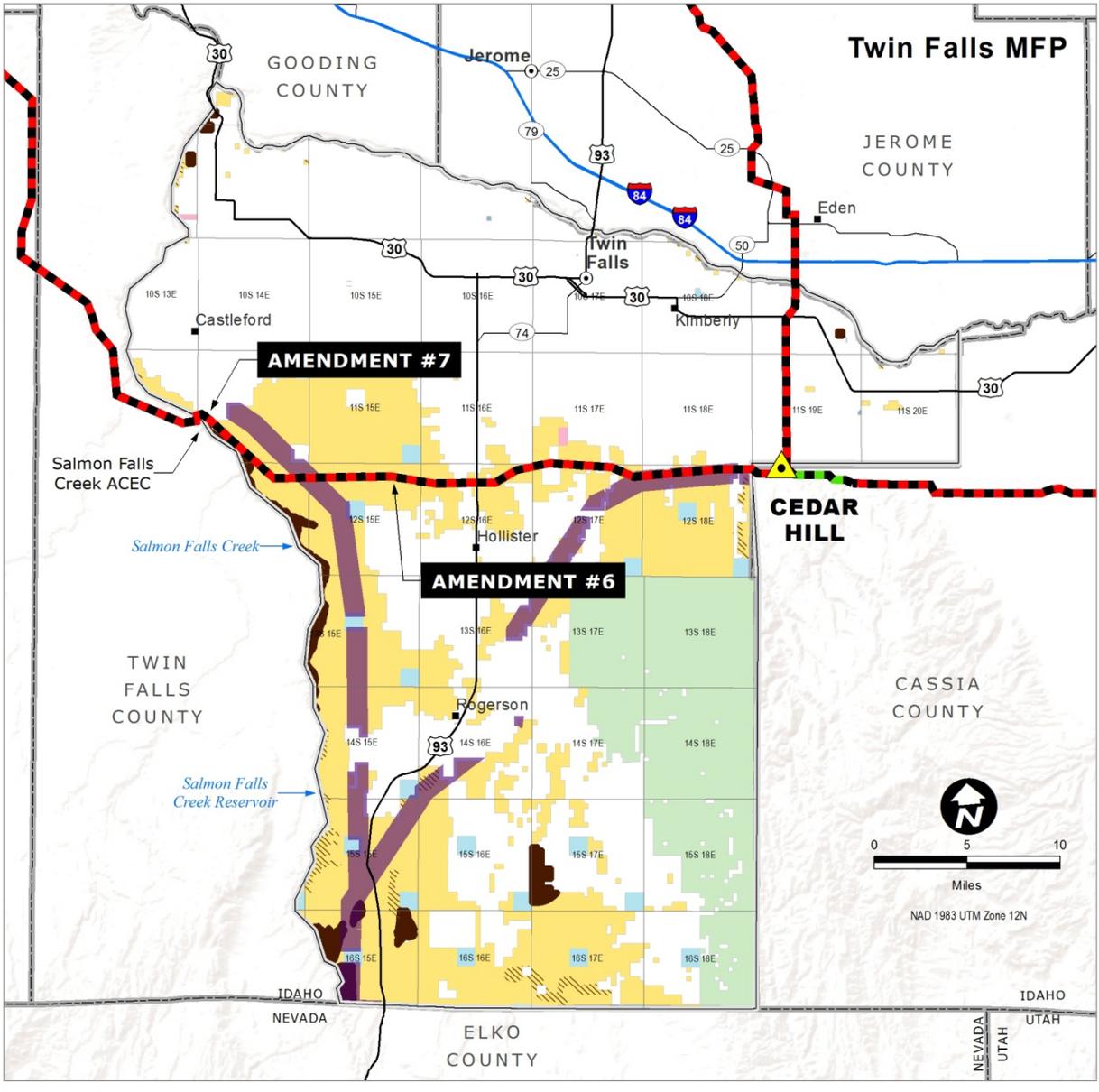
3.7.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Segment 9 Preferred Route and Alternatives 9A, 9B, and 9C would cross through the areas managed under the Twin Falls MFP. Segment 10 of the Preferred Route would also cross through areas managed under the Twin Falls MFP, although this route is not on BLM-managed land. The Segment 9 Preferred Route includes the Proponents’ Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Alternative 9E. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Twin Falls MFP. Several additional alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figure A-11 of the Final EIS shows the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives in Segment 9.

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route through the Twin Falls Planning Area would follow the Proposed Route for Segments 9 and 10. The Segment 9 Preferred Route enters lands managed by the Twin Falls MFP west of Cedar Hill. The route proceeds in a westerly direction and then turns north, paralleling Salmon Falls Creek, which the route would cross as it leaves the Twin Falls Planning Area. The Segment 9 Preferred Route would cross the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC.

Alternatives: Alternative 9A is a 7.7-mile-long route that is located 2 miles south of Hub Butte. It was the Proposed Route but was changed to a feasible alternative route due to concerns regarding agriculture and dairies. Alternative 9B is a 53.2-mile-long route that diverges from the Preferred Route about 5 miles south of Castleford and rejoins west of the Twin Falls Planning Area. This alternative parallels the route and was identified based on the presence of a nearby WWE corridor and existing utility corridors. Alternative 9C leaves the Preferred Route on the east side of the river and rejoins it on the west side of the river. Alternative 9C avoids crossing the ACEC.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required.



Enlarged Area Above



Figure 3.7-1. Preferred Route and Twin Falls RMP Planning Area

The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.7.3 Proposed Plan Amendment to the Twin Falls MFP

The Segment 9 Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the Twin Falls MFP for granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed by the Burley FO. The Twin Falls MFP allows new utilities to be constructed in existing corridors and protects visual resources. These MFP decisions would be rewritten to allow development of this Project.

Proposed Amendment #6 for Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would rewrite the "Land 4.1" decision to allow the development of this Project (changes in italics):

"Allow future major power transmission lines (line of at least 46-138 kV which originate and terminate outside of the MFP area) to be constructed within the recommended corridors. Also allow construction of transmission lines between the corridors. Do not permit power lines to the west or the east of the two corridors. Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line ROW outside existing corridors. Exempt service lines from restriction."

The Segment 9 Preferred Route would require an amendment to the Twin Falls MFP VRM classification and Amendment (1989) regarding the establishment of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. This amendment would apply to the Jarbidge RMP and the Twin Falls MFP as a result of the 1989 amendment requiring the Twin Falls portion of the ACEC be managed according to the Jarbidge RMP.

Proposed Amendment #7 for Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would amend the VRM direction:

"Allow the Gateway West Project without changing the VRM classification in the VRM class II designated area near Salmon Falls Creek."

Amendment #7 would also amend the Twin Falls MFP and 1989 Plan Amendment regarding the management of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC:

"Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project to cross Salmon Falls canyon through the ACEC. Tower location and crossing alignment will be sited to minimize visual intrusion."

3.7.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

Allowing the transmission line to cross outside of the designated corridors will extend the impacts of transmission lines in an east-west direction. The rationale for the existing

decision is that “utility corridors serve to accommodate major powerlines in a designated route which minimizes environmental construction and provides a feasible, economical route for power transmission.” There is concern about major transmission lines causing serious adverse environmental impacts in the Foothills area, the Shoshone Basin, and along Salmon Falls Creek. EPMs such as OM-21 through OM-23 will monitor occurrence of sensitive plant and animal species within the ROW and provide actions to modify project actions as agreed to with Agency personnel.

The Segment 9 Preferred Route crosses the Planning Area in an east-west direction. The east-west route crosses mule deer range and near raptor nests. The transmission line construction and operation would impact vegetation and soils as well as wildlife. Impacts include soil compaction and erosion, potential weed spread and introduction, removal of native vegetation, disturbance to wildlife due to habitat fragmentation, behavioral avoidance of structures and roads, and dust and noise disturbance disrupting breeding and rearing. BMPs and EPMs such as WILD-2 (which restricts vehicular speeds and locations on project roads), VEG-1 (minimizing native plant disturbance), as well as SOIL and WQA EPMs will reduce impacts to these resources.

Allowing structures that would otherwise not conform to the VRM Class II designated land north of Lilly Grade would result in a disruption of the scenic view of the adjacent landscape. Views from the canyon and approaching the canyon where the transmission line would cross would be interrupted by towers and cables (see Appendix G-1 for visual analysis). EPMs such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-8 and VIS-11) will be used to reduce visual impacts.

An amendment allowing the crossing of the ACEC would retain the restrictions for future utility crossings of the Salmon Falls Creek canyon. Surface disturbance EPMs, such as SOIL-4, vegetation EPMs such as VEG-1 and VEG-4, and wildlife EPMs such as WILD-3, will aim to minimize impacts to the resources in the area.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.7.5 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

Alternatives 9A, 9B, and 9C would also cross land managed under the Twin Falls MFP. Alternative 9A would cross the management area outside of existing corridors and would be associated with a plan amendment to the Twin Falls MFP “Land 4.1” as described above in Section 3.7.3 above. The existing direction in the MFP states:

“L-4.1 Allow future major power transmission lines (line of at least 46-138 kV which originate and terminate outside of the MFP area) to be constructed within the recommended corridors. Also allow construction of transmission lines between the corridors. Do not permit power lines to the west or the east of the two corridors. Exempt service lines from restriction.”

The amended MFP decision (changes in italics) would read:

“Allow future major power transmission lines (line of at least 46-138 kV which originate and terminate outside of the MFP area) to be constructed within the

recommended corridors. Also allow construction of transmission lines between the corridors. Do not permit power lines to the west or the east of the two corridors. *Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project outside existing corridors. Exempt service lines from restriction.*”

Similar to the Preferred Route, Alternative 9A would cross the Planning Area in an east-west direction. Impacts are similar to those discussed above in Section 3.7.4 above.

Amendments associated with Alternatives 7I and 7J are no longer included because these routes are no longer being considered.

3.8 Jarbidge RMP Amendment

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Jarbidge FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Jarbidge RMP approved on March 23, 1987, and the Jarbidge RMP Amendment approved in 1989. The RMP designates utility avoidance/restricted areas for cultural features, designates VRM Class I and II areas, and establishes an ACEC along Salmon Falls Creek. The proposed Project would not conform to these requirements in the Jarbidge RMP.

The 1989 Amendment to the Jarbidge RMP designated the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. This 1989 amendment states that management of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC in Jarbidge Resource Area would continue as stated in the Jarbidge RMP which emphasizes no utilities development above or below ground in the ACEC.

No amendment for this area was proposed in the Draft EIS as it was thought that crossing the WSR at the proposed location would not be consistent with WSR management goals. The alignment for Segment 9 was adjusted to cross just north of the road crossing at Lilly Grade and adjacent to an existing distribution line. The Burley FO has stated that the WSR classification at this location is “Recreational” and that this crossing would not have a negative effect on the ORVs for that classification. Amendments for crossing the ACEC and VRM Class II lands are therefore provided in this Final EIS.

An alternative crossing of the river (Alternative 9C) avoids the eligible WSR and the ACEC.

3.8.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Jarbidge RMP

The Project’s Preferred Route and Route Alternatives would cross through the Jarbidge Management Area. The Jarbidge RMP includes management objectives for many resources including lands, minerals, range management, watershed, wildlife, visual, cultural, recreation, and transportation support. The RMP decisions that are proposed to be amended relate to cultural and visual resources. The route locations for the Project were developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible.

The Project is not in conformance with the direction provided in the Jarbidge RMP; thus, amendments to the land use plan would be needed for Segments 8 and 9 of the Preferred Route or Alternatives 8A, 9B, or 9D/9G, if selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan. The Preferred Route for Segment 8 would cross MUA-3 where utilities are restricted. Amendment #8 would allow the Project to cross this area.

The following section is a requirement in the Jarbidge RMP for any activities conducted and/or authorized by the BLM in MUA-3:

“MUA-3 Utility avoidance/restricted area – three Paleontological areas (Sugar Bowl, Glenns Ferry, & McGinnis Ranch) and Oregon Trail ruts (7,200 acres/22.5 miles) to overhead and surface disturbance and underground utilities.” (Jarbidge RMP 11-19)

The Jarbidge MUA-14 Salmon Falls Creek includes management for Salmon Falls Creek from rim to rim as an SRMA and Outstanding Natural Area. The 1989 Amendment to the Jarbidge RMP designated this area as Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. Management requirements within this Amendment formalize the requirements in the RMP for the SRMA management and add ACEC to the Special Designations throughout the RMP:

“Protect the Salmon Falls Creek Canyon (rim-to-rim) for its natural and scenic values through special designation and management.”

“C) Lands

1. Utility avoidance/restricted area – entire canyon – 2,947 acres (overhead, surface, underground).”

“I) Special Designations

Salmon Falls Creek & Canyon – SRMA, Outstanding Natural Area, ACEC – 2,947 acres/30 miles.”

The Decision Record/Rationale for the 1989 Amendment designating the ACEC states that “the intent of the amendment is to continue existing multiple use management on the areas outside Salmon Falls Creek Canyon, while protecting the ACEC from visual intrusions or obviously incompatible uses on the areas adjacent to the Canyon.” Amendment #9 addresses this nonconformance with the Jarbidge RMP and 1989 Amendment.

Segments 8 and 9 of the Preferred Route would cross areas managed for VRM Class II objectives. The following VRM direction under General Management Guidelines in the Jarbidge RMP applies:

“Visual Resource Management – The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400. VRM Classes will be managed as shown on Map 9.” (Jarbidge RMP 11-4)

The VRM Class II areas crossed by the Preferred Route for Segment 9 include 4 miles of VRM Class II land adjacent to Salmon Falls Creek Canyon. The canyon itself is also managed as an ACEC, Outstanding Natural Area, and SRMA. A powerline would not conform to the VRM objectives of Class II designation (see Appendix G-1, Section 5.8.1 for the visual analysis). Amendment #10 addresses this nonconformance with the Jarbidge RMP visual resource requirements.

The Jarbidge RMP discusses requirements for areas listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would be within 0.5 mile of these resources. The route would cross the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road in three locations; however, only one location would be on BLM-managed land. A second crossing would be within 0.5 mile of BLM-managed land, but this management restriction for land near trails only applies where trail crossings occur on BLM-managed land. Amendment #11 addresses the nonconformance with the management direction in the Jarbidge RMP. The following section is a requirement in the Jarbidge RMP for any activities conducted and/or authorized by the BLM:

“The existing ruts of the main route, north and south alternate routes of the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road will be protected by not allowing incompatible uses to occur within ½ mile corridor through which these routes pass.” (Jarbidge RMP 11-90)

Segment 9 would also cross VRM Class II land near Saylor Creek and, while within the WWE corridor, would not conform to the management objectives of VRM Class II designation (see Appendix G-1, Section 5.8.2 for the visual analysis). Amendment #12 addresses this nonconformance.

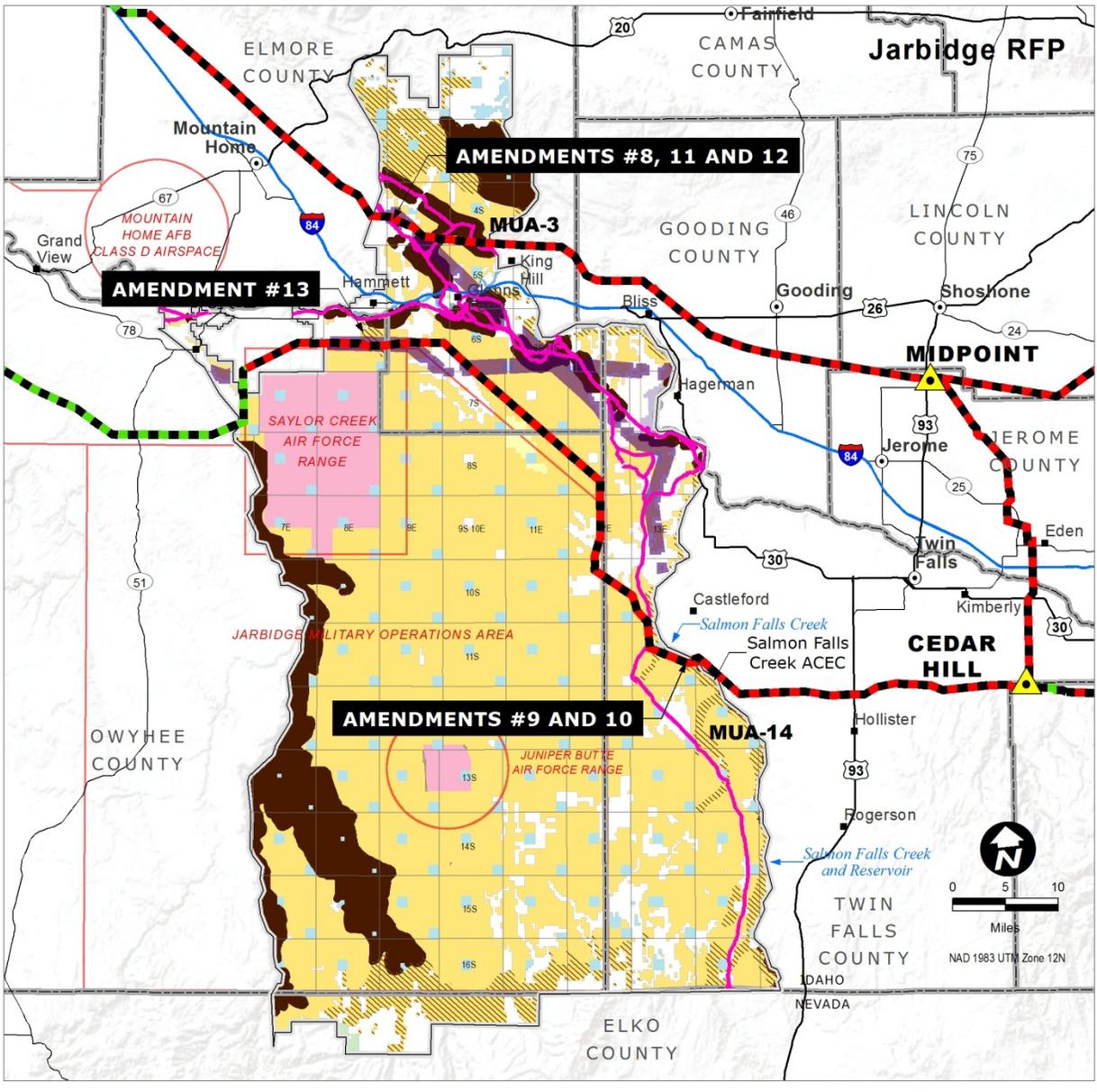
Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would cross VRM Class I areas designated around the NHTs and would not conform to the VRM objectives in this area (see Appendix G-1, Section 5.8.5, for the visual analysis). Amendment #13 addresses this nonconformance.

An area north of the Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument that would be crossed by the Project was incorrectly mapped as VRM Class II in the RMP. It is actually VRM Class III.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to modify RMP decisions regarding visual resource, utility avoidance areas, special designations, and cultural resources such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would be in conformance with the Jarbidge RMP. Figure 3.8-1 shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the Jarbidge RMP and where Amendments #8 through #13 would apply.

3.8.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Segments 8 and 9 Preferred Route and Alternatives 8A, 9B, 9C, and 9D/9G would cross through lands managed under the Jarbidge RMP. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Jarbidge RMP. Several alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and the Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figures A-10 and A-11 of the Final EIS show the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segments 8 and 9, respectively.



Enlarged Area Above



Figure 3.8-1. Preferred Route and Jarbidge RMP Planning Area

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route through the Jarbidge Planning Area follows the Proposed Route for Segments 8 and 9, and Alternative 9E. The Segment 8 Preferred Route includes one 132.0-mile-long single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Midpoint Substation near the county line between Jerome and Lincoln Counties in Idaho and the proposed Hemingway Substation, located about 30 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho. The Segment 9 Preferred Route includes one 171.4-mile-long single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Cedar Hill Substation near the county line between Cassia and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho and the Hemingway Substation. The Preferred Route leaves the Proposed Route near Bruneau, Idaho, to follow the Alternative 9E alignment, heading south, and then parallels the Proposed Route to the northwest.

Segment 8 of the Preferred Route enters the Jarbidge Planning Area west of King Hill and continues in a westerly direction where it leaves the Jarbidge Planning Area east of the Hot Springs Reservoir. Segment 8 is within the Planning Area for approximately 12 miles, 6.4 of which are located on BLM-managed land.

The Segment 9 Preferred Route enters the Jarbidge Management Area at Salmon Falls Creek in an ACEC just north of Lilly Grade. The Preferred Route follows a northwesterly direction and leaves the Jarbidge Planning Area at Indian Cove. Approximately 57 miles (53 miles on BLM-managed land) of Segment 9 would be within in the Planning Area.

Alternatives: Alternative 8A enters the Jarbidge Planning Area near Hagerman and intersects the Proposed Route within lands managed by the Jarbidge RMP. Alternative 8A is within or parallel to a WWE corridor. Alternative 8A is within the Planning Area for approximately 29 miles, 16.7 miles of which are located on BLM-managed land.

Alternative 9B is a 53.2-mile-long segment, located between Castleford and the Owyhee/Elmore County Line. The route using Alternative 9B is several miles longer than the Preferred Route; however, it follows an adjacent WWE corridor. Alternative 9C, a 14.4-mile-long segment, leaves the Preferred Route on the east side of the river within the Twin Falls MFP area and rejoins it on the west side of the river. Alternative 9C was the Proposed Route but was changed to an alternative due to agricultural concerns. Nearly all of 9C is within the Jarbidge RMP area. Alternative 9C avoids crossing the eligible WSR and the ACEC. Alternatives 9D and 9G share the same alignment in this area. Alternative 9D/9G leaves the Preferred Route near Bruneau, Idaho, heading northwest for about 6 miles before intercepting the C.J. Strike Reservoir, formed at the junction of the Bruneau River and the Snake River. Approximately 43 miles of Alternative 9B (24 on BLM-managed land), 6 miles of Alternative 9C (3.6 on BLM-managed land), 2.8 miles of 9D/G (2.4 miles on BLM-managed land) would be within the Jarbidge RMP Planning Area.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind

energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.8.3 Proposed Plan Amendment to the Jarbidge RMP

Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would require an amendment where it crosses a utility avoidance area. The Jarbidge RMP shows locations for utility avoidance/restricted areas.

Proposed Amendment #8 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the Lands decision and would read:

“The current Lands decision is amended to reclassify the area identified as restricted in Section 35, T. 04 S., R. 09 E. to ‘avoidance’ in order to accommodate a 500kV powerline right of way.”

The Segment 9 Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the Jarbidge RMP, if selected, for crossing the ACEC. The existing management direction in MUA-14 in the Amended Jarbidge RMP protects the canyon through special designation and management by managing it as a utility avoidance/restricted area and designating it as an SRMA and Outstanding Natural Area. The 1989 Plan Amendment also designates it as an ACEC.

Proposed Amendment #9 for Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would amend the MUA-14 management direction and 1989 Plan amendment and would read:

“Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project to cross the canyon and Special Designation Areas (including the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC, SRMA, and ONA). Tower locations and crossing alignment will be sited to minimize visual intrusion.”

The Segment 9 Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the Jarbidge RMP, if selected, to cross VRM Class II area west of Salmon Falls Creek.

Proposed Amendment #10 for Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would amend the VRM management and would read:

“Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project to cross VRM II classified land across Salmon Falls Creek and from Lilly Grade, northwest, paralleling the canyon for approximately 4 miles.”

The Segment 8 Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the Jarbidge RMP if it was selected to address cultural resources.

Proposed Amendment #11 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the Cultural Resources direction and would read:

*“The existing ruts of the main route, north and south alternate routes of the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road will be protected by not allowing incompatible uses to occur within 0.5 mile corridor through which these routes pass, *except where the Gateway West Transmission Line Project crosses the trail, where no surface disturbance will be allowed within 330 feet of the trail.*”*

Preferred Route 8 would cross VRM Class I land associated with the Oregon NHT. Visual resources are managed according to Map 9 in the Jarbidge RMP. A powerline would not conform to VRM I objectives, an amendment would be needed.

Proposed Amendment #12 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the VRM management and would read:

“The VRM decision and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. Approximately 5,200 acres of VRM Class I area associated with the Oregon Trail is Re-classified to VRM Class III.”

Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the Jarbidge RMP, if selected, where it crosses VRM Class II land within the WWE corridor.

Segment 9 crosses 1.7 miles of VRM Class II within the WWE corridor

Proposed Amendment #13 for Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would amend the VRM management and would read:

“The area within the WWE Corridor will be reclassified as VRM III.”

3.8.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Section 3.11.2.2 for effects on special status species; and Section 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

Reclassifying the area within the WWE corridor to VRM Class III would allow development within this corridor to conform to the RMP. VRM Class I lands within the WWE corridor crossed by Segments 8 and 9 of the Preferred Route would affect Oregon Trail users. Building a transmission line across the trail would detract from the historical sense-of-place. Reclassifying the area around Saylor Creek, currently designated as VRM Class II, would allow the transmission line to span the canyon. The transmission line would be highly visible to sensitive viewers and draw the attention of the casual observer from over a mile away. This change in setting would adversely affect the recreational experience. EPMs such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-7) will reduce, though not avoid, these visual impacts.

Changing the restricted area designation around important paleontological sites may impact the fossil resources of the area. While construction disturbance activities could result in the discovery of isolated fossil specimens, the scientific information provided by fossils is maximized by discovery of fossil specimens preserved in place within the host geologic formations, and construction techniques are more likely to damage specimens than discover them. The change in designation could lead to additional development of the corridor, extending the impacts beyond the effects of the Project. Mitigation measures to reduce effects to these resources include surveys in potential fossil yield areas (PALEO-5), altering surface-disturbing activities and schedules if resources are

discovered (PALEO-1) as well as ensuring appropriate management is applied where relevant (PALEO-2 and PALEO-3), and development and following of a Paleontological Resources Preservation Plan (PALEO-4). Additionally, mitigation measures associated with cultural resources (CR-1 through CR-8) will minimize disturbance to cultural resources such as NHTs in the affected area.

In areas where the VRM class is changed from Class I or II to Class III, an amendment would result in the area being managed at a lower protection level. EPMS such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-7 and VIS-11) will be used to reduce visual impacts. Amending the RMP to lower the VRM classification may encourage additional development in these areas, which would further impact the visual resources, beyond the Project actions.

An amendment allowing the crossing of the ACEC would retain the restrictions for future utility crossings of the Salmon Falls Creek canyon. Surface disturbance EPMS, such as SOIL-4, vegetation EPMS such as VEG-1 and VEG-4, and wildlife EPMS such as WILD-3, will aim to minimize impacts to the resources in the area.

Allowing the transmission line to cross the ACEC without changing the VRM Class II designation would result in visual disruption of the surrounding landscape that would be visible approaching the canyon and to some degree from within the canyon when looking up from beneath the crossing. This will create a dominant visual disruption to the flat landscape that dominates the view above the canyon rim. The same EPMS as described above would apply to reduce visual impacts to the canyon.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.8.5 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

The Management Objectives for Jarbidge RMP MUA-7 Saylor Creek East (affected by Alternative 8A) include managing “the Oregon Trail to preserve remaining ruts and trail features and nominate to national register.” Additionally, there is an objective to “Protect the 96 paleontological sites in Pasadena Valley, Rosevear Creek and Gulch, Dove Springs, Deer Gulch, Pilgrim Spring and Stage, and Glens Ferry.”

These objectives are supported by the following management action:

“MUA-7C) Lands_1. Utility avoidance/restricted area – Oregon Trail 5,888 acres (overhead, surface, underground); Dove Springs (160 acres) and 96 paleontological sites (surface and underground).” (Jarbidge RMP II-32)

Alternative 8A, if selected, would require a plan amendment to allow the granting of a ROW across lands managed under the Jarbidge RMP. The Jarbidge RMP includes measures to protect cultural sites. This protection would be rewritten to allow development of this Project, with mitigation measures that would be implemented to maintain the integrity of the trail ruts. The amendment changing areas from restricted to avoidance would allow the transmission line, providing there are no other viable alternatives outside the restricted areas. The amended decision for the Jarbidge RMP MUA-7 Saylor Creek East (changes in italics) would read:

“1. Utility avoidance/restricted area – *no surface disturbance within 330 feet of the Oregon Trail, Dove Springs (160 acres), and 96 paleontological sites (surface and underground).*”

Alternative 8A would require an amendment to Jarbidge RMP MUA-3 Lower Bennett as described above in Section 3.8.3 for the Preferred Route. The selection of Alternative 8A would require the amended decision to read as follows (changes in italics):

“Utility avoidance/restricted area – three paleontological areas (Sugar Bowl, Glens Ferry, & McGinnis Ranch) & Oregon Trail ruts (7,200 acres/22.5 miles) to overhead and surface disturbance and underground utilities. *The current lands decision is amended in the area identified as restricted in Section 2, T. 05 S., R. 09 E. to reclassify these areas as avoidance to accommodate a 500kV powerline right of way.*”

The following Route Alternatives would cross an area managed for VRM Class I and II objectives: 8A (Class I), 9B (Class I), and 9D/9G (Class II). The following VRM direction applies:

“The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400. VRM Classes will be managed as shown on Map 9.” (Jarbidge RMP 11-4)

Alternative 8A would cross approximately 5 miles of VRM Class I within the WWE corridor. Alternative 9B would cross 1.6 miles of VRM Class I within the WWE corridor. Alternative 9D/9G would cross 0.15 mile of VRM Class II following an existing transmission line route. The Jarbidge RMP protects visual resources; these RMP decisions would be rewritten to allow the development of this Project.

The areas that would not conform to VRM Class designation but that are within the WWEC (affects AOIs BOP-1/J-3, J-4, and J-5) would be reclassified. The amended VRM decision would read (new language in italics):

“The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400; *however, the area within the WWE Corridor will be reclassified as VRM III.*”

Alternative 8A would cross VRM Class I land associated with the Oregon NHT. Because a powerline would not be consistent with the VRM Class I objectives, the amended VRM decision would read (new language in italics):

“The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The Degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400. VRM Classes will be managed as shown on Map 9. *The VRM decision and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. Approximately 2,800 acres of VRM Class I area associated with the Oregon Trail is reclassified to VRM Class III.*”

Reclassifying the area within the WWE corridor to VRM Class III would allow development within this corridor to conform to the RMP. VRM Class I lands within the WWE corridor crossed by Alternatives 8A, 9B, and 9D/9G would affect Oregon Trail users. Impacts and mitigation associated with VRM reclassification are further discussed above in Section 3.8.4.

Alternative 8A would cross the Oregon NHT and Kelton Road within the WWE corridor. The proposed amendment would reclassify lands within the WWE corridor to VRM Class III while maintaining a 330-foot-wide “no surface disturbance” zone along either side of the trail. This would allow the construction of tower facilities while protecting the integrity of the trail ruts. However, the historic setting for the trail would likely be adversely affected at the transmission line crossing. EPMs would be implemented to reduce these impacts to the extent feasible.

Other impacts from Jarbidge RMP amendments associated with Route Alternatives as described above would be as for the Preferred Route, discussed above in Section 3.8.4.

3.9 SRBOP RMP Amendment

The SRBOP RMP, approved in September 2008, guides decisions made by the Four Rivers FO regarding actions that occur in the SRBOP Management Area. These include decisions on the granting of ROWs under Title V of the FLPMA. The RMP restricts major utility development to two existing corridors in the SRBOP Management Area. The RMP also manages motorized vehicle use, protects visual resources, and prohibits surface disturbing activities near special status species. The Project does not conform to decisions in the SRBOP RMP.

A plan amendment would be needed for Segments 8 and 9 of the Preferred Route or if Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, or 9H are selected to allow the Project outside of existing corridors.

Portions of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H are located in an area where motorized vehicle use is restricted to designated routes. A review of RMP objectives and consultation with the Boise District staff indicate that an NCA RMP plan amendment to the area closed to motorized vehicles for Segment 8 (Halverson Bar – 1,150 acres) would not be approved. Neither this amendment nor an amendment for Alternative 9D/9G (Cove – 1,600 acres), allowing the Project in these areas would meet the intent of the enabling legislation of the NCA, because currently offered mitigation could not compensate for the disturbance and fragmentation of raptor prey base habitat. The relevant Management Objective is: “Provide motorized vehicle access to the majority of the National Conservation Area (NCA) while reducing the number of unnecessary routes and increasing the non-motorized opportunities.”

Therefore, Segment 8 of the Proposed Route cannot be approved as currently designed. The Preferred Route includes Alternative 8B, which avoids crossing Halverson Bar, and portions of Proposed Route 9 with Alternative 9E (which was revised between Draft and Final EIS), which avoids crossing Cove. The Preferred Routes for Segments 8 and 9 avoid most of the SRBOP Management Area.

Amendments are proposed for the Preferred Route regarding utility corridor restrictions. Additional amendments would be needed for alternatives to the Preferred Route regarding non-motorized areas, visual resources, and special status species.

3.9.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the SRBOP RMP

The Preferred Routes along Segments 8 (Proposed Route and Alternative 8B) and 9 (Proposed Route and Alternative 9E, as well as Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H) would cross through the SRBOP Management Area. Approximately 2 miles of the Preferred Route for Segment 8 is on BLM-managed land within the Planning Area and is within one of the two utility corridors designated in the RMP. Approximately 11 miles of Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would also cross the Planning Area on BLM-managed land; however, much of this would be located within, or adjacent to, the second RMP-designated utility corridor. The route locations were developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These include, but are not limited to, TES species, soil resources, cultural resources, and visual resources.

The Project is not in conformance with the decisions in the SRBOP RMP and the plan would need to be amended if Segment 9 of the Preferred Route, Segments 8 or 9 of the Proposed Routes, or Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9E, 9F, 9G, or 9H are selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Preferred Route for Segment 9 crosses the SRBOP in two areas. The route crosses the NCA for 2.5 miles near Murphy within, or adjacent to, one of the established utility corridors. The route was moved slightly to the west in order to avoid pivot irrigated farm land and a residence on private land. The route also crosses the SRBOP north of the Saylor Creek Air Force Range, a portion of which is not within a designated corridor. In this location, the route is in the SRBOP for 8.8 miles near Saylor Creek, but only 6.7 miles of this is within the designated utility corridor. The line was moved south in this location at the request of Owyhee County, in order to avoid a planned subdivision and agricultural lands. The SRBOP RMP for Lands, Realty, and Utility Corridors emphasizes the following:

“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified.” (Lands Map 3)

The RMP states that “designation of utility corridors and ROW avoidance areas are non-discretionary actions” (2.11 Lands and Realty 2-14). Proposed Amendment #14 addresses this nonconformance of the Preferred Route with the SRBOP RMP.

The RMP provides management direction for sensitive plants. Some of these management actions are listed below, however no amendment would be needed for the Preferred Route. The SRBOP RMP for Utility and Corridors emphasizes the following regarding sensitive plants:

“Include in all BLM authorizations permitting surface disturbing activities (non-grazing), requirements that (1) affected areas be reseeded with a perennial vegetative cover, and (2) surface disturbing activities be located at least a half-mile from occupied sensitive plant habitat.”

Additional objectives under the Slickspot Peppergrass Conservation Agreement (CA), LUP Lands and Realty Management for issuance of rights-of-way state:

“Objective: For new rights-of-way and renewal of existing rights-of-way, see Special Status Animal and Plant Species Management program section item (3). Avoid issuing new rights-of-way or renewal of existing rights-of-way in suitable habitat if negative impacts are expected.” (page 21 of the CA; A-83 of the SRPOB RMP)

An amendment for the Preferred Route would not be required for slickspot peppergrass, which has been recently delisted under the Endangered Species Act. The Project’s Preferred Route would not cross occupied habitat and EPMs would be followed (see Table 2.7-1 in the Final EIS) to avoid or minimize negative impacts to the species or its habitat as required under Conservation Measure 3 – Ensure that new Federal actions support or do not preclude species conservation in slickspot peppergrass habitat (page 4 of the CA; A-67 of the SRPOB RMP):

“b) If direct or indirect negative impacts to the species or its habitat are anticipated as a result of new BLM actions, the activity will be modified to avoid or minimize negative impacts and, where feasible, promote species conservation.”

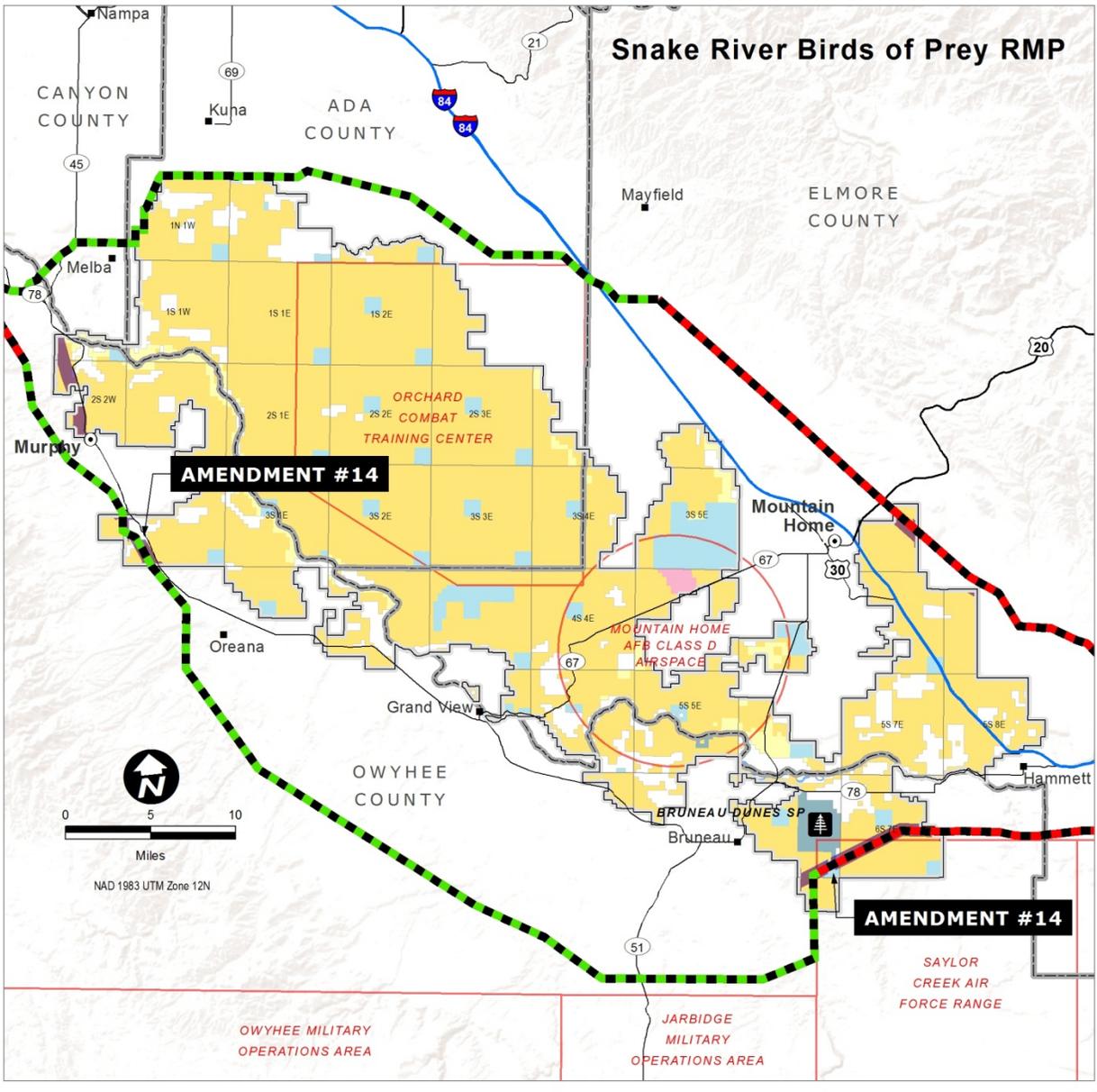
Alternatives to the Preferred Route would cross occupied slickspot peppergrass habitat and an amendment would be required if these alternatives are selected. The amendment that would be associated with these Route Alternatives is discussed in Section 3.9.5, below.

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to modify the utility corridor restriction such that the Project would be in conformance with the SRBOP RMP. Figure 3.9-1 shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the SRBOP RMP and where Amendment #14 would apply.

3.9.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Preferred Route includes Segments 8 and 9 of the Proposed Route, as well as Alternatives 8B and 9E (revised). The Preferred Route along Segments 8 and 9, as well as Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H, would cross through the SRBOP Management Area. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the SRBOP RMP. Several alternative routes were considered along Segments 8 and 9. The Proposed Route and Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figures A-10 and A-11 of the Final EIS show the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segments 8 and 9, respectively.

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route through the SRBOP Management Area follows the Proposed Route for Segments 8 and 9, and Alternative 9E (revised). The Preferred Route along Segment 8 includes one single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Midpoint Substation near the county line between Jerome and Lincoln Counties in Idaho and the proposed Hemingway Substation, located about 30 miles southwest of



- Legend**
- BLM Preferred Alternative and Proponent Proposed
 - BLM Preferred Alternative
 - West-wide Energy Corridor (WWEC)
 - Land Status**
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - Military Reservation/Corps of Engineers
 - State
 - State Wildlife, Park, Recreation or Other
 - Private
 - Water

Figure 3.9-1. Preferred Route and SRBOP RMP Planning Area

Boise. The Preferred Route along Segment 9 includes one single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Cedar Hill Substation near the county line between Cassia and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho and the Hemingway Substation. The Preferred Route along Segment 8 would cross into the SRBOP within a designated utility corridor for approximately 2 miles east of Mountain Home, Idaho, and would follow a northwesterly to westerly route before heading south to the Hemingway Substation. The Segment 8 Preferred Route would avoid most of the SRBOP by using Alternative 8B.

The Preferred Route for Segment 9 would cross the southeastern end of the SRBOP, as well as a small section between Murphy and Oreana. The Preferred Route for Segment 9 was located to minimize impacts on private land and was identified to avoid buffers of sage-grouse leks. The portion of the Segment 9 Preferred Route that follows Alternative 9E has been revised since the Draft EIS to avoid sage-grouse Preliminary Priority Habitat and to incorporate a recommended route change submitted by Owyhee County that avoids a planned subdivision near Murphy.

Alternatives: Alternative 8D (8.1 miles) would bypass the Idaho Army National Guard's "Alpha" Orchard Combat Training Center. Alternative 8E leaves the Proposed Route approximately 4 miles east of the Snake River crossing at the northwestern section of the route in order to avoid Cove non-motorized vehicle area. Alternative 8E then follows an existing transmission line south and then turns west to cross the Snake River at the same location as Alternative 9D/9F (therefore, 8E cannot be selected if 9D/9F is also selected).

Alternative 9D enters the SRBOP southeast of Bruneau and follows a northwesterly route until joining the Segment 9 Proposed Route north of Murphy. This alternative maximizes the use of public land, although it does not follow the WWE corridor. Alternatives 9D and 9G follow existing transmission lines from the C.J. Strike Dam west, on the north side of the river. Alternative 9F follows the Proposed Route until just southwest of C.J. Strike Reservoir. It then turns north and joins Alternative 9D just west of C.J. Strike Reservoir. Alternatives 9G/9H were developed as a southern alternative to the Proposed Route 9 to account for the conflict between 8E and 9D/9F. Alternative 9G follows the same route as 9D until approximately 15 miles east of the west end of the route, where it crosses the Snake River south of 9D and proceeds northwest to join up with the Proposed Route 9 approximately 9 miles from the western end of the Project. Alternative 9H follows the same route as 9F through the C.J. Strike area and then follows the same route as 9G in its western end.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.9.3 Proposed Plan Amendments to the SRBOP RMP

Segments 8 and 9 of the Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the SRBOP RMP for granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed under the RMP. The SRBOP RMP limits new utilities to existing corridors, establishes area designations for motorized vehicle use, and limits impacts to visual resources and sensitive plant species. These RMP decisions would be rewritten to allow development of this Project.

The Segment 9 Preferred Route would require a plan amendment to the SRBOP RMP to allow a ROW outside of the two designated corridors. The RMP management action proposed for amendment is located in both the “Land and Realty” and “Utility and Communication Corridors” sections.

Proposed Amendment #14 for Segment 9 of the Preferred Route would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project (changes in italics):

“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified and allow an additional *major powerline ROW in conjunction with the compensatory off-site mitigation* [identified below]. (Lands Map 3).”

The Project would be microsited through the corridor to the extent feasible in order to reduce impacts to adjacent resources. Mitigation, including off-site compensatory mitigation, is discussed below.

3.9.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Section 3.11.2.2 for effects on special status species; Section 3.15.2.3 for effects on soils; and Section 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

Approximately 11 miles of the Preferred Route for Segment 9 would cross the SRBOP, 9 miles of which would be within or adjacent to a currently designated corridor. Much of the area that would be crossed is undeveloped and characterized by numerous draws and gulches with sparse vegetation. The area that would be crossed outside the designated corridor is very limited in travel routes and those that exist are unpaved. Allowing the transmission line through this landscape would increase the human presence by occupation of infrastructure and creation of dedicated travel routes for construction and operations.

Construction within slickspot peppergrass suitable habitat will require surveys to ensure occupied habitat is not disturbed, in accordance with the CA. Micrositing and thorough surveys would be required to avoid damage to populations near the construction and operations areas (TESPL-4).

The SRBOP RMP contains conservation measures for the protection of slickspot peppergrass and its habitat. Slickspot peppergrass was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2009, but the listing was remanded by the Idaho District

Court in 2012 (see Section 3.7.1.5 of the Final EIS); however, the BLM's management of the species has not changed. Segments 8 and 9 Preferred Routes would not cross known occupied sensitive plant habitat within the SRBOP; therefore, the RMP and associated CA for occupied habitat would not apply. The alignment for Alternative 8B (Preferred Route) would border the BLM-administered lands managed under the SRBOP RMP; however, micro-siting would keep disturbance from the Project outside of these BLM-managed lands. The Preferred Route for Segment 9 would, however, cross potential slickspot peppergrass habitat within the SRBOP. The Project includes EPMS to protect natural resources (see Table 2.7-1 in the EIS). Specific EPMS are included to protect slickspot peppergrass habitat, which involve surveys for plants within 50 feet of construction prior to ground disturbance in all three BLM categories of slickspot peppergrass habitat, not constructing within 50 feet of identified plants or known previously occupied areas, limiting disturbance, and using appropriate methods for soil storage and seeding during reclamation activities (TESPL-4). These mitigation measures would ensure that the Preferred Route conforms to the SRBOP RMP objectives for slickspot peppergrass and an amendment would not be needed.

Because the SRBOP was designated, in large part, to protect raptor species, any impacts to raptors could affect the ability of the SRBOP to meet their management goals. This area is not a raptor concentration area; however, mitigation measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to these species. The towers and conductors would be constructed following Avian Power Line Interaction Committee recommendations in avian habitat (WILD-3). Mitigation measures such as avoiding guyed towers where possible (TESWL-11, WILD-6), and installing anti-collision devices where required could further lower the impacts to raptor species (WILD-6, and WILD-7).

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS. Compensatory mitigation for the Preferred Route is discussed in the following subsection.

Mitigation Associated with the Preferred Route in the SRBOP

The BLM's Preferred Route for Segment 8 crosses through approximately 2 miles of the SRBOP within an approved utility corridor. Segment 9 of the Preferred Route crosses through approximately 11 miles of the SRBOP, approximately 9 miles of which would be within or adjacent to an approved utility corridor. The SRBOP was established in 1993 by Public Law 103-64, which states that: "[t]he...conservation area is established...to provide for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats and the natural and environmental resources and values associated therewith, and of the scientific, cultural, and educational resources and values of the public lands in the conservation area." As a result, any action in the SRBOP must enhance the resources for which the SRBOP was designated.

The SRBOP's RMP and accompanying EIS identifies restoration and outreach opportunities that could help mitigate for project-related impacts in the SRBOP, as well as ensure enhancement of the resources for which the SRBOP was designated. This includes 1) restoration of shrub and grasslands, 2) inventorying cultural resources, 3) hiring an additional law enforcement ranger to deal with the increased unauthorized cross-country travel access that could be created by energy development projects, and 4) enhancing scientific and educational efforts in the SRBOP.

The BLM’s Preferred Route would result in approximately 294 acres of impact within the SRBOP (see Table 3.9-1 below). Potential mitigation ratios that could be applied to this impact value in order to calculate the total acreage of required mitigation (specifically applicable to the acreage of shrub and grasslands that would need to be restored, as well as acres of cultural resource areas to be inventoried) would need to be at least a 2:1 ratio in order to fulfill the “enhancement” requirement in Public Law 103-64; however, larger ratios may be considered by the BLM. The BLM is currently considering mitigation ratios ranging from 2:1 to 5:1 based on mitigation required/ offered by other energy development projects (BLM 2006c, 2010e). Additionally, the timeline for employment of an additional law enforcement ranger could range from 10 years (the shortest time frame currently considered by the BLM for this mitigation option) to 50 years (i.e., the permitted life of the project). The timeline for the funding of scientific and educational efforts in the SRBOP could range from 2 years to 5 years.

Table 3.9-1. Acres of Disturbance Within the SRBOP by Type

Segment/Component	Acres
Segment 8	
Existing Road – Improved	4.0
Fly Yard	12.5
New Road	4.7
Pad – 500kV	11.5
Pulling-Tensioning – 500kV (1-SC)	3.8
Segment 8 Total	36.5
Segment 9	
Deadend Pulling – 500kV (1-SC)	27.6
Existing Road - Improved	32.5
Fly Yard	50.0
New Road	41.7
Pad – 500kV	83.4
Pulling-Tensioning – 500kV (1-SC)	23.2
Segment 9 Total	258.4

Source: GIS Indicative Engineering Disturbance Layer.
 Numbers are rounded and may not sum exactly.
 Assumes staging areas are located outside the SRBOP.

3.9.5 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

Amendments to the SRBOP RMP would be needed if the Proposed Route Segments 8 or 9 or Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, or 9H are selected.

Portions of Proposed Route Segments 8 or 9 and Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H are not within a designated utility corridor. An amendment as described above in Section 3.9.3 would be required if these Alternatives are selected.

The RMP contains decisions that close areas to motorized vehicles. The Management Objective currently reads: “Provide motorized vehicle access to the majority of the NCA while reducing the number of unnecessary routes and increasing the non-motorized opportunities.” Portions of Segment 8 of the Proposed Route would cross the Halverson Bar Non-Motorized Area:

“2.16 Transportation – Close the following areas to motorized vehicles: ...
 Halverson Bar – 1,150 acres (Transportation Map A-145).”

Portions of Alternatives 9D/9G would cross the Cove Non-motorized Area. The route has been adjusted such that it would cross at the southeastern end of the restricted area instead of through the middle, as was presented in the Draft EIS. The SRBOP RMP restriction that applies is as follows:

“2.16 Transportation – Close the following areas to motorized vehicles: ... Cove – 1,600 acres (Transportation Map A-145).”

The following amendment would be required for Segment 8 of the Proposed Route to be in conformance with the RMP:

Allow the Gateway West Project to cross the Halverson Bar non-motorized area. (The BLM has indicated that this amendment would not be approved. Alternative routes [8B and 8E] avoid this area.)

The following amendment would be required for Alternative 9D/9G to be in conformance with the RMP:

Allow the Gateway West Project to cross the Cove non-motorized area. (The BLM has indicated that this amendment would detract from meeting the management goals for the area).

A review of RMP objectives and consultation with the Boise District staff indicate that an SRBOP RMP plan amendment for Segment 8 (Halverson Bar – 1,150 acres) would not meet the objectives of the RMP and would not be approved. In addition, amending the RMP to allow either Segment 8 to cross the Halverson Bar area or Alternative 9D/9G to cross the Cove area would not meet the intent of the enabling legislation of the NCA (as noted above, utility corridors are restricted to corridors shown on Lands Map 3), because currently offered mitigation could not compensate for the disturbance and fragmentation of raptor prey base habitat.

The RMP states that “designation of utility corridors and ROW avoidance areas are non-discretionary actions” (2.11 Lands and Realty 2-14). It goes on to state that “Land containing significant cultural resources will be protected during any use-authorized project installation or during use” (2.17 Utility and Communication Corridors 2-25). The SRBOP RMP emphasizes protection of cultural restrictions and protection of key areas through ROW avoidance areas:

“Retain all public lands in the 43,000-acre ROW avoidance area to protect the visual corridor along the historic Oregon Trail and the resources along the Snake River canyon.” (Lands Map 1)

The Segment 8 Proposed Route and Alternatives 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H would pass through designated utility corridor and ROW avoidance area designation around a National Register Historic District. This area has a significant concentration of cultural resources and traditional cultural properties and should be avoided unless no other routes are feasible. Implementation of the route would require an amendment to management actions restricting ROWs in this area (changes in italics):

“Objective: ROW authorizations for utility developments will be compatible with the purposes for which the NCA was established, emphasizing habitat protection with economic development:

“Retain all public lands in the 43,000-acre ROW avoidance area to protect the visual corridor along the historic Oregon Trail and the resources along the Snake River canyon. *Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project with mitigation as appropriate based upon Section 106 consultation.*”

Authorization of this amendment would have significant mitigation measures and specific route determination would be required to avoid areas of cultural resources and traditional properties.

The SRBOP RMP has the objective of protecting “the visual resources of historic areas with a secondary emphasis on the Snake River Canyon, with the following management action:

“Manage the areas along the Oregon Trail and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II, the OTA as Class IV and remaining areas as Class III. [Visual Resource Management (VRM) Map] This will provide reasonable protection of the Oregon Trail and flexibility in managing the remainder of the NCA.”

“VRM Class II management areas will not be available for utility corridors.”

The Segment 8 Proposed Route and Alternatives 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H would impact VRM Class II lands associated with the Oregon NHT and Snake River Canyon. The SRBOP Visual Resources management guidelines state (SRBOP RMP, 2.8 Visual Resources 2-13):

“Manage the areas along the Oregon Trail and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II, the OTA as Class IV and remaining areas as Class III. [Visual Resource Management (VRM Map A-147)].”

The Class II designation for the Oregon Trail is again stated in Section 2.2 of the SRBOP RMP in the Cultural and Tribal Resources Management Actions (page 2-2):

“Protect the Oregon Trail as a Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II area. [Visual Resource Management (VRM Map)]”

Amendments associated with visual resources would read as follows (changes in italics).

For Proposed Route 8:

“Manage the areas along the Oregon Trail and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II, the OTA as Class IV and remaining areas as Class III. *Approximately 6,400 acres of Class II areas associated with the Oregon Trail and scenic values associated with the Oregon Trail and scenic values associated with the Snake River Canyon would be designated as Class III to accommodate a major powerline R/W.*”

For Alternatives 8E, 9D, and 9F:

“Manage the areas along the Oregon Trail and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II, the OTA as Class IV and remaining areas as Class III. *Approximately 3,100 acres of Class II areas associated with the Oregon Trail and scenic values associated with the Snake River Canyon is designated as Class III to accommodate a major powerline R/W.*”

The proposed amendment for Alternative 9G/9H is:

“VRM Class II areas that are in view of the proposed transmission line where micro-siting would not sufficiently mitigate for VRM Class II impacts, would be inconsistent with the VRM II classification and would be reclassified to VRM III. VRM Class II areas within 250 feet of the route centerline would be reclassified to VRM Class III, taking into account the need for a 0.5 mile buffer from NHTs. Mitigation will include adjusting the alignment to ensure a 0.5 mile buffer from NHTs is maintained.”

A plan amendment would also be needed for the Segment 8 Proposed Route and Alternatives 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H. The existing Standard Operating Procedures under Section 2.17 (Utility and Communication Corridors) state:

“VRM Class II management areas will not be available for utility corridors.”

The associated amendment states (changes in italics):

“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified and the major powerline R/W (Lands Map 3).”

An amendment would be needed to change the “Management Action” language in the “Utility and Communication Corridors” section to read (changes in italics):

“Allow the Gateway West Transmission Line Project outside the designated utility corridors”

(Note that in order to meet the Standard Operating Procedures in the RMP, VRM Class II management areas would need to be reclassified to VRM Class III).

This amendment allowing a major powerline to cross the SRBOP outside of established utility corridors would not be consistent with the enabling legislation for the NCA, because currently offered mitigation could not compensate for the disturbance and fragmentation of raptor prey base habitat.

Segment 8 of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H would pass through the Snake River SRMA. This use is not in conformance with the SRMA designation based on “recreational, scenic or cultural values.”

“This SRMA consists of 22,300 acres in the Snake River Canyon downstream from Grandview, Idaho that is managed for the protection of cultural and scenic values.” (2.14 Recreation 2-20).

The following amendment reducing the designated area is proposed for the Project to be in conformance with the RMP (changes in italics):

“This SRMA consists of 15,900 acres in the Snake River Canyon downstream from Grandview, Idaho that is managed for the protection of cultural and scenic values. The SRMA designation has been reduced by approximately 6,400 acres to accommodate a major powerline.”

Alternatives 9D and 9G share the same alignment where they would pass through C.J. Strike SRMA. This use is not in conformance with the SRMA designation based on “recreational, scenic or cultural values.” (Note: the route through the SRMA would also

cross a portion of the Cove non-motorized area, which would also require an amendment, as discussed above). An amendment to change the area of the designation of the C.J. Strike SRMA would be needed for this alternative alignment.

The designation of the C.J. Strike SRMA is defined as:

“C.J. Strike SRMA: This SRMA consists of 20,000 acres surrounding C.J. Strike Reservoir along the Snake River. The purpose of the SRMA is to provide enhanced recreation management associated with the reservoir, and protection of the Oregon Trail adjacent to the reservoir.” (2.14 Recreation 2-20)

The following amendment reducing the designated area would be required for the Project to be in conformance with the RMP (changes in italics):

“C.J. Strike SRMA: This SRMA consists of *16,900* acres surrounding C.J. Strike Reservoir along the Snake River. The purpose of the SRMA is to provide enhanced recreation management associated with the reservoir, and protection of the Oregon Trail adjacent to the reservoir. *The SRMA designation has been reduced by approximately 3,100 acres to accommodate a major powerline R/W.*”

Amendments to the SRBOP RMP would be required to protect slickspot peppergrass if portions of the Proposed Route Segments 8 and 9 or Alternatives 8D, 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H are selected. These alignments would cross occupied plant habitats and would therefore not be in conformance with the SRBOP RMP or the CA adopted by the RMP. The SRBOP RMP for Utility and Corridors emphasizes the following regarding sensitive plants:

“Include in all BLM authorizations permitting surface disturbing activities (non-grazing), requirements that (1) affected areas be reseeded with a perennial vegetative cover, and (2) surface disturbing activities be located at least a half-mile from occupied sensitive plant habitat.”

Additional objectives under the Slickspot Peppergrass CA, LUP Lands and Realty Management for issuance of rights-of-way, state:

“Objective: For new rights-of-way and renewal of existing rights-of-way, see Special Status Animal and Plant Species Management program section item (3). Avoid issuing new rights-of-way or renewal of existing rights-of-way in suitable habitat if negative impacts are expected.” (page 21 of the CA; A-83 of the SRPOB RMP)

An amendment would be required for slickspot peppergrass, which has been recently delisted under the Endangered Species Act. The Route Alternatives would cross occupied habitat and would therefore not be in conformance with the RMP or CA. Amending the RMP to permit the Project for these alternative routes may make it difficult to meet Conservation Measure 3 – Ensure that new Federal actions support or do not preclude species conservation in slickspot peppergrass habitat (page 4 of the CA; A-67 of the SRPOB RMP):

“b) If direct or indirect negative impacts to the species or its habitat are anticipated as a result of new BLM actions, the activity will be modified to avoid

or minimize negative impacts and, where feasible, promote species conservation.”

The purpose of the amendments associated with these alternative routes would be to modify the utility corridor, motorized vehicle, visual resource, and sensitive plant restrictions such that the Project would be in conformance with the SRBOP RMP.

Effects

Changing the VRM Class II and SRMA designations would affect the ability to meet the plan objectives. The Visual Resource objective is to protect visual resources of historic areas. Changing the VRM class would reduce the level of protection for some historic areas. The construction of the transmission line, if approved, would adversely affect the historic character of place where it is installed because it would dominate the landscape.

Recreation objective goals for the Oregon NHT and the C.J. Strike SRMAs would not be directly impacted because the affected areas have been removed from designation; however, reduction in lands available for recreation to affect the overall goals for recreation management.

Allowing motorized use in the Cove and Halverson Bar Non-Motorized Areas could impact the ability of meeting goals for landscape restoration (Cove) and preservation (Halverson Bar). Careful planning of motorized use for Project construction and maintenance access in these areas can reduce the negative effects.

Allowing construction in the Utility Avoidance Area and in areas of high cultural importance, such as a National Register Historic District, could impact the ability to meet management objectives of protecting these areas and maintaining the cultural landscape. Potential impacts could include loss of historic artifacts, loss of historic character of the landscape, and diminished traditional cultural properties and resources. “Significant mitigation” would be required to limit these impacts as described in the SRBOP Record of Decision 2-1, which could involve extensive cultural surveys, micro-siting, data recovery, and on-site mitigation.

Effects of amendments to sensitive species, raptors, and avoidance area requirements would result in similar impacts and employ similar mitigation measures as described above for the Preferred Route Segments 8 and 9 in Section 3.9.4 above.

3.10 Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Amendment

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP (BLM 1980) provides direction for management of public land under the jurisdiction of the Shoshone FO in south-central Idaho. The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Planning Area consists of approximately 892,000 acres in Blaine, Camas, Elmore, Gooding, and Lincoln Counties and guides actions such as the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA. The MFP includes management objectives and recommendations for scenic and cultural resources. The proposed crossing of the Oregon NHT would impact visual resources and archeological resources; thus, the proposed Project would not be in conformance with the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP.

3.10.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP

Approximately 21 miles of the Project's Preferred Route in Segment 8 would cross through the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Planning Area, approximately 15 miles of which would be on BLM-managed lands. This route would cross 6.3 miles of VRM Class II lands as well as crossing the Oregon NHT. The location of the Proposed Route was identified to comply with WECC requirements and to protect important resources to the greatest extent feasible. These resources include, but are not limited to, threatened and endangered plants, wildlife, sensitive lands, and archeological and visual resources.

Because the Project does not conform to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, land use plan amendments would be needed if the Segment 8 Preferred Route is selected. Along the length of Segment 8, five alternative routes were considered in detail (and four additional alternatives were considered but were eliminated from detailed study). Alternative 8A is the only alternative for this portion of Segment 8 and is not within the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Planning Area; thus, if Alternative 8A were selected, an amendment of the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP would not be required. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide for a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP management objective REC 4.1 for visual resources is to "manage the visual resources within the Planning Area in conformance with the guidance in BLM Manual 6310.18B-E." The recommendation for achieving this follows:

"No management activity should be allowed to cause any evident changes in the form, line color or texture that is characteristic of the landscape within this Class II area."

The decision for meeting the objective is to use the above recommendation as "guidance for the Class II areas, utilizing concealment, repetition of elements, minimizing surface disturbance, etc., to meet the goal" (Bennett Hills-Timmerman Hills MFP; Recreation 4.1). Proposed Amendment #15 addresses the Project's nonconformance with the guidance in the Bennett Hills Timmerman Hills MFP regarding REC 4.1.

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Management Objective for cultural resources is to "identify, evaluate, and manage cultural resources in the Bennett Hills-Timmerman Hills Planning Units" (Bennett Hills-Timmerman Hills MFP; Recreation R-14). The management recommendation, REC 14.6, for Class I archaeological resources, emphasizes the following:

"Prohibit all land disturbing developments and uses on archeological sites."

Proposed Amendment #16 addresses the Project's nonconformance with the guidance in the Bennett Hills Timmerman Hills MFP regarding REC 14.6.

The purpose of the proposed amendment is to 1) modify the VRM class designation for areas along existing transmission line ROWs and 2) modify limitations protecting the Oregon NHT. These amendments would allow the Project to conform to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP if the Segment 8 Preferred Route is selected. Figure 3.10-1

shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP and where Amendments #15 and 16 would apply.

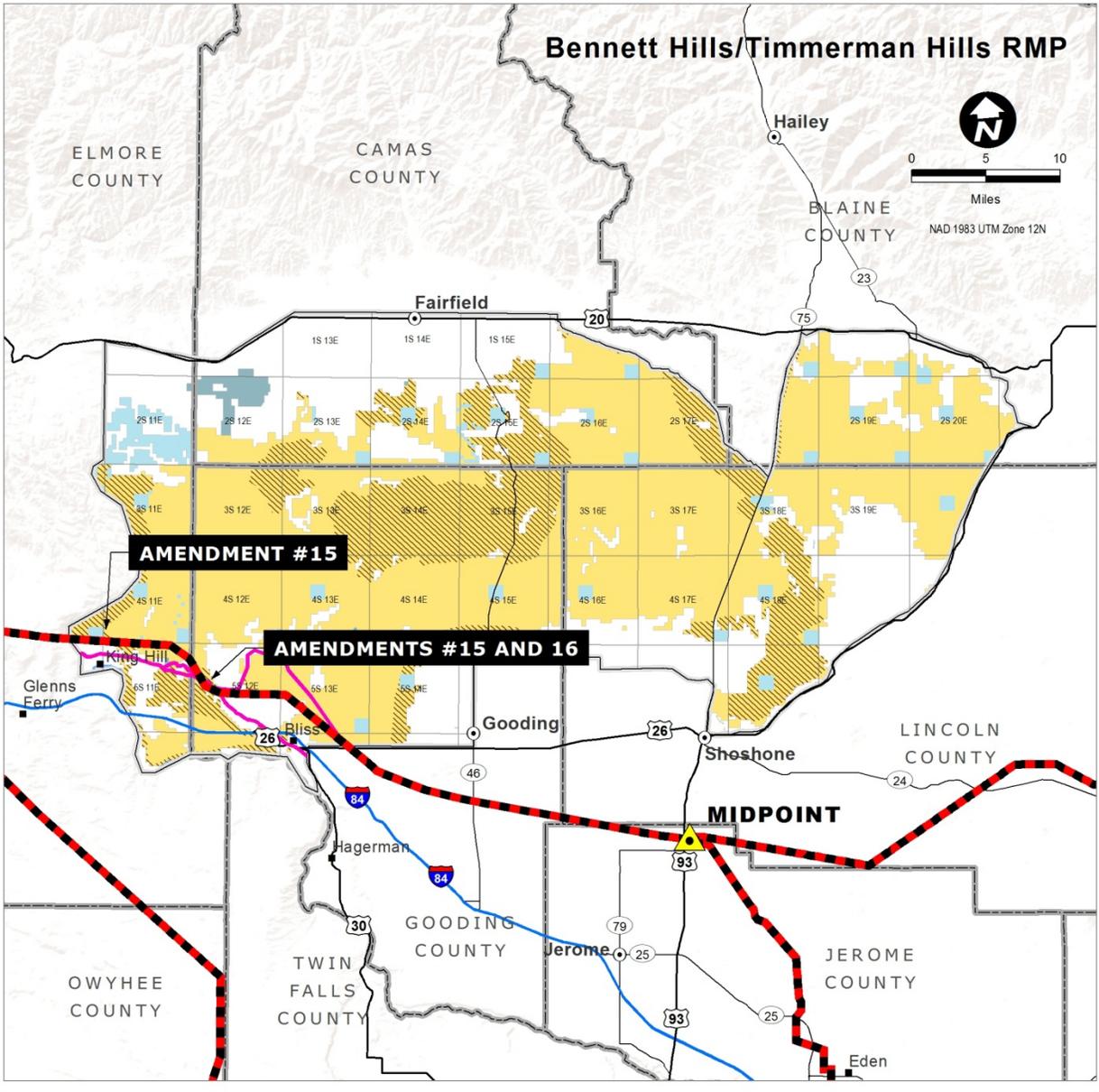
3.10.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Preferred Route includes Segment 8 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 8B. The Segment 8 Preferred Route crosses through the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Planning Area. The Preferred Route includes a 132-mile-long single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Midpoint Substation near the county line between Jerome and Lincoln Counties in Idaho and the proposed Hemingway Substation, located about 30 miles southwest of Boise. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. Several alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and the Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figure A-10 of the Final EIS shows the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segment 8.

Preferred Route: The Preferred Route for Segment 8 enters lands managed by the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP north of Tuttle and east of Bliss, Idaho. The route is located in a northwesterly direction, spans approximately 21 miles of the southwest corner of the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills management area, and parallels an existing 230 kV transmission line. The route is located south of the Pioneer Reservoir, crosses the Gooding County/Elmore County line, and leaves the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills management area east of King Hill.

Alternatives: Alternative 8A is located south of the area managed by the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. Alternative 8A is within or parallel to a WWE corridor along its entire length.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.



- Legend**
- BLM Preferred Alternative and Proponent Proposed
 - BLM Preferred Alternative
 - Substation
 - VRM I
 - VRM II
 - Historic Trail
- Land Status**
- Bureau of Land Management
 - National Forest
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - State
 - State Wildlife, Park, Recreation or Other
 - Private
 - Water

Figure 3.10-1. Preferred Route and Bennett Hills/Timmerman MFP Planning Area

3.10.3 Proposed Plan Amendment to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP

The Preferred Route in Segment 8 would require a plan amendment to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, if selected, for granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed by the Shoshone FO. The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP protects visual and archeological resources. These protections would be rewritten to allow development of this Project.

Proposed Amendment #15 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the visual resource protection in this area to allow development of this Project:

“The VRM Class II area within 3,000 feet to the north of the existing transmission line ROW will be reclassified to VRM III (including the existing ROW).”

Proposed Amendment #16 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the archaeological resource protection in this area to allow development of this Project and therefore allow crossing of the Oregon NHT by the Project. The amended MFP decision (changes in italics) would read:

“Prohibit all land disturbing developments within 330 feet of the Oregon Trail and manage archeological sites as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.”

3.10.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-1 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

Transmission line towers would not occur within 330 feet of the Oregon NHT; however, transmission lines would span the trail where Segment 8 of the Preferred Route crosses. Allowing land-disturbing developments up to 330 feet of the Oregon NHT could potentially affect the ability to conform to agency policy of protecting archaeological sites; however, stipulations for managing archeological sites as required by the National Historic Preservation Act should minimize this possibility. Additionally, EPMs (CR-1 through CR-8) would be aimed at reducing these impacts and construction would occur in a manner that would avoid disturbing important historic resources.

The amendment changing the VRM Class II classification to VRM Class III would change the classification of lands within 3,000 feet of an existing transmission line. This may result in additional utilities being located along this route, which would result in additional impacts to resources managed under the MFP. A new transmission line would impact plants and wildlife as well as scenic and cultural resources. However, the disturbance would occur in a previously disturbed area. The VRM Class II areas that would be reclassified under this amendment are also big game habitat. Impacts to big game would occur for both the construction and operations phases. Effects of these activities could result in avoidance of preferable forage, increased demand of energy

resources in response to disturbance, temporary displacement from preferred habitat, resulting in possible increase in predation, reduced quality of forage, and impacts to reproduction.

The Preferred Route would be within the viewshed of Kings Crown and the surrounding area north of King Hill. Scenery in this area is important to sensitive viewers such as visitors along the Oregon NHT. Existing high-voltage transmission lines and wind towers already interrupt the scenic quality in this area. The Preferred Route would add to this interruption; however, it would avoid disrupting scenic quality in undisturbed areas. Additionally, EPMs such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-7 and VIS-11) will minimize visual impacts.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.11 Wells RMP Amendment

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Wells FO of the Elko District, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Wells RMP approved in 1985. The RMP currently restricts new utilities to identified corridors. Two route alternatives, 7I and 7J, were presented in the Draft EIS that would cross into the Wells FO. These alternatives are no longer being considered and no route alternatives would cross this management area. Amendments permitting construction of a transmission line or allowances for crossing VRM Class II areas are no longer needed as the Project would no longer cross this area.

3.12 Bruneau MFP Amendment

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Bruneau FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Bruneau MFP (BLM 1983b). Portions of Segment 9 of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 9D/9G, 9E (revised), and 9F/9H would cross through the Bruneau Management Area. The Bruneau MFP includes management objectives for visual resources.

No amendments to the Bruneau MFP are proposed for the Preferred Route. Within this Planning Area, the Preferred Route follows the Alternative 9E (revised) alignment, which avoids the area in conflict with visual resource management classifications. Although the Preferred Route would not require amendments to the Bruneau MFP, selection of the Proposed Route Segment 9 would not conform to the VRM classification in the Bruneau MFP as currently written.

3.12.1 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Preferred Route includes Segment 9 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 9E (revised); however, only the portion comprising Alternative 9E crosses the Bruneau Planning Area. Segment 9 of the Preferred Route, Segment 9 of the Proposed Route, and Alternatives 9D/9G, 9E (revised), and 9F/9H would cross through the Bruneau MFP Planning Area. The Preferred Route for Segment 9 includes one 171.4-mile single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Cedar Hill Substation near the county line

between Cassia and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho and the Hemingway Substation. Approximately 37 miles of the Preferred Route are within the boundaries of the Bruneau FO under the Bruneau MFP, 36 miles of which cross BLM-managed lands. Approximately 33 miles of Proposed Route would cross the Bruneau Planning Area, 19 miles of which would be on BLM-managed lands.

The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Bruneau MFP. Several alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and the Alternative Routes are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figure A-11 of the Final EIS shows the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segment 9.

Preferred Route: Segment 9 of the Preferred Route enters into the Bruneau Management Area south of Bruneau and Hot Spring. The route follows a westerly then northwesterly direction and leaves the Bruneau Planning Area at Castle Creek. The Preferred Route was located to minimize Project impacts on private land. This section is located primarily on BLM-managed land. The Segment 9 Preferred Route is outside the WWE corridor, crosses crucial big game management range, and is located to avoid buffers of sage-grouse leks.

Alternatives: Segment 9 of the Proposed Route enters into the Bruneau Management Area between Bruneau and Hot Spring. Proposed Route Segment 9 proceeds in a northwesterly direction, generally paralleling the Preferred Route. The majority of the Proposed Route follows the WWE corridor, crossing both public and private lands.

The majority of Alternatives 9F/9H and 9D/9G are located within the SRBOP, although small sections of these routes (approximately 2.5 miles for Alternative 9F/9H and 0.8 mile of 9D/9G) cross the Bruneau Planning Area. Alternative 9F/9H crosses approximately 1.9 miles of BLM-managed land west of C.J. Strike Reservoir. Alternative 9D/9G crosses approximately 0.4 mile of BLM-managed land north of the town of Bruneau. These alternatives also maximize the use of public land, and although not following the WWE corridor, the portion where Alternatives 9D/9F/9G/9H share the same alignment follows an existing transmission line within the SRBOP.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

3.12.2 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

The Bruneau MFP currently restricts impacts to visual resources. A 1,000-foot section of the Segment 9 Proposed Route would cross an area within the WWE corridor classified as VRM Class II; therefore, an amendment to the MFP to allow impacts to visual resources would be needed if the Proposed Route Segment 9 is selected.

The Bruneau MFP emphasizes the following with regards to visual resources:

- **VISL Objective #1:** Manage all public lands in a manner which will protect and maintain the existing visual qualities, provide for enhancement where consistent with management policies, and provide for rehabilitation of land which presently do not meet the visual quality standards of surrounding lands. Use VRM contrast rating and project application design process for all management activities without unduly reducing commodity production or limiting program effectiveness.
- **VRM-1.2:** Designate 136,000 acres as VRM Class II where activities are designed and located to blend into the natural landscape and not visually apparent to the casual visitor.

AOIs within the WWE corridor would be reclassified to VRM Class III. Segment 9 of the Proposed Route would cross a parcel designated as VRM Class II near Castle Creek. The recently completed Visual Inventory recognizes this parcel as VRM Class III for inventory purposes. With these factors in mind, the visual resource restrictions would be rewritten to reclassify the area.

The amended restriction for visual resource impacts (changes in italics) would read (changes in italics):

- **VISL Objective #1:** Manage all public lands in a manner which will protect and maintain the existing visual qualities, provide for enhancement where consistent with management policies, and provide for rehabilitation of land which presently do not meet the visual quality standards of surrounding lands. Use VRM contrast rating and project application design process for all management activities without unduly reducing commodity production or limiting program effectiveness. *The 282-acre parcel of VRM Class II designated land adjacent to Castle Creek will be reclassified to VRM Class III. This designation is reflective of the presence of the WWE corridor, which comprises 177 acres of the VRM II parcel.*
- **VRM-1.2:** Designate 135,718 acres as VRM Class II where activities are designed and located to blend into the natural landscape and not visually apparent to the casual visitor. *The area designated as VRM Class II adjacent to Castle Creek (AOI B-1) will be reclassified to VRM Class III.*

The purpose of the amendment would be to modify the visual restrictions, such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would be in conformance with the Bruneau MFP.

Effects

Reclassifying the VRM Class II parcel to VRM Class III would allow the transmission line to conform to the Bruneau MFP. More than half of the area of this parcel is within the WWE corridor. Reclassifying this parcel to VRM Class III would facilitate siting the transmission line in the WWE corridor. Changing the VRM class would also facilitate siting future utility lines within the WWE corridor, which would add to cumulative effects in the area. The direct effects of amending the MFP to allow the Project include the disruption of form, line, texture, and color of the existing landscape. Construction and operations of a high-voltage transmission line would impact wildlife and other resources as described in the Final EIS.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.13 Kuna MFP Amendment

The Kuna MFP, approved on March 22, 1983, guides actions that occur with its Planning Area on lands managed by the Four Rivers FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the FLPMA. The MFP confines new ROW to existing corridors, and has management requirements for visual and cultural resources. The Project would not be consistent with these requirements and thus is not consistent with the Kuna MFP.

3.13.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Kuna MFP

Approximately 63 miles (27 miles on BLM-managed land) of Segment 8 of the Preferred Route and 8 miles (8 on BLM-managed land) of Alternative 8C would cross through the Kuna Management Area.³ The Kuna MFP includes management objectives for many resources including lands, minerals, range management, watershed, wildlife, visual, cultural, recreation, and transportation support. Management Actions being proposed for amendment are those for “Lands,” “Visual,” and “Cultural” resources. The route locations for the Project were developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect resources to the greatest extent feasible.

Because the Project does not conform to the current direction provided in the Kuna MFP for cultural resources and following existing corridors, the land use plan would need to be amended if Segment 8 of the Preferred Route (which includes a portion of the Proposed Route and Alternative 8B), Segment 8 of the Proposed Route, or Alternative 8C is selected. Alternatives 8A and 8D do not cross the area managed under the Kuna MFP. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Preferred Route would cross the Kuna MFP management area outside existing corridors. An amendment would be needed if the Preferred Route or Route Alternatives are selected. Proposed Amendment #17 addresses the Project’s nonconformance with the management direction in the Kuna MFP. The Kuna MFP L-4.1 emphasizes the following with regard to utility ROWs:

“Confine major new utility R/Ws (i.e., 500KV or larger or 24-inch pipeline) to existing corridors, as shown on Overlay L-4. The R/Ws will be subject to reasonable stipulations to protect other resource uses.”

The Preferred Route would cross the Oregon Short Line Railroad within the Kuna MFP management area. An amendment to the Kuna MFP would be needed if Segment 8 of the Preferred Route or 8C is selected. Proposed Amendment #18 addresses the Project’s nonconformance with the management direction in the Kuna MFP. The Kuna MFP CRM-2.1 states the following with regard to cultural resources:

“CRM-2.1 Manage parcels containing historic site 10-AA-155 and a 1/4-mile-wide corridor on either side of the Union Pacific (Oregon Short Line) Railroad for the

³ Additional alternatives would cross the Kuna MFP Management Area; however, these alternatives are addressed under the SRBOP RMP, which replaces the Kuna MFP in these areas.

protection of cultural resource values. Nominate these sites to the National Register of Historic Places but do not designate them as ACECs.” (Other management is listed)

The purpose of the proposed amendments is to modify the ROW restriction to allow the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project and modify cultural resource management requirements such that the Project would be consistent with the Kuna MFP. Figure 3.13-1 shows the area where the Preferred Route would not be in conformance with the Kuna MFP and where Amendments #17 and 18 would apply.

3.13.2 Preferred Route and Alternatives

The Preferred Route includes Segment 8 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 8B. Segment 8 of the Preferred Route is a single-circuit 500-kV transmission line that would link the Midpoint and Hemingway Substations. Approximately 63 miles of the Segment 8 Preferred Route are within the Kuna MFP boundaries. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Kuna MFP. Several alternative segments were considered. The Preferred Route and Route Alternatives are described in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes. Appendix A, Figure A-10 of the Final EIS shows the Preferred Route, Proposed Route, and other Route Alternatives for Segment 8.

Preferred Route: Segment 8 of the Preferred Route enters the Kuna MFP in Elmore County, southeast of Mountain Home, and proceeds in a general northwesterly direction, avoiding the SRBOP Management Area before heading west towards the Hemingway Substation. Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would stay north of the Snake River until just east of the Hemingway Substation.

Alternatives: Segment 8 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 8C would cross the Kuna MFP planning area; Alternatives 8D and 8E would cross land managed by the SRBOP RMP; Alternative 8A would cross land managed by the Jarbidge and Monument RMPs.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in EIS Section 1.3, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

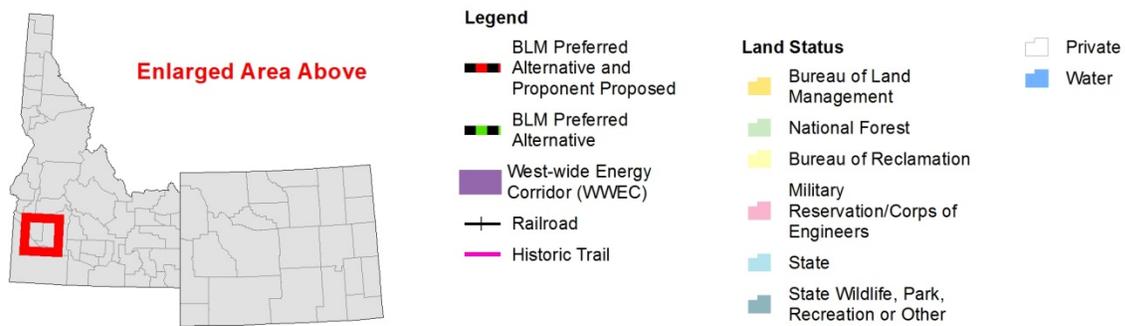
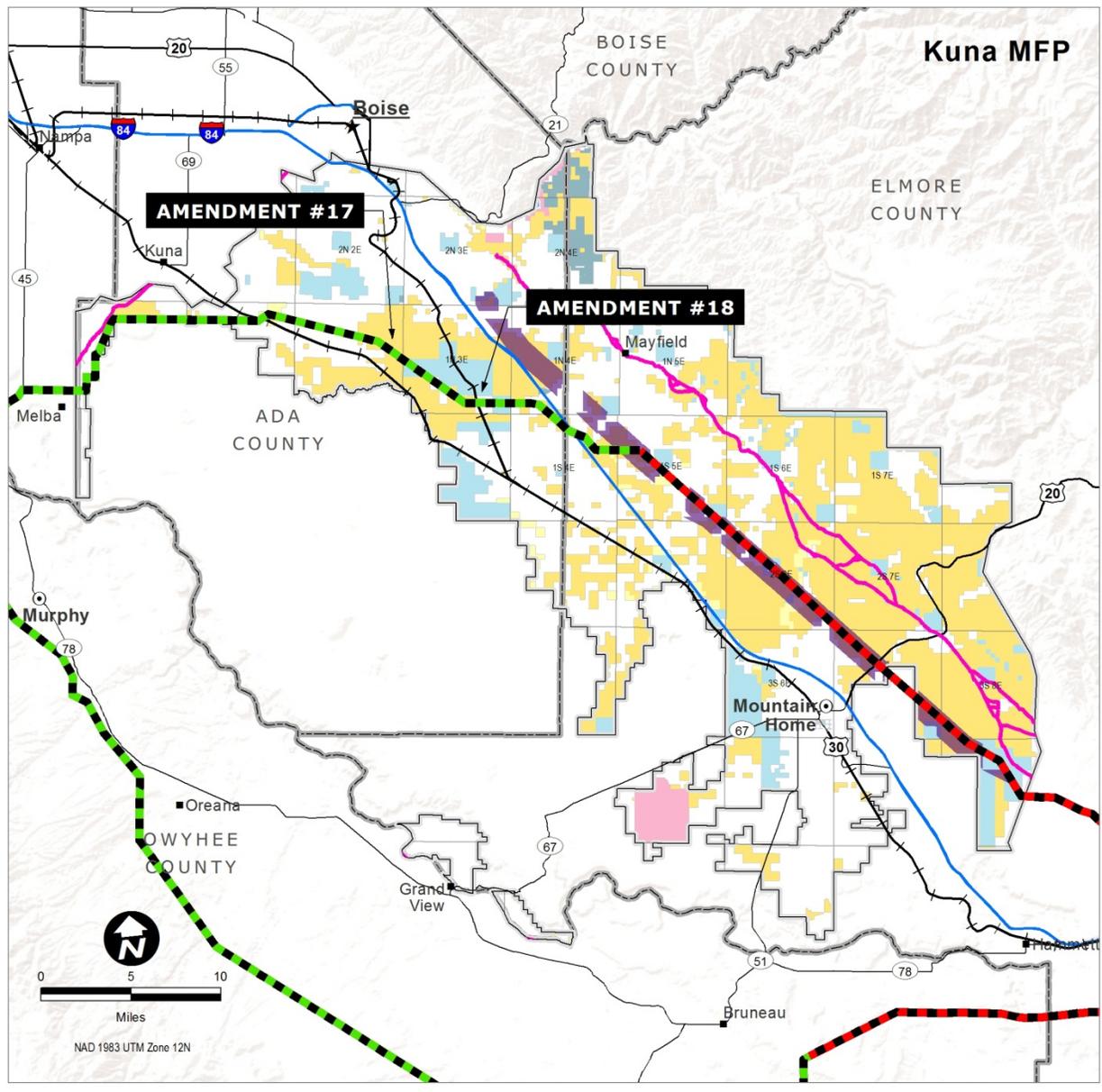


Figure 3.13-1. Preferred Route and Kuna MFP Planning Area

3.13.3 Proposed Plan Amendment to the Kuna MFP

The Preferred Route for Segment 8 would require a plan amendment to the Kuna MFP. This proposed amendment would allow the granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed by the Four Rivers FO. The Kuna MFP limits new ROWs to existing corridors. This limitation would be rewritten to allow development of this Project. The intent of the amendment is to allow the current Project but not to create a corridor that would facilitate additional major utilities.

Proposed Amendment #17 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the current Lands decision to permit the Project in this area. The amended decision (changes in italics) would read:

“L-4.1– Confine major new utility R/Ws (i.e., 500 KV or larger or 24-inch pipeline) to existing corridors as shown on Overlay L-4. The R/Ws will be subject to reasonable stipulations to protect other resource uses. *Amend Overlay L-4 to add a major transmission line (500 kV) right of way.*”

There is currently a management objective for managing cultural and historic ruins near the area for the Preferred Segment 8.

Proposed Amendment #18 for Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would amend the Cultural Resource Management decision 2.1 to allow the Project in this area. The amended management action (changes in italics) would read:

“CRM-2.1– Manage parcels containing historic site 10-AA-155 and a 1/4-mile-wide corridor on either side of the Union Pacific (Oregon Short Line) Railroad for the protection of cultural resource values. Nominate these sites to the National Register of Historic Places, but do not designate them as ACECs (Other recommended management is listed). *Allow one transmission line crossing with micro-siting required to minimize presence in the restricted area such that the transmission line will not affect the railroad’s status as a Historic Place.*”

3.13.4 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation.

The “Lands” amendment would allow the Project to conform to the Management Objective. Allowing the additional ROW placement, however, would not establish a new corridor, and new proposals for siting additional major utility lines would require a plan amendment, in addition to assessment under NEPA.

Allowing transmission lines outside the previously designated ROWs would mean that construction and operations impacts would occur outside these corridors. This includes impacts to wildlife, vegetation, soils, and cultural resources.

Segment 8 of the Preferred Route would cross approximately 15 miles of elk crucial winter range, 2.5 miles of which are on BLM-managed land that is not within an existing ROW or the WWE corridor.

Approximately 87 raptor nests are located within 1 mile of Segment 8 of the Preferred Route (which includes land managed under the Kuna MFP, SRBOP RMP, Jarbidge RMP, and Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP); 43 of these are on BLM-managed land. Impacts to raptors could include area avoidance, decreased hunting success, and nest abandonment due to disturbance. EPMs and BMPs following appropriate working and operations windows would limit these impacts.

Stream crossings would occur for the Preferred Route. While impacts to fish could include increased siltation from culvert installation and decreased riparian cover, BMPs would be in place to minimize these impacts and correct improperly functioning culverts such that passage is not hindered. Specific EPMs for this Project include routine and corrective operations and maintenance activities in streams with sensitive fish species such as culvert installation, bank stabilization, and ford location throughout the year (OM-16). Culverts on BLM-administered land will be designed to meet BLM Gold Book Standards (FISH-1). Riparian vegetation management will be conducted following EPMs such as OM-17, OM-19, and OM-20. In addition, water quality EPMs such as meeting National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements (WQA-1, WQA-2, and WQA-3) and following SWPPPs and BMPs (WQA-4 through WQA-12) will avoid and minimize impacts to water resources.

The soils for Segment 8 and its alternatives are generally susceptible to erosion with a low tolerance to soil loss. Impacts from the Project include compaction, as well as soil loss due to wind and water erosion. Detrimental soil disturbance such as compaction, erosion, puddling, and displacement will be minimized through implementing measures identified in the SWPPP (SOIL-4).

Cultural impacts from the amendment to CRM-2.1 could include impacts to the sense of place and historic character of the railroad. EPMs (CR-1 through CR-8) would be aimed at reducing these impacts and construction would occur in a manner that would avoid disturbing important historic resources. Possible impacts include presence of a structure not in keeping with the historic nature of the site, disturbance of land containing culturally important artifacts or landscape features, as well as noise and construction disturbance during construction, decommissioning, and repair and maintenance.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.13.5 Amendments Associated with Alternative Routes

The Proposed Route for Segment 8 and Alternative 8C, if selected, would require plan amendments to the Kuna MFP for utility corridors and protection of the Union Pacific (Oregon Short Line) Railroad. Proposed amendment language would be as described above for the Preferred Route.

General effects resulting from proposed amendments to the Kuna MFP for the Alternatives would be as described above for the Preferred Route. Specific impacts to wildlife would be as follows.

Segment 8 of the Proposed Route would cross approximately 15 miles of elk crucial winter range, 2.5 miles of which are on BLM-managed land that is not within an existing ROW or the WWE corridor. Approximately 2 miles of the 5 miles of elk crucial winter range crossed by Alternative 8C is on BLM-managed land and is within the WWE corridor.

Approximately 300 raptor nests are located within 1 mile of Segment 8 of the Proposed Route within the Kuna MFP Planning Area (which includes land managed under the SRBOP RMP); 252 of these are on BLM-managed land and include 36 burrowing owls, 55 ferruginous hawks, and 161 prairie falcons. Alternative 8C would cross within 1 mile of five raptor nests on federal land.

Appendix F-2
Proposed Forest Plan Amendments

Appendix F-2
Proposed Forest Plan Amendments
Gateway West Transmission Line Project

Prepared by Tetra Tech

Submitted To:
USDA Forest Service

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIZ	Aquatic Influence Zone
AOI	area of inconsistency
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
Forest Plan	Land and Resource Management Plan
Forest Service	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
FSH	Forest Service Handbook
Gateway West	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
kV	kilovolt
MA	Management Area
MP	milepost
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NF	National Forest
NFMA	National Forest Management Act
NFS	National Forest System
NOI	Notice of Intent
PFA	post-fledging area
Project	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
Proponents	Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power
ROD	Record of Decision
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
ROW	right-of-way
SIO	Scenic Integrity Objective
SMS	Scenery Management System
U.S.C.	United States Code
VQO	Visual Quality Objective
WWE	West-wide Energy

1 INTRODUCTION

The Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project) starts in Wyoming at the Windstar Substation. Segment 1W for the most part follows the West-Wide Energy (WWE) corridor and an existing 230-kilovolt (kV) line (proposed for reconstruction as Segment 1W[c]) to the Aeolus Substation. It then proceeds as a single-circuit 500-kV line from Aeolus to Populus (Segments 2, 3, and 4). At Populus, the Project splits into two single-circuit 500-kV roughly parallel paths. Segments 5, 6, and 8 travel on a more northerly route toward the Hemingway Substation through the Borah and Midpoint Substations, while Segments 7 and 9 travel a more southerly route through the Cedar Hill Substation to the Hemingway Substation. Segment 10 provides an interconnection between the Cedar Hill and Midpoint Substations and also provides an interconnection between the more northerly and more southerly routes.

The Project crosses National Forest System (NFS) lands, as well as federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM is the lead agency. As a cooperating agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) has and will continue to participate in all aspects of the environmental analysis, and will use the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as a basis for its decision regarding issuance of the special use authorization and determining under what terms and conditions the authorization should be issued. The applicable Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) establish management direction including Standards and Guidelines for land and resource management on the Forest (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 219). Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), consistency with these Standards and Guidelines must be demonstrated prior to Project approval (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.10(e)). The Forest Plan may be amended to permit projects that are inconsistent with Plan direction (36 CFR 219.10(f)). The Forest Service has determined that, depending on the route selected, the proposed Project would have inconsistencies with certain aspects of the Medicine Bow, Caribou, and Sawtooth Forest Plans. Any decisions to amend a plan would be made concurrent with a decision on the proposed Project.

2 PLANNING PROCESS

The planning action is to consider amending three Forest Plans as a part of the EIS. Scoping meetings have been held for this Project, where the public, as well as state, local, tribal, and federal governments were invited to participate in the planning process. Public scoping was initiated with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register on May 16, 2008 (73 *Federal Register* 28425). The NOI was followed by a series of nine public meetings held in 2008. Four of these meetings were held in Wyoming, and five were held in Idaho:

- Tuesday, June 3, 2008, in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, Idaho;
- Tuesday, June 3, 2008, in Murphy, Idaho;
- Wednesday, June 4, 2008, in Pocatello, Idaho;
- Wednesday, June 4, 2008, in Boise, Idaho;

- Thursday, June 5, 2008, in Montpelier, Idaho;
- June 9, 2008, in Casper, Wyoming;
- June 10, 2008, in Rawlins, Wyoming;
- June 11, 2008, in Rock Springs, Wyoming; and
- June 12, 2008, in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

Multiple meetings were also held between 2008 and 2009 with private landowners located within 2 miles of the Project's Proposed and Alternative Routes. The Draft EIS was released in July 2011. Seventeen public meetings were held (4 in Wyoming, 12 in Idaho, 1 in Nevada) during the 90-day public comment period to give the public an opportunity to comment on and provide additional information regarding the Project, including the possibility of Plan amendments. Public and agency comments were considered and changes were made where appropriate, both in the EIS and in the proposed amendments.

2.1 PLANNING ISSUES AND CRITERIA

The NOI listed the planning issues that were anticipated and invited the public, other federal agencies, as well as state, local, and Tribal governments to identify additional concerns or issues during scoping meetings and the comment period that followed.

2.1.1 Planning Issues

The issues identified through public scoping and which have been used to develop alternatives are as follows:

- Objection to location on private lands;
- Reliability and proposed separation distances of transmission lines;
- Avoiding sensitive areas such as National Monuments and Wildlife Refuges, military operating areas, National Conservation Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Roadless Areas, and State Parks;
- Effects to Native American traditional cultural properties and respected places;
- Effects to paleontological resources;
- Effects on wildlife habitat, plants, and animals including threatened, endangered, and sensitive species;
- Effects to visual resources and existing viewsheds;
- Effects to National Historic Trails and their viewsheds;
- Land use conflicts and consistency with land use plans;
- Effects to soils and water from surface-disturbing activities;
- Effects to agriculture lands;
- Effect on local and regional socioeconomic conditions; and
- Management of invasive plant species and effective reclamation.

2.1.2 Planning Criteria

The following general planning criteria are being considered in the development of the proposed plan amendment:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA);
- Existing laws, regulations, and Forest Service policies;
- Plans, programs and policies of other federal, state and local governments, and Indian Tribes;
- Public input;
- Future needs and demands for existing or potential resource commodities and values;
- Past and present use of public and adjacent lands;
- Environmental impacts;
- Social and economic values;
- Public welfare and safety; and
- President's National Energy Policy.

3 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Amendments to Forest Plans may be needed to bring the Project into compliance with the applicable Forest Plans for lands crossed by the Project, depending on the final route selected. The final text of the amendment(s) would depend on final conditions of approval for the Project. Inconsistencies of the Project with the applicable Forest Plans include the following:

- Building additional roads where motorized access is limited,
- Effects on wildlife habitat,
- Effects on recreation, and
- Effects on scenery/visual resources.

Effects on visual resources were determined through the use of computer modeling, field visits, and site-specific knowledge by Forest staff. The analysis and effects determinations on visual resources are documented in Appendix G-2. The proposed amendments reference the analysis, maps of the locations, referred to as the areas of inconsistency (AOIs), photographs, and simulations included in Appendix G-2.

3.1 MEDICINE BOW FOREST PLAN

Digest: Modifies Management Direction to authorize transmission line construction, operations, and maintenance on Medicine Bow National Forest (NF)¹, Wyoming.

¹ While the Medicine Bow and Routt NFs are managed as one unit, the land and resource management plan discussed in this amendment applies only to the Medicine Bow NF.

3.1.1 Reason for Amendment

This amendment to the *Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 2003 Revision*² (referred to hereafter as the Medicine Bow Forest Plan) would allow for approval of a construction permit and granting of an authorization for operation and maintenance of high-voltage transmission lines on portions of the Medicine Bow NF, Wyoming. The Project includes rebuilding one line that crosses the Forest as well as the construction of one additional line. These two lines are generally parallel, and would each cross approximately 2.3 miles of the Douglas Ranger District. Because a portion of the Project would cross the Forest, the Forest Service is a cooperating federal agency. A Record of Decision (ROD) is expected to be published in the summer of 2013.

3.1.2 Route Descriptions

3.1.2.1 Proposed Routes

Two transmission lines would cross the Medicine Bow NF under the Proposed Action (within this area, the BLM Preferred Route is the Proponents' Proposed Route). An existing transmission line, referred to as Segment 1W(a), would be rebuilt. A new transmission line, referred to as Segment 1W(c), would be built parallel to this line (1W[a]) and located approximately 1,500 feet to the southeast. Both lines would be within the WWE corridor, which is allocated to Management Area (MA) 8.3—Utility Corridors and Electronic Sites. Project road construction and reconstruction would occur within MA 8.3 as well as MA 3.31, Backcountry Recreation-Year-round Motorized.

3.1.2.2 Alternatives Considered

The Gateway West EIS considered a No Action Alternative. If the No Action Alternative is selected, the Right-of-Way (ROW) Grant and Special Use Authorization for the Project would not be approved. Under this alternative, the existing transmission would not be rebuilt and the additional transmission line would not be built across the Forest at this time; therefore, no plan amendments would be required. The Draft EIS also considered a second new transmission line (Segment 1E) and an alternative (1E-C) that would cross the Forest approximately 1,500 feet to the west or east of the Segment 1W lines, respectively. Neither of these alternatives is still under consideration.

3.1.2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Study

An alternative that bypassed the Forest (the Shirley Basin Alternative) was considered but eliminated because it was 72 miles longer than the Proposed Route, crossed historic trails not crossed by the Proposed Route, crossed Seminoe State Park, and was not consistent with the Wyoming Governor's sage-grouse policy. The Draft EIS also considered several alternatives to the Segment 1E Proposed Route but eliminated them from consideration due to greater environmental impacts. These included the East Laramie Mountains Alternative, the Fetterman Road Alternative, the Central Laramie Mountains Alternative, and the Medicine Bow Alternative.

² Forest Service. 2003. *Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 2003 Revision*. Rocky Mountain Region. Laramie, Wyoming. December.

3.1.3 Standards to be Amended

The Medicine Bow Forest Plan contains Standards and Guidelines for activities that can be conducted on NFS lands.

Standards are actions that must be followed or are required limits to activities that must be followed to achieve Forest goals. Deviations from Standards must be analyzed and documented in a Forest Plan amendment (Page 1-25).

Guidelines are advisable courses of action that should be followed to achieve Forest goals. Deviations from Guidelines must be analyzed during project-level analysis and documented in a project decision document but do not require a Forest Plan amendment (Page 1-25).

The Medicine Bow Forest Plan was reviewed to identify Standards relevant to the Project (refer to the Consistency Table for the Medicine Bow Forest Plan in the Administrative Record). Where the Project requires an amendment, the relevant specific direction is included below. A summary of proposed amendment components follows in Section 3.1.3.

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species—Standard 4 (Forest Plan 1-42) and Standard 5 (Forest Plan 1-42)

Standard 4: Within each occupied northern goshawk territory, select three nests and protect 30 acres of dense vegetation surrounding each, defining the boundaries of each area based on habitat quality. If fewer than 3 nests are found within an occupied territory, substitute 30-acre areas with characteristics of nesting habitat.

Standard 5: Within each occupied northern goshawk territory, designate a northern goshawk post-fledging area (PFA) of a minimum of 200 acres that includes the three 30-acre nest sites selected. The large tree component within the PFA should include snags, down dead wood, and clumps of trees with interlocking crowns. Within the PFA, prohibit management activities that may degrade goshawk foraging habitat.

Need for Amendment: Based on existing historical data, northern goshawk nests are present near the portion of the Project located on the Medicine Bow NF; however, surveys conducted in 2010 for Segments 1W(a) and 1W(c) determined that these nests are no longer active. The 2010 surveys did confirm that goshawks still occupy the area (based on call back responses from goshawks on adjacent private land) and are likely still nesting in the area. As goshawks nest in this general area, and Project construction would remove suitable goshawk habitat, a plan amendment is needed to allow the Project.

Habitat near historic northern goshawk nests would be disturbed during construction, which would result in a direct loss of habitat, as well as creating a potential to disturb birds in adjacent habitats. On the Medicine Bow NF, approximately 1.4 acres of forested habitat within 1 mile of historic nests would be impacted by construction along Segment 1W(a) and 17.5 acres along Segment 1W(c). ROW maintenance would remove snags from the immediate footprint of the Project, further reducing habitat; however, snags would remain in forested areas that are located directly adjacent to the ROW and road footprints. In addition, shrub habitats that may currently serve as hunting habitats for the northern goshawk would also be impacted. An amendment to

the Medicine Bow Forest Plan allowing the Project would be needed, which will follow timing restrictions for northern goshawks.

Mitigation: Design roads to avoid goshawk habitat to the extent feasible. Survey prior to construction during the appropriate season to identify active nests. Medicine Bow NF timing restrictions for northern goshawks would be followed (see WILD-1, WILD-3, WILD-6, WILD-8, WILD-9, TESWL-14, and other mitigation measures in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS).

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species—Standard 11 (Forest Plan 1-44)

Standard: Allow no loss or degradation of known or historic habitat for the boreal toad, wood frog, or northern leopard frog.

Need for Amendment: Construction of the Project would disturb approximately 0.1 acre of wetland and riparian habitat on the Medicine Bow NF. Boreal toads and wood frogs are not found in the Project area; however, the northern leopard frog may be present. The area crossed by the proposed transmission lines provides suitable habitat for the northern leopard frog; therefore, a plan amendment is required. An amendment would be needed allowing the Gateway West Transmission Line Project to be approved by the Medicine Bow NF. Mitigation measures would be applied to reduce impacts to the northern leopard frog habitat.

Mitigation: To minimize impacts to wetland and riparian habitat on the Medicine Bow NF, Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power (the Proponents) would implement a Project Reclamation Plan (VIS-14), which will include a site-specific plan for ROW vegetation management in riparian and wetland areas. Additionally, applicable Forest Plan buffers and requirements would be observed where physically and economically feasible (WET-1). Where impacts cannot be avoided, a site-specific crossing plan and measures to mitigate impacts will be submitted to the Forest and other regulatory agencies for approval (WET-3). Crossing plans will demonstrate that vegetation removal is minimized, show how sediment would be controlled during construction and operation within wetland and riparian areas, attempt to intersect the wetland or riparian habitat at its edge, and provide measures to restore habitat and ensure conservation of riparian microclimates. To further reduce impacts, topsoil in affected wetlands shall be segregated during construction and reapplied during restoration (REC-18, SOIL-7). Additional mitigation measures in Table 2.7-1 would apply.

Scenery Management, Standard 1 (Forest Plan 1-56)

Standard: Apply the Scenery Management System (SMS) to all NFS lands. Travel routes, use areas, and waterbodies determined to be of primary importance are a concern Level 1 and appropriate Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) are established according to the SMS.

Need for Amendment: The SMS was used to identify effects to SIOs. The proposed transmission lines cross one MA: MA 8.3—Utility Corridors with an SIO of “compatible with adjacent management areas”. The adjacent area has a Moderate SIO.

Segments 1W(a) and 1W(c) would each cross approximately 2.3 miles of NFS land classified as MA 8.3. MA 8.3 allows development in utility corridors to be obvious and to dominate foreground views; however, the utility corridor should be consistent with the

SIOs of adjacent MAs. The adjacent area is MA 3.31, where the SIO is Moderate. Forest Plan direction for the SIO of Moderate is “Management activities remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape being viewed. Activities may repeat form, line, color, or texture common to the characteristic landscape but may not change in their qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction, pattern, etc.” Transmission lines are considered inconsistent with the SIO of Moderate (Forest Plan, page 3.2-70). An amendment would be needed to allow the Project to cross areas managed according to Moderate SIOs. Refer to Appendix G-2 of the EIS for the scenery analysis.

Mitigation: To minimize visual impacts, the following Forest Plan Guideline will be followed: Crossing the Medicine Bow NF along a transmission corridor shall require the preparation of a vegetation management plan for the utility corridor to minimize scenic impacts and plan for rehabilitation of existing impacts (see Appendix B of the EIS).

The following additional mitigation would also be implemented: 1) towers on both transmission lines shall be similar to reduce contrast (VIS-3); 2) a construction and maintenance plan shall be developed and approved by the Forest Service prior to construction to reduce ROW scarring and enhance restoration (VIS-14); 3) no paint or permanent coloring agents shall be applied to mark the clearing area boundary except as required by the timber settlement contract (VIS-4); 4) the edges of the cleared area shall be feathered to give a natural appearance (VIS-13); 5) access roads shall follow landform contours where practicable to minimize ground disturbance and reduce scarring/visual contrast (VIS-5); and 6) steel towers shall have a dull galvanized finish and insulators would be made of non-reflective material (VIS-1). Additional mitigation measures are listed in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

Management Area Prescriptions—3.31 Backcountry Recreation, Year-Round Motorized, General, Standard 1 and Infrastructure Standard 2 (Forest Plan 2-34)

Standard 1: Allow uses and activities only if they do not degrade the primitive character of the area.

Infrastructure Standard 2: Prohibit new road construction or existing road reconstruction unless needed to honor existing rights.

Need for Amendment: Approximately 2.3 miles of Segment 1W would cross the Forest within an existing utility corridor (MA 8.1); however, roads needed for the Project would cross an area allocated to MA 3.31—Backcountry Recreation, Year-round Motorized (see Figure 3.19-5 in Section 3.19 of the EIS). The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classification for this area is Semi-primitive Motorized. Within this ROS classification, trails and primitive roads are consistent with the primitive setting but new road construction and reconstruction are not. Approximately 1.7 miles of the 4.8 miles of reconstructed road and 0.2 mile of the 3.4 miles of proposed new roads would be outside of the WWE corridor; therefore, the Project would be inconsistent with the Forest Plan. An amendment would be needed to allow road construction and reconstruction associated with the Project in an area with an ROS of Semi-Primitive Motorized allocated to MA 3.31—Backcountry Recreation, Year-round Motorized.

Mitigation: Visual mitigation measures will be implemented, as described above, resulting in development of a construction and maintenance plan to reduce ROW scarring and enhance restoration (VIS-14); no permanent marking for clearing area

boundary except as required by the timber settlement contract (VIS-4); feathering the ROW edges for a more natural appearance (VIS-13); following landforms where practicable when constructing access roads (VIS-5); and constructing the towers with dull galvanized coating and making the insulators out of non-reflective material (VIS-1). Additional mitigation measures are listed in Table 2.7-1 of the EIS.

3.1.4 Proposed Amendment

- The Gateway West Transmission Line Project will be allowed, provided the following measures are implemented:
 - Medicine Bow-Routt NFs timing restrictions for northern goshawks will be followed.
 - Mitigation measures, to be approved by the Medicine Bow-Routt NFs, will be applied to reduce impacts to the northern leopard frog.
 - Mitigation measures will be applied to minimize visual impacts.
 - Areas within MA 3.31 Backcountry Recreation where roads are constructed or reconstructed for the Project will be allocated to an ROS of Roaded Natural.

3.1.5 Amendment Applicability

This amendment to Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines would apply only for those lands identified in the Gateway West Final EIS and ROD, and as included under the special use authorization. Lands not analyzed must undergo analysis following Guidelines set forth in 36 CFR 228.102 prior to any additional authorizations. Those lands not impacted by the special use authorization shall continue to be managed under the existing management prescriptions, Standards, and Guidelines.

3.1.6 NEPA Analysis

The NEPA evaluation of this proposed amendment, as called for by 36 CFR Part 219, Section 219.10(f), has been performed as part of the Project EIS process. As part of the proposed plan amendment evaluation, a determination as to whether the proposed amendment is a significant or non-significant amendment to the current plan will be made and documented in the ROD for the Project. This amendment is consistent with NEPA, 40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508, Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 (09/20/10), and 26 CFR 220.

3.1.7 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-2 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation. A summary of effects specific to the above proposed amendments is presented below.

Amending Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species Standards 4 and 5 of the Forest Plan would result in direct loss of habitat and physical disturbance to northern goshawks within and adjacent to the planning area (as is discussed above). Effects of this disturbance may include avoidance of previous nesting areas by birds that would

otherwise have used existing nests. Reduction of forest cover due to ROW maintenance could further affect behavior and habitat suitability. Where shrub habitats are disturbed, the disruption to prey species could result in impact on northern goshawk by altering prey behaviors and thus availability.

Amending Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species Standard 11 of the Forest Plan to allow the Project in areas would likely result in disturbance of approximately 1 acre of wetland and riparian habitat. Mitigation measures would aim to minimize disturbance; however, some loss of habitat is likely to occur. This could negatively impact the local population of northern leopard frogs (if present) within the affected area due to changes in vegetation cover, water quality, and surface disturbance.

Permitting the Project through areas with a Moderate SIO would result in impacts to scenic values that are not consistent with a Moderate SIO. The presence of an additional transmission line would further detract from the natural setting and likely impact the visual experience for recreational users of the NF. Mitigation measures and the remoteness of the area would likely result in relatively few viewers impacted, however the presence of a new transmission line through the forest would increase the visual impact of the existing ROW.

Changing the ROS from “semi-primitive motorized” to “roaded natural” in MA 3.31—Backcountry Recreation, Year-Round Motorized would allow for higher visibility of man-made structures as well as allow for road construction and reconstruction. This change would result in altering both the physical and visual characteristics of the landscape, which would not maintain the primitive characteristic of the area. Changing the ROS would affect recreational users as well as wildlife within the land adjacent to the areas impacted by the Project.

3.2 CARIBOU FOREST PLAN

Digest: Establishes a new corridor of Management Prescription 8.1—Concentrated Development Area, to authorize transmission line construction, operations, and maintenance on the Caribou NF³, Idaho.

3.2.1 Reason for Amendment

Portions of Segment 4 of the Project cross areas of the Cache NF administered by the Caribou NF currently designated as Management Prescriptions 5.2—Forest Vegetation Management, 2.7.2 (Elk and Deer Winter Range), 3.2—Semi-Primitive Recreation, and 2.8.3—Aquatic Influence Zone. To be consistent with Forest Plan direction, an amendment is needed to designate the ROW for the proposed 500-kV line as Prescription 8.1—Concentrated Development Areas and change the ROS, in applicable areas, from Semi-Primitive Non-motorized to Roded Natural. The amendment is proposed for the Forest Service’s Preferred Route. The Preferred Route includes the Proposed Route across the Forest with the inclusion of Alternative 4G.

This amendment to the *Revised Forest Plan for the Caribou National Forest*⁴ (hereafter referred to as the Caribou Forest Plan) would allow for approval of a special use

³ While the Caribou NF and Targhee NF are managed as one unit, the land and resource management plan discussed in this amendment applies only to the Caribou portion of the NF.

authorization for the construction and operations of the Project on the Caribou portion of the Caribou-Targhee NF, Idaho. The BLM, as the lead agency, is preparing a Final EIS on an application from the Proponents for a ROW grant to use the National System of Public Lands for portions of the Project in Idaho and Wyoming. The application was originally submitted to the BLM in May 2007, and most recently was revised in January 2010 to reflect refinements in the proposed Project. Approximately 9.1 miles of the proposed 990.5-mile transmission line are located on the Caribou-Targhee NF.

As a cooperating agency, the Forest Service has and will continue to participate in all aspects of the environmental analysis, and will use the EIS as a basis for its decision regarding issuance of the special use authorization and determining under what terms and conditions the permit should be issued. The Caribou Forest Plan establishes management direction including Standards and Guidelines for land and resource management on the Forest (36 CFR 219). Under the NFMA, consistency with these Standards and Guidelines must be demonstrated prior to project approval (16 U.S.C. 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.10(e)). The Forest Plan may be amended to permit projects that are inconsistent with Forest Plan direction (36 CFR 219.10(f) and Caribou Forest Plan pp. 1-3 and 1-4).

The NEPA analysis for the Project indicates that approval of the special use authorization would be inconsistent, in some instances, with Standards and Guidelines in the Caribou Forest Plan.

3.2.2 Route Descriptions

3.2.2.1 Proposed Route

The Proposed Route for Segment 4 crosses the eastern boundary of the Forest in Section 12, Township 12 South, Range 42 East near milepost (MP) 161.0. The route continues in a west/northwest direction for approximately 9.1 miles before exiting the Forest near MP 170 (at the western boundary of Section 3, Township 12 South, Range 41 East). The Proposed Route would create a new ROW approximately 1 mile north of an existing utility corridor. Constraints in this subsection include steep slopes, unstable soils, and Retention and Partial Retention VQOs.

3.2.2.2 Alternatives Considered

The Project EIS considered a No Action Alternative. If this alternative is selected, the ROW Grant and Special Use Authorization for the Project would not be approved. Under the No Action Alternative, the transmission line would not be built across the Forest at this time and no plan amendment would be required.

Alternative 4G was proposed by the Forest Service to avoid crossing steep slopes and unstable soils along a portion of the Proposed Route in Sections 1 and 2, Township 12 South, Range 41 East. These areas were identified by a soil survey completed in October 2012 by the Forest Service. Alternative 4G would diverge from the Proposed Route within the Forest near MP 167.0, follow a north/northwest and then a west/southwest alignment along a ridge for approximately 2.6 miles. Alternative 4G would then rejoin the Proposed Route near MP 169.4, approximately 0.75 mile from the

⁴ Forest Service. 2003. Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Caribou National Forest. Intermountain Region, Idaho Falls, Idaho. February.

Forest's western boundary. This route would be approximately 9.4 miles long, approximately 0.3 mile longer than the Proposed Route. If the Proposed Route with the Alternative 4G variation is selected, approximately 14.3 miles of new road would be required for the Forest Service's Preferred Route. In addition, approximately 6.2 miles of existing road would be improved.

3.2.2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated From Detailed Study

The Draft EIS considered an alternative that avoided the Caribou-Targhee NF. It was identified as the "Southern WWE Corridor" (page 2-64 of the Draft EIS). It was considered but eliminated from detailed study because it 1) did not meet the Proponents' Objectives (it did not connect to the Populus or Borah Substations); 2) would be located in densely populated areas of the northern Salt Lake metropolitan area; and 3) was significantly longer than the Proposed Route. This route would have required crossing the Wasatch-Cache NF in Utah.

An alternative was also considered that followed the existing transmission line for 3 miles (offset by 1,500 feet) before turning north towards the Proposed Route (page 2-68 of the Draft EIS). It generally followed the Proposed Route (but somewhat south of it) across the Forest. This alternative was not selected for detailed analysis because the Forest staff recommended a different route that was more feasible in regard to constructability and environmental impacts.

An alignment was also considered that exactly paralleled the existing 345-kV powerline in North Canyon, but offset by 1,500 feet to the north. This alignment was not considered in detail because the Forest staff determined that it unnecessarily impacted a substantial length of North Canyon Creek and the associated Aquatic Influence Zone (AIZ).

3.2.3 Forest Plan Direction to be Amended

The Caribou Forest Plan includes three types of direction:

- **Management Prescriptions**, a set of management practices, are applied to a specific area of land to attain multiple-use and other goals and objectives. They identify the emphasis and focus of multiple-use management activities in a specific area; however, emphasis, as used in this context, is defined as a focus or a highlight and does not necessarily mean exclusive use. The specific direction stated in a management prescription determines what uses are allowed and to what extent the uses are permitted. Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines apply unless specified in the Management Prescription direction.
- **Standards** are used to promote the achievement of the desired future conditions and objectives at the Forest or Management Prescription level. Standards are binding limitations on management activities that are within the authority of the Forest Service to enforce. A Standard can also be expressed as a constraint on management activities or practices (Forest Plan, page 3-1). Exceptions to Standards require analysis to be disclosed in a NEPA document and a Forest Plan amendment.
- **Guidelines** are used in the same way as Standards but tend to be operationally flexible to respond to variations, such as changing site conditions or changed

management circumstances. Under the Caribou Forest Plan, Guidelines are a preferred or advisable course of action, and they are expected to be carried out, unless site-specific analysis identifies a better approach (Forest Plan, page 3-1). Exceptions to Guidelines require the analysis be disclosed in a NEPA document and a Forest Plan Amendment is needed unless a better site-specific approach is identified in the NEPA document.

The Caribou Forest Plan was reviewed to identify Management Prescriptions, Standards, and Guidelines relevant to the Project (refer to the Consistency Table for the Caribou Revised Forest Plan [2003] in the Administrative Record). Where the Project requires an amendment, the relevant specific direction is included below. A summary of proposed amendment components follows in Section 3.2.5.

3.2.3.1 Transportation and Utility Corridors (RFP 3-11)

Standard 1: Existing and proposed rights-of-way of the following types shall be designated as corridors (Management Prescription 8.1). This does not prevent the inclusion of lower-rated transmission lines or smaller pipelines within the corridors.

- Communication lines and zones for interstate use.
- Railroads.
- Federal, state, interstate, and forest highways.
- Electric transmission lines of 66KV and greater, including fiber optics.
- Oil, gas, slurry, or other pipelines 10 inches or larger in diameter.

Guideline 7: Pipelines and other related utilities should share utility corridors except as needed to meet other resource goals.

Need for Amendment: The proposed ROW crosses the Caribou-Targhee NF in areas that are not designated as Management Prescription 8.1—Concentrated Development Area—and where the current Management Prescriptions (2.8.3, 3.2, 5.2, and 6.2, described below) are not consistent with a transmission line. Existing utility corridors do not have sufficient width to accommodate a new 500-kV transmission line. Therefore, an amendment would be required to designate the Gateway West Transmission Line ROW as a new utility corridor, Management Prescription 8.1. This amendment would allow for the construction of the Project outside of the currently designated utility corridors.

Mitigation: The Project will follow best management practices (BMPs) and implement a variety of mitigation measures to minimize environmental impacts. See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for a complete list of mitigation measures for wildlife, vegetation, scenic, recreation, aquatic, and riparian resources.

3.2.3.2 Vegetation, Guideline 5 (RFP 3-20)

Guideline: Use methods of vegetation treatment that emulate natural disturbance and successional processes.

Need for Amendment: Maintaining a ROW that has been cleared of trees would not emulate natural disturbance and successional processes in forested areas. Therefore, an amendment would be needed to designate the ROW as a new utility corridor

(Management Prescription 8.1). The Caribou Forest Plan states: “Lands where Category 8 prescriptions are applied are likely to be permanently altered by human activities beyond the level needed to maintain natural appearing landscapes and ecological processes. These land areas are generally small. Ecological values are protected where they affect the health and welfare of human occupancy. Mines, utility corridors or other concentrated uses are included in this prescription category (RFP-78).”

Mitigation: The Proponents will meet the terms and stipulations within the timber sale contracts for timber removal operations on the Caribou-Targhee NF (VEG-9). Forest staff will also approve tree seedlings planted in decommissioned roadbeds and other temporarily disturbed areas to assure seedlings are matched to site conditions (VEG-6). The Forest staff will approve the seed mixes to be used for revegetation to ensure disturbed soils are not allowed to support noxious weeds or invasive species (WEED-1). Monitoring will be required (VEG-8 and SOIL-5). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures for revegetation, soil protection, and weed prevention.

3.2.3.3 Wildlife – Snag/Cavity Nesting Habitat (3-27)

Standard 2: Snags with existing cavities or nests shall be the priority for retention.

Guideline 2: Hard-snag densities for various biological potentials should be approximately as follows [in Table 3.3] by forest type.

Guideline 3: Retain live trees for future snag recruitment using the guidelines in Table 3.4.

Need for Amendment: Maintaining snags and live trees for future snag recruitment is generally not feasible within the ROW. Therefore, a plan amendment designating the proposed ROW as a utility corridor (Prescription 8.1) would be required. This will allow for cutting all snags. Maintaining snags is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).

Mitigation: To the extent feasible, all vegetation clearing would be conducted prior to the onset of the avian breeding season in order to limit the potential impact of clearing on nesting birds (WILD-10). Pre-construction pedestrian or aerial surveys will be completed during appropriate nesting time periods, needed to identify each raptor species (WILD-8). If an active nest is found during pre-construction surveys, the nest will be avoided until any young have fledged. In addition, snags shall be maintained to the extent practical along the outer portions of the ROW to reduce impacts to habitat for cavity nesters (WILD-11). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.3.4 Scenic Resources (RFP 3-40)

Standard 1: Objectives for scenery (either Visual Quality Objectives [VQOs] or SIOs) shall be met along Scenic or Historic Byways, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and other sensitive travel routes and special emphasis areas.

Guideline 2: Until the SMS is fully implemented, projects should be planned and implemented to meet the VQOs as displayed on the Forest VQO map.

Need for Amendment: Although three transmission lines and State Route 36 cross the Forest within 1 to 4 miles of the proposed ROW, the portion of the Forest crossed by the Project has VQOs of Retention and Partial Retention. Management activities in areas classified as Retention should not be evident to the casual Forest visitor. Management activities in areas classified as Partial Retention may be evident but should be subordinate to the characteristic landscape. The Proponents have worked with the Forest Service to site the proposed transmission line to minimize visual impacts; the Project would not violate the VQO for any Scenic or Historic Byways or Wild and Scenic Rivers. A Project-level management plan amendment is proposed to change the ROW to Management Prescription 8.1. Prescription 8.1 does not contain retention or partial retention as stated in the Forest Plan description (page RFP 4-78): “Lands where Category 8 prescription are applied are likely to be permanently altered by human activities beyond the level needed to maintain appearing natural landscapes.” Therefore, the effect of changing the current management prescriptions to Prescription 8.1 would be to remove these acres from the Partial Retention and Retention VQO categories. Refer to Appendix G-2 for the scenery analysis.

Mitigation: To mitigate potential visual impacts from Segment 4 within the Forest, the following measures shall be implemented: 1) a construction and maintenance plan shall be developed and approved by the Forest Service prior to construction to reduce ROW scarring and enhance restoration (VIS-14); 2) no paint or permanent coloring agents shall be applied to mark the clearing area boundary other than that required under the timber sale contract (VIS-4); 3) the edges of the cleared area shall be feathered to give a natural appearance (VIS-13); 4) access roads shall follow landform contours where practicable to minimize ground disturbance and reduce scarring (visual contrast) (VIS-5); and 5) the towers shall have a dull galvanized coating and insulators would be made of non-reflective material (VIS-1). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.3.5 Recreation Guideline 4 (RFP 3-40)

Guideline: Projects should be planned and implemented to meet the ROS as depicted on the Forest ROS map.

Need for Amendment: Approximately 84 percent of the segment crossing the Caribou NF (7.7 miles) crosses lands allocated to the Roded Natural ROS class. The remainder (1.5 miles) is allocated to Semi-Primitive Motorized. An estimated 14.3 miles of new road would be required along the portion of Segment 4 that crosses the Caribou NF, and an estimated 7.6 miles of existing road would require improvement. Semi-Primitive Motorized is defined as having a natural setting with moderately dominant alterations that would not draw the attention of motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area. Structures are rare and isolated. The transmission line and new or improved roads associated with the Project would not be compatible with the Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS designation. The proposed Project-level management plan amendment to change the ROW to Management Prescription 8.1 would result in the area within the ROW (125 feet on each side of the transmission line) having an ROS of Roded Natural. The Caribou Forest Plan would be also amended such that the area from the edge of the ROW out 375 feet and within 500 feet of new

access roads outside this area will have an ROS of Roaded Natural (affecting approximately 728 acres).

Mitigation: Temporary roads would be decommissioned using Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (TRANS-11). Roads needed for future access to the towers would be reduced to an 8-foot width and revegetated using low-growing plants (TRANS-14). These roads would be closed to the public and would be maintained by the Proponents in accordance with the Special Use Authorization (TRANS-14). Existing roads used for the Project would be restored to their pre-construction condition (TRANS-10). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.3.6 Table 3.5 Management Standards and Guidelines within Active Goshawk Nesting Territories (RFP 3-30).

The management Standards and Guidelines in Table 3.5, Management Standards and Guidelines within Active Goshawk Nesting Territories (Forest Plan page 3-30), apply to all forest types within active and historic goshawk nesting territories. Standards and guidelines within this table that apply to the proposed amendment are:

- **Standard/Guideline:** Goshawk Nesting Areas on the Caribou-Targhee NF are defined as areas greater than or equal to 200 acres, post-fledging family areas are defined as areas greater than or equal to 400 acres centered on the nest, and Foraging Areas on the Caribou-Targhee NF are defined as areas greater than or equal to 5,400 acres around nests.
- **Standard/Guideline:** No created openings within goshawk nesting areas, and the maximum created opening is less than or equal to 40 acres within the post-fledging family area and the foraging area.

Need for Amendment: Surveys and historical data indicate that the Project would cross through a portion of the Forest occupied by goshawks. The Preferred Route would affect foraging areas of nest 307, 308, 309, 349, TT_CNF_1, and TT_CNF_2, as well as the post-fledging family areas of nests 308, 309, and TT CNF 1 (see Tables 3.11-11p and 3.11-11q in Section 3.11 of the EIS). In addition, roads needed for the Project would impact 3 acres of coniferous forest and 2 acres of grass/shrubland habitat within the nesting area of nest 309. Furthermore, the initial disturbance, as well as ROW maintenance during operations, would remove snags from the immediate footprint of the Project. As the clearing of vegetation within the foraging areas would exceed 40 acres of continuous forested habitat, and clearing would occur within nesting areas, the Project is not currently consistent with the Caribou's Standards and Guidelines (Forest Plan page 3-30). The Project would also not be consistent with the guidelines for rotation age, downed logs (in the long term), and thinning presented in Table 3.5 (Management Standards and Guidelines within Active Goshawk Nesting Territories) of the Caribou Forest Plan. Therefore, a plan amendment is needed to allow the Project, with mitigation, where it would otherwise not be permitted.

In addition, the Proposed Route would impact foraging areas associated with nests 307, 308, 309, 349, TT CNF 1, and TT CNF 2 (see Table 3.11-8 in Section 3.11 of the EIS). Therefore, a plan amendment would also be associated with selection of the Proposed Route.

Mitigation: Design roads to reduce impacts to goshawks to the extent feasible. Survey prior to construction during the appropriate season to identify active nests (WILD-4, WILD-8) and follow timing restrictions for nesting goshawks (WILD-1). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.3.7 Transportation – Access, Guideline 1 (RFP 3-39)

Guideline: The construction of new or maintenance of existing, motorized and non-motorized access routes should be consistent with the ROS class in which they are located.

Need for Amendment: The Project would include construction of access roads in an area of ROS class Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, which is inconsistent with that class. Therefore, an amendment would be required to convert affected land from Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized to Roded Natural. Specifically, the area within 375 feet of the edge of the ROW and within 500 feet of new access roads would have an ROS of Roded Natural. (The area within the ROW would be converted automatically to Roded Natural when the ROW is designated as Management Prescription 8.1).

Mitigation: All temporary and permanent roads on NFS land will comply with Forest Transportation Plan requirements (TRANS-14). Temporary roads would be decommissioned using Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (G-2). Roads needed for future access to the towers would be reduced to an 8-foot width and revegetated using low-growing plants. The remainder of the roadway would be restored to the extent feasible. See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.3.8 Management Prescription 2.8.3 – Aquatic Influence Zone (RFP 4-45)

Lands, Guideline 1: Avoid locating facilities and utility corridors in Aquatic Influence Zones.

Wildlife, Standard 1: Snags shall be maintained at = 80 percent of biological potential for woodpeckers.

Timber, Guideline 1: Timber harvest, including fuelwood cutting, is generally not allowed unless: a) Catastrophic events such as fire, flooding, wind, or insect damage result in degraded riparian conditions, and unscheduled timber harvest (salvage and commercial fuelwood cutting) is selected as the most desirable management practice, or b) Silvicultural practices are necessary to achieve desired vegetation characteristics and desired AIZ attributes.

Need for Amendment: Some road crossings of AIZs and tree removal (live and snags) in AIZs are unavoidable. Therefore, an amendment would be required designating the ROW as a new utility corridor (Management Prescription 8.1), allowing AIZs to be crossed, and the removal of timber within AIZs to allow the construction and maintenance of the transmission line project.

Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79). As stated on page 4-45 of the Forest Plan: “AIZ management direction overrides direction from other overlapping management areas.” and “Prescription direction applies where these areas occur on the Forest.” Although the forest prescription map will show one continuous polygon for the ROW, the

Standards and Guidelines, as amended, will continue to apply to the AIZs within the ROW.

Mitigation: To minimize impacts to AIZs, riparian/wetland crossing-specific plans will be developed that a) demonstrate that vegetation removal is minimized, b) show how sediment would be controlled during construction and operation, c) attempt to intersect the wetland or riparian habitat at its edge, d) provide measures to restore habitat and ensure conservation of riparian microclimates. These plans would be submitted to the Forest Service for approval prior to construction of any portion of the Project within sensitive riparian habitat (TESWL-14). Agency consultation is also required prior to siting and design for stream crossings (WQA-24). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures related to AIZs.

Where possible, low-growing vegetation and small tree species within the ROW that will not grow into the minimum required clearance distance will be left in place (OM-9). Also, prior to clearing, a site-specific plan with tree removal, slash disposal plans, and BMPs to avoid erosion or sedimentation of watercourses or wetlands must be submitted to the Forest Service for approval (VEG-9).

3.2.3.9 Management Prescription 3.2 – Semi-Primitive Recreation (RFP 4-57)

Wildlife, Guideline 1: Maintain snags at = 60 percent biological potential for woodpeckers.

Need for Amendment: Maintaining snags and live trees for future snag recruitment is generally not feasible within the ROW. Therefore, a plan amendment designating the proposed ROW as a utility corridor (Management Prescription 8.1) would be required. Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).

Mitigation: To the extent feasible, all vegetation clearing would be conducted prior to the onset of the avian breeding season in order to limit the potential impact of clearing on nesting birds. An avian protection plan approved by the USFWS will be followed. Pre-construction surveys within the disturbed portion of the ROW (WILD-8) will be conducted. If an active nest is found during pre-construction surveys, the nest will be avoided until any young have fledged (WILD-9). Avoidance distances are species-specific and must be approved by a USFWS-approved biologist. In addition, snags shall be maintained to the extent practical along the outer portions of the ROW to reduce impacts to habitat for cavity nesters (WILD-10). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.3.10 Management Prescription 5.2 – Forest Vegetation Management (RFP 4-71)

Wildlife, Guideline 1: Maintain snag habitat at = 40 percent of the biological potential for woodpeckers.

Vegetation, Guideline 1: Where aspen exists, it should be maintained or enhanced as a component through restoration treatments.

Need for Amendment: Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Forest Plan, page RFP 4-79). Aspen would not be enhanced within the ROW. Trees will be managed to provide adequate clearance

under powerlines and height will vary by terrain. Therefore, a plan amendment designating the proposed ROW as a utility corridor (Management Prescription 8.1) would be required. Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).

Mitigation: Snags shall be maintained to the extent practical along the outer portions of the ROW to reduce impacts to habitat for cavity nesters (WILD-10). Where topography permits, aspen will be retained in areas where aspen would not come within 50 feet of the transmission line (see Figure B-20 in Appendix B of the EIS). See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

3.2.4 Proposed Amendment

A new transmission line corridor will be designated for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project, with management prescription of Management Prescription 8.1—Concentrated Development Area. The utility corridor will be 9.4 miles long and 250 feet wide with an ROS of Roaded Natural. The area from the edge of the ROW out 375 feet and within 500 feet of new access roads outside this area will have an ROS of Roaded Natural. This management prescription designation and ROS change would result in the following changes to management requirements in the affected areas:

- Allow the creation of a new ROW outside of existing and previously planned corridors;
- Allow vegetation management within the ROW to not emulate natural processes;
- Allow removal of snags within the ROW and feathering area that would exceed removal standards for woodpeckers in other prescriptions;
- Remove the requirement for maintaining residual wood in the new ROW in the long-term;
- Prescription 8.1 does not contain retention or partial retention (Forest Plan, page RFP 4-78);
- Change the ROS from “Semi-primitive non-motorized” to “Roaded Natural” where project roads would otherwise conflict with the existing ROS. Motorized access off of designated routes in the winter will remain as identified on the current Forest Travel Plan map, no travel off of designated routes in this area is allowed;
- Standards and Guidelines for protecting goshawk active and historic goshawk nesting habitat will not apply to the utility corridor and the approved access roads required for the Project, provided mitigation measures are implemented;
- The Project would be allowed to cross AIZs and to remove timber within AIZs for the construction and maintenance of the transmission line project;
- Semi-Primitive Recreation areas crossed by the ROW would be changed from Prescription 3.2 (B, E, F) to 8.1. Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Forest Plan, page RFP 4-79); and
- Forest Vegetation Management Areas crossed by the ROW would be changed from Prescription 5.2 (B, C, E) to 8.1. Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Forest Plan, page RFP 4-79). Aspen would not be enhanced or maintained within the ROW.

Amendment effects specific to the wording and location for each Standard and Guideline impacted by this amendment are provided in Section 3.2.8.

3.2.5 Amendment Applicability

This amendment to the Caribou Forest Plan would apply only for those lands identified in the Gateway West Final EIS and ROD, and as included under the special use authorization. Lands not analyzed must undergo analysis following Guidelines set forth in 36 CFR 220 prior to any additional authorizations. Those lands not impacted by the special use authorization shall continue to be managed under the existing management prescriptions, Standards, and Guidelines.

3.2.6 NEPA Analysis

The NEPA evaluation of this proposed amendment, as called for by 36 CFR Part 219, Section 219.10(f), has been performed as part of the Project EIS process. As part of the proposed plan amendment evaluation, a determination as to whether the proposed amendment is a significant or non-significant amendment to the current plan will be made and documented in the ROD for the Project. This amendment is consistent with NEPA, 40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508, FSH 1909.15 (09/20/10), and 26 CFR 220.

3.2.7 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-2 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.9.2.2 and 3.9.2.3 for effects on wetland and riparian areas; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation. A summary of effects specific to the above proposed amendments is presented below.

Designating a new corridor within the NF would create a new linear disturbance in addition to an area that currently contains existing corridors. This could impact both wildlife and recreational users. Changing the management to Concentrated Development would allow additional actions that could impact vegetation, riparian, wildlife, and scenic values within the area. The corridor being designated would not be wide enough to accommodate additional 500-kV transmission lines due to safety and reliability considerations; however, other facilities, such as a lower-rated transmission line, could be built in the corridor.

Clearing of vegetation in AIZs could alter various functions provided by these areas, including their ability to provide habitat for forest-associated wildlife species as well as their ability to trap sediment and nutrients. Conversely, habitat for generalist and edge species would increase. Approximately 12 acres of AIZs on the Caribou-Targhee NF would be impacted on the Preferred Route by construction activities. Soil disturbances and removal of vegetation within a wetland or riparian area could temporarily alter the area's ability to moderate flood flow, control sediments, or facilitate surface water flow. Removal of vegetation could also increase water and soil temperatures and alter the species composition within these areas. However, with the application of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and Reclamation, Revegetation, and Maintenance Plan, construction is not expected to result in a reduction or loss of function for the

streams within the Project area, due to the revegetation efforts and the measures to restrict sedimentation input to waterbodies. Site-specific crossing plans and measures to mitigate impacts will be submitted to Caribou-Targhee NF for approval prior to construction in these areas.

Approximately 261 acres of mixed forest and 61 acres of juniper woodland vegetation would be impacted by the Project on the Caribou-Targhee NF along the Preferred Route; 220 acres of the mixed forest and 46 acres of the juniper woodland would be cleared for the life of the Project. Roughly 95 percent of the mixed forest is mature forest. At the 5th code Hydrologic Unit Code scale, the acreage of mature forest impacted by the Project would be well below the maximum allowable by the Caribou Forest Plan Vegetation Standard 2 and should not prevent the Forest Service from meeting the requirements of maintaining at least 20 percent of the forest in mature and old age classes.

Due to the greater potential for edge effects where the forested habitat type is cleared compared to the other habitat types, forest/woodlands adjacent to cleared areas would be impacted as well. These impacts to mature forests, such as edge effects, would be more pronounced due to the more distinct difference between mature forest and adjacent cleared areas, and the longer recovery time of this type of habitat. Wildlife species that use this habitat type, for example northern goshawk and American three-toed woodpecker, would experience habitat loss until areas regrow during Project operations, in this case several decades.

Removing trees within the ROW and for road construction/reconstruction outside the ROW would result in the loss of both present habitat (canopy cover, live trees, forest understory) and potential future habitat (snags and down wood from dead, mature trees). Removal of snags, and removal of trees that would become snags, would decrease nesting substrate for many species, such as cavity-nesting birds.

In the areas where feathering occurs, impacts to forests would increase somewhat, perhaps by approximately 15 percent, because of the additional tree removal outside of the construction ROW. Feathering would be a one-time vegetation treatment, and this type of ROW edge would not be maintained throughout Project operations.

The creation of new edges along forest or shrubland habitat types could increase brood parasitism of avian species. Mammalian predation on bird nests could also increase due to their use of Project-related travel corridors into new areas. Edge effects could also lead to a change in plant species composition, potentially lowering the quality of bird habitat.

Changing the ROS to Roded Natural could lead to additional road building within the redesignated portions. This would likely impact recreational users due to changes in scenic qualities as well as road use and noise, especially during construction. Unauthorized use of Project roads may also occur, which could lead to both safety and environmental concerns. Effects on wildlife could include avoidance of the area due to noise and disturbance, changes in habitat suitability for both predator and prey species, as well as effects of fragmentation.

The Preferred Route would affect 609 acres of northern goshawk foraging habitat. Amending the Caribou Forest Plan to permit this disturbance could result in decreased hunting efficiency for northern goshawk using land adjacent to and within the project area. This could lead to increased time being required for foraging which could impact overall productivity. However, the Project is unlikely to have population-level effects to goshawks. Although the clearing in foraging areas is out of compliance with the Forest Plan, it is not expected to adversely affect this species. Goshawks are known to take prey from openings in forested habitats, and will typically hunt in these areas from perches located along the edge of the clearing.⁵ In addition, measures would be taken to avoid or minimize impacts to nesting birds (i.e., conducting vegetative clearing outside of the nesting season). Project disturbance of nesting territories is still unlikely to have population-level effects to goshawks; nesting habitat would be available in adjacent areas, and birds would be able to find adjacent nesting habitat. Furthermore, goshawks do not typically utilize the same nest every year, indicating that they do not have high fidelity to a single nesting location.

3.2.8 Summary of Standards and Guidelines Affected by the Amendment

The management prescription and ROS change will address inconsistencies in the following standards and guidelines where the Project will not meet existing Standards and Guidelines, requiring an amendment to allow the Project with mitigation:

- **Soils – Forest Ecosystems – Guideline 2:** Sustain site productivity by providing the following minimum amounts of woody residue >3 inches in diameter dispersed on the site as outlined in Table 3.1, below. These do not apply within a 300-foot corridor on either side of roads designated as open on the most current version of the Travel Plan.
 - Maintenance of the new ROW will limit the production of woody residue and recruitment potential over the long term and would not meet the guideline requirements. The amendment would allow the Project.
- **Transportation and Utility Corridors – Standard 1:** Existing and proposed rights-of-way of the following types shall be designated as corridors (Rx 8.1). This does not prevent the inclusion of lower-rated transmission lines or smaller pipelines within the corridors.
 - The Project would create a new corridor outside of existing and proposed corridors present at the time the Forest Plan was adopted. The amendment would designate a new corridor (Prescription 8.1).
- **Transportation and Utility Corridors – Standard 3 – Guideline 7:** Pipelines and other related utilities should share corridors except as needed to meet other resource goals.
 - Existing corridors do not have sufficient space to add a 500-kV transmission line. The amendment would designate the Project ROW as a new utility corridor (Prescription 8.1).

⁵ Graham, R., R. Rodriguez, K. Paulin, R. Player, A. Heap, and R. Williams. 1999. The Northern Goshawk in Utah: Habitat Assessment and Management Recommendations. U.S. Forest Service General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-22.

- **Vegetation – Standard 3 – Guideline 5:** Use methods of vegetation treatment that emulate natural disturbance and successional processes.
 - Successional processes are not compatible with a transmission line ROW. The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a new utility corridor (Prescription 8.1) where these guideline requirements would not apply.
- **Wildlife – Snag/Cavity Nesting Habitat – Standard 2:** Snags with existing cavities or nests shall be the priority for retention.
 - The plan amendment to designate the ROW as a new utility corridor (Prescription 8.1), would allow for cutting all snags. Maintaining snags is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).
- **Wildlife – Snag/Cavity Nesting Habitat – Standard 2 – Guideline 2:** Hard-snag densities for various biological potentials should be approximately as follows by forest type. Biological potentials for woodpeckers were determined through analysis during the Targhee RFP (1997) and are incorporated in Table 3.3, below. The analysis area for calculating biological potential for woodpeckers should usually be the specific management prescription area polygon. Smaller analysis areas can be used when identified for site-specific projects.

Table 3.3 Biological Potentials by Forested Vegetation Type.

Percent of Biological Potential	Number of Snags per 100 Forested Acres ¹		
	Aspen	Douglas-fir Spruce/Fir	Lodgepole
100	828	978	877
80	662	782	702
60	497	587	526
40	331	391	351
20	166	196	175

¹ In mixed species stands, use the average number of snags for dominant forest types.

- The plan amendment to designate the ROW as a utility corridor (Prescription 8.1) would allow for cutting all snags in the ROW and adjacent feathered areas. Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).
- **Wildlife – Snag/Cavity Nesting Habitat – Standard 2 – Guideline 2:** Retain live trees for future snag recruitment using the following guidelines in Table 3.4:

Table 3.4 Live Trees for Snag Recruitment.

Percent of Biological Potential	Number of Live Trees per 100 Forested Acres				
	≥10 inch dbh	≥7-9.9 inch dbh	≥5-6.9 inch dbh	<5.0 inch dbh	Total Trees per Acre
100	800	500	500	700	2500
80	600	400	400	600	2000
60	500	300	300	400	1500
40	300	200	200	300	1000
20	200	100	100	100	500

- Live trees will not be maintained in the ROW or adjacent feathered areas. The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a new utility corridor

(Prescription 8.1) where maintaining snags is not a consideration (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).

- Goshawk Habitat – Standards and Guidelines – Rotation age, maximum created opening, downed logs:** The management standards and guidelines in Table 3.5 below apply to all forest types within active and historic goshawk nesting territories.

Table 3.5 Management Standards and Guidelines within Active Goshawk Nesting Territories.

Attribute	Nest Area	Post-Fledging Family Area	Foraging Area
Number of Areas (S)	1	1	1
Size of each area (acres) (S)	> 200 acres	> 400 acres	> 5,400 acres
Management Season ⁵ (G)	Sept-Mar	Sept-Mar	Year-long
Open Road Density ⁴ (G)	No new system roads	No new system roads	Use management Rx density
Size Class Distribution For Forested Acres (%) (G):			
Nonstocked/seeding	0%	≤ 20%	≤ 25%
Sapling	0%	≤ 20%	≤ 25%
Pole	0%	≤ 20%	≤ 25%
Mature/old ¹	100%	≥ 40%	= 30%
Rotation Age (years)(G)	--	60 to 240 years	60 to 240 years
Maximum Created Opening (Acres) (G)	0	≤ 40 acres	≤ 40 acres
Snags and Reserve Trees ² (G)	as specified in management prescription		
Downed Logs (average/acre) (G)	Forest-wide S&Gs	Forest-wide S&Gs	Forest-wide S&Gs
Thinning (G)	Non-uniform ³	Non-uniform	By silvicultural prescription

- The guidelines for rotation age, maximum created opening size, downed logs (in the long term), and thinning would not be met. The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a new utility corridor (Prescription 8.1) where these standards and guidelines do not apply.
- Transportation – Access – Standard 4 – Guideline 1:** The construction of new or maintenance of existing motorized and non-motorized access routes should be consistent with the ROS class in which they are located.
 - Road construction would occur within currently designated Semi-Primitive Non-motorized areas. The plan amendment would change Semi-primitive Non-motorized areas crossed by the Project to Roaded Natural.

- **Recreation – Guideline 4:** Projects should be planned and implemented to meet the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) as depicted on the Forest map.
 - The plan amendment would change Semi-primitive Non-motorized areas crossed by the Project to Roaded Natural.
- **Scenic Resources – Standard 1:** Objectives for scenery (either VQOs or SIOs) shall be met along Scenic or Historic Byways, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and other sensitive travel routes and special emphasis areas.
 - The on-Forest portion of the Project would not be visible to local Scenic or Historic Byways, Wild and Scenic Rivers; however, it would be visible from the Highline Trail and from sensitive travel routes and special emphasis areas. Following the decision to amend the Forest Plan, the current VQO's would not apply to Prescription 8.1.
- **Scenic Resources – Standard 1 – Guideline 2:** Until the Scenery Management System is fully implemented, projects should be planned and implemented to meet the VQOs as displayed on the Forest VQO map.
 - The Project would not meet the VQOs of Partial Retention or Retention that apply to the current prescription areas that the project crosses. Following the decision to amend the Forest Plan, the current VQO's would not apply to prescription 8.1.
- **Prescription 2.8.3 – Aquatic Influence Zone (AIZ) – Lands – Guideline 1:** Avoid locating facilities and utility corridors in Aquatic Influence Zones.
 - Not all AIZs could be avoided. The plan amendment would designate the entire ROW, including riparian areas, as a new utility corridor (Prescription 8.1).
- **Prescription 2.8.3 – Aquatic Influence Zone – Wildlife – Standard 1:** Snags shall be maintained at 80 percent of biological potential for woodpeckers (see tables 3.4 and 3.5)
 - The standard would not be met within the ROW. The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a utility corridor (Prescription 8.1). Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).
- **Prescription 2.8.3 – Aquatic Influence Zone – Timber – Guideline 1:** Timber harvest, including fuelwood cutting, is generally not allowed unless:

Catastrophic events such as fire, flooding, wind, or insect damage result in degraded riparian conditions, and unscheduled timber harvest (salvage and commercial fuelwood cutting) is selected as the most desirable management practice.

Silvicultural practices are necessary to achieve desired vegetation characteristics and desired AIZ attributes. Areas within MA 3.31 Backcountry Recreation where

roads are constructed or reconstructed for the Project will be allocated to an ROS of Roded Natural.

- The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a new utility corridor (Prescription 8.1). Timber removal restrictions in AIZs do not apply to the utility corridor. However, where possible, low-growing vegetation and small tree species within the ROW that will not grow into the minimum required clearance distance will be left in place (OM-9). Also, prior to clearing, a site-specific plan with tree removal, slash disposal plans, and BMPs to avoid erosion or sedimentation of watercourses or wetlands must be submitted to the Forest Service for approval (VEG-9).
- Prescription 3.2 (B, E, F) – Semi-Primitive Recreation – Wildlife – Guideline 1: Maintain Snags at 60 percent biological potential for woodpeckers.
 - The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a utility corridor (Prescription 8.1). Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).
- Prescription 5.2 (B, C, F) – Forest Vegetation Management – Wildlife – Guideline 1: Maintain snag habitat at 40 percent of the biological potential for woodpeckers.
 - The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a utility corridor (Prescription 8.1). Maintaining biological potential for woodpeckers is not a consideration in Prescription 8.1 (Wildlife Standard 1, page 4-79).
- **Prescription 5.2 (B, C, F) – Forest Vegetation Management – Vegetation – Guideline 1:** Where aspen exists, it should be maintained or enhanced as a component through restoration treatments.
 - Aspen would not be enhanced or maintained within the ROW. Trees will be managed to provide adequate clearance under the lines, height will vary by terrain. The plan amendment would designate the ROW as a utility corridor (Prescription 8.1) and allow aspen removal.

3.3 SAWTOOTH NATIONAL FOREST

Digest: Modifies Management Direction to authorize transmission line construction, operation and maintenance on Sawtooth NF, Idaho.

3.3.1 Reason for Amendment

The BLM Preferred Route would not cross the Sawtooth NF. The following amendment discussion is associated with Alternative 7K. This amendment to the *Revised Forest Plan for the Sawtooth National Forest*⁶ (hereafter referred to as the Sawtooth Forest Plan) would allow for approval of a special use authorization for the construction and operations of the Project on the Sawtooth NF, Idaho. Approval of the special use permit would be inconsistent with the Standards and Guidelines of the Sawtooth National Forest Plan. The application was originally submitted to the BLM in May 2007, and

⁶ Forest Service. 2003 [amended 2012]. Amended Sawtooth Forest Plan (Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan [Forest Plan] Revised). Sawtooth National Forest. Available online at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/sawtooth/home/?cid=STELPRDB5391896>

most recently was revised in January 2010 to reflect refinements in the proposed Project. The Preferred Route would not cross the Sawtooth NF; however, Alternative 7K would cross the Forest. Three alternatives, 7H, 7I, and 7J, were assessed in the Draft EIS; however, they are no longer considered and have been removed from the analysis. Alternative 7K replaces the other three alternatives.

Alternative 7K would cross two divisions of the Sawtooth NF—the Sublett and Cassia Divisions—for a total distance of 12.7 miles, and passes within 0.5 mile of the northern boundary of the Black Pine Division. If Alternative 7K is authorized, land that is currently allocated to Modification and within 0.5 mile of a new road or the proposed transmission line would be crossed. The Project would not be consistent with a VQO of Modification, where management activities are required to remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

The Gateway West EIS also considered a No Action Alternative. If this alternative is selected, the ROW Grant and Special Use Authorization for the Project would not be approved and a transmission line would not be built at this time. There would be no effects to Forest resources at this time and no plan amendment would be required.

The NEPA analysis for the Project indicates that approval of the special use authorization would be inconsistent, in some instances, with Standards and Guidelines in the Sawtooth Forest Plan. Thus, the required plan amendment and associated mitigation are described herein.

3.3.2 Standards to be Amended

The Sawtooth Forest Plan includes two types of direction:

- **Standards** are actions that must be followed or are required limits to activities in order to achieve Forest goals. Deviations from Standards must be analyzed and documented in a Forest Plan amendment.
- **Guidelines** under the Sawtooth Forest Plan are advisable courses of action that should be followed to achieve Forest goals. Deviations from Guidelines must be analyzed during project-level analysis and documented in a project decision document but do not require a Forest Plan amendment.

The Sawtooth Forest Plan was reviewed to identify Standards relevant to the Project (refer to the Consistency Table for the Sawtooth Forest Plan [2003, as amended 2012] in the Project Record). Where the Project requires an amendment, the relevant specific direction is included below. A summary of Proposed Amendment components follows in Section 3.3.3.

Management Direction for Scenic Environment – SCST01, SCGU02, SCGU08, SCGU09

Standard: All projects shall be designed to meet the adopted VQOs as displayed on the Forest VQO map.

Guidelines: Duration of visual impacts from ground disturbance in vegetation removal activities to allow for herbaceous recovery of ground cover may extend three years in the foreground and middleground of Retention designations, and foreground and middleground Partial Retention designations. There should be minimal distraction from

scenic quality in the foreground of Partial Retention designated areas from road construction, reconstruction, and other excavation management. Roads and other excavation may be visible in the middleground and background landscapes, but should blend into the characteristic landscape of the surroundings. In areas designated as Modification, management activities may dominate the characteristic landscape but must use naturally established form, line, color, and texture. They should appear as a natural occurrence when viewed as middleground.

Need for Amendment: Alternative 7K (if selected) would not meet Modification VQO where it would cross the Sawtooth NF. Approval of a special use permit would be inconsistent with standards and guidelines for scenic resources. If this alternative is approved, a plan amendment would be needed to permit the crossing of these VQOs by the Project as a one-time allowance without changing the management prescription category.

Mitigation: To minimize visual impacts, the following measures shall be implemented: 1) a construction, restoration, maintenance, and monitoring plan shall be developed by the Proponents and approved by the Forest Service prior to construction to reduce ROW scarring and enhance restoration; 2) no paint or permanent coloring agents shall be applied to mark the clearing area boundary except as required for the timber sale contract; 3) the edges of the cleared area shall be feathered to give a natural appearance; 4) access roads shall follow landform contours where practicable to minimize ground disturbance and reduce scarring (visual contrast); 5) the towers shall have a dull galvanized coating and insulators shall be made of non-reflective material; and 6) Natina stain or a similar product shall be applied to towers, including lattice towers. See Table 2.7-1 in the EIS for additional mitigation measures.

In addition to established mitigation, visual impacts will be lowered due to micro-siting and topography. Figure 3.3-1 shows the Alternative 7K alignment as proposed by Cassia County as well as the modified alignment that more accurately reflects the route as it would be designed.

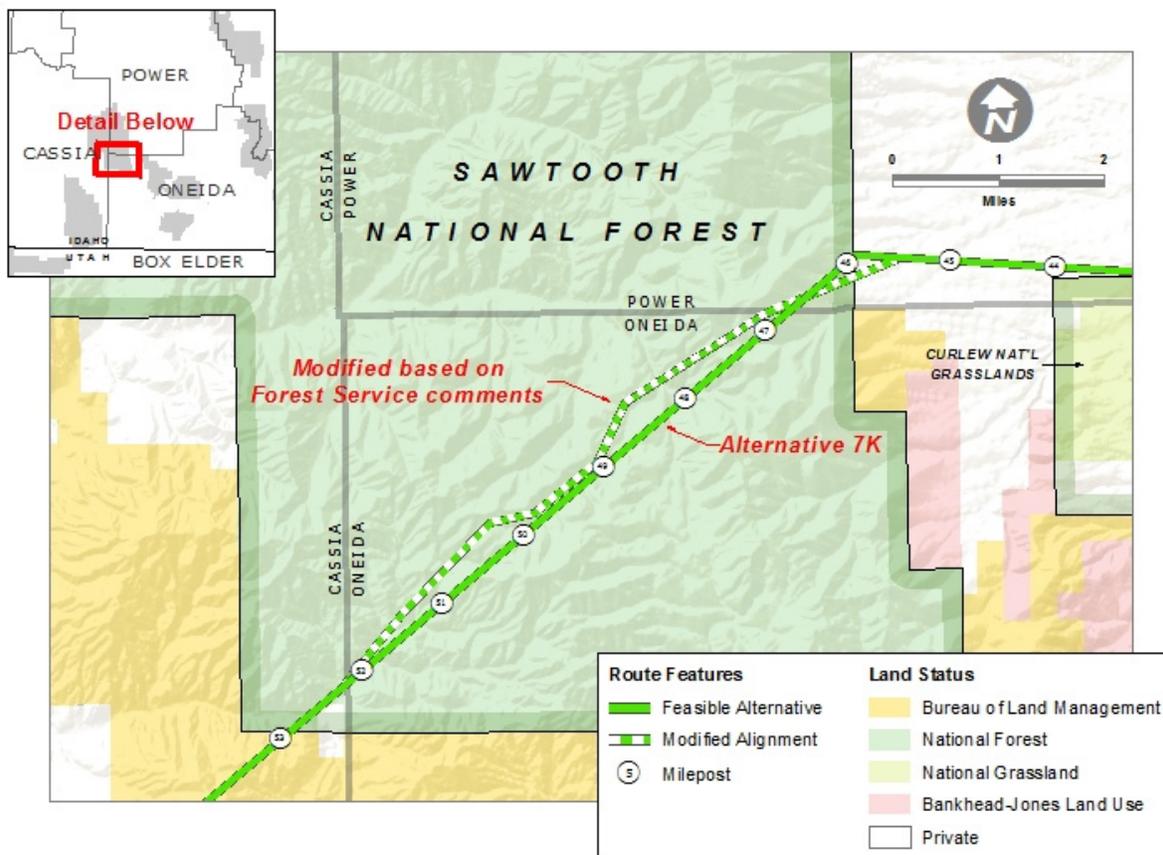


Figure 3.3-1. Proposed Alignment for Alternative 7K Compared to the Modified Alignment That Would Be Built if this Alternative is Selected

3.3.3 Proposed Amendment

- The Gateway West transmission line will be allowed without changing the management prescription category provided mitigation measures to minimize visual impacts are applied, including micrositing and feathering the ROW edges.

3.3.4 Amendment Applicability

This amendment to the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines would apply only for those lands identified in the Gateway West Final EIS and ROD, and as included under the special use authorization. Lands not analyzed must undergo analysis following Guidelines set forth in 36 CFR 228.102 prior to any additional authorizations. Those lands not impacted by the special use authorization shall continue to be managed under the existing management prescriptions, Standards, and Guidelines.

3.3.5 NEPA Analysis

The NEPA evaluation of this proposed amendment, as called for by 36 CFR Part 219, Section 219.10(f), has been performed as part of the Gateway West Project EIS process. As part of the proposed plan amendment evaluation, a determination as to whether the proposed amendment is a significant or non-significant amendment to the current plan will be made and documented in the ROD for the Project. This amendment

is consistent with NEPA, 40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508, FSH 1909.15 (09/20/10), and 26 CFR 220.

3.3.6 Effects

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G-2 for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 and 3.10.2.3 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation. A summary of effects specific to the above proposed amendments is presented below.

Permitting a one-time allowance for the Gateway West Project through areas designated as Modification where it would otherwise not be in compliance with the visual objectives for the areas would likely result in a change affecting the visual experience for recreational users. ROW clearing would result in high visibility of the Project in forested areas such as the Alternative 7K alignment through the Sublett Division. Amending these requirements to allow the Project would allow the Project to be constructed; therefore, the effects of the amendment are the effects of the Project being built.

The actual visual effects, if Alternative 7K is selected, would likely be less than the proposed alignment, due to micrositing. The alignment for Alternative 7K was proposed by Cassia County and did not take into account topography and other factors identified by the Forest Service. Therefore, the alignment does not accurately reflect the backdropping and other resource avoidance that would occur with the actual built design.