1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

On May 7, 2007, Idaho Power Company and PacifiCorp (doing business as Rocky Mountain Power), collectively known as the Proponents, applied to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a right-of-way (ROW) grant to use the National System of Public Lands for portions of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project). The original application was revised in October 2007, August 2008, May 2009, and January 2010 to reflect changes and refinements in the proposed Project and in response to public feedback regarding routing alternatives. The Plan of Development (POD) has been revised several times in response to Project changes and recommendations from the BLM, other reviewing agencies, and public comment.

The original Project as proposed would extend from the Windstar Substation (located near the Dave Johnston Power Plant in Glenrock, Wyoming) to the Hemingway Substation (located near Melba, Idaho; approximately 20 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho). The original Project proposed rebuilding one 230-kilovolt (kV) line and constructing two new 230-kV lines between Windstar and Aeolus; a 345-kV line to connect the new Anticline Substation to the existing Jim Bridger Substation; and a 500-kV system from Windstar to Hemingway, comprising 10 transmission line segments with a total length of approximately 1,103 miles. The eastern route 230-kV line and the 500-kV line between Windstar and Aeolus were dropped prior to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), resulting in a Project with a total length of approximately 1,000 miles.

The BLM published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for this Project on April 26, 2013 (BLM 2013a) and a Record of Decision (ROD) on November 14, 2013 (BLM 2013b). In that ROD, the BLM deferred a decision for 2 of the 10 segments (i.e., Segments 8 and 9) to allow additional time for federal, state, and local permitting agencies to examine additional routing options, as well as mitigation and enhancement measures for these segments.

In November 2013, the BLM requested the Boise Resource Advisory Council (RAC) to consider issues surrounding siting Segments 8 and 9 of the Project. The RAC formed a subcommittee to examine options for Segments 8 and 9. The RAC Subcommittee examined a number of routing options, many of which were similar to routes evaluated in the FEIS. They also examined design features not previously studied in detail in the FEIS, including early drafts of the Proponents' Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio (MEP), which is discussed in greater detail in Section 1.2.4 below. The RAC Subcommittee presented two reports to the full RAC, which subsequently forwarded them as presented to the BLM. The RAC Subcommittee reports are included as information gathered during scoping for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS; see Section 1.2.6).

The Proponents submitted a revised Project application for Segments 8 and 9 in August 2014, which has been assigned the case file number of IDI-35849-01. Segments 8 and 9, as currently proposed by the Proponents, would require amendment of one or more BLM land use plans, including the Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP), the

1987 Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP)[1], the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP) RMP, the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, and the Kuna MFP. The Proponents also submitted a portfolio of proposed mitigation measures and other measures focused on enhancing resources and values in the SRBOP, known as the MEP (see Appendix C).

This SEIS incorporates by reference the analysis related to Segments 8 and 9 included in the Gateway West 2013 FEIS. The SEIS will supplement the analysis found in that FEIS by assessing the new information that has become available since the FEIS and ROD were published.

This SEIS identifies a Revised Proposed Action and new alternatives for Segments 8 and 9, which include design features and mitigation measures, developed in consideration of new information that became available after the FEIS and ROD were published. The SEIS supplements the analysis found in the FEIS with analysis of these new alternatives. The new information did not warrant reanalysis of the alternatives previously described in the FEIS.

Chapter 2 of this SEIS includes a comparison of effects for all routes and alternatives considered in detail in both this document and the FEIS.

The SEIS identifies opportunities to mitigate the impacts of siting and building Segments 8 and 9, if a ROW is granted, by incorporating avoidance, minimization, and compensation measures with consideration of local and regional conditions. In addition, opportunities for enhancement of resources and values within the SRBOP are evaluated, in accordance with Public Law (P.L.) 103–64, the statute which established the SRBOP. Mitigation measures will be evaluated in the context of the magnitude of the potential effects of the Project.

Figures 1.1-1a and 1.1-1b illustrate the routes along Segments 8 and 9, respectively. The maps found in Appendix A show each segment in greater detail.

The BLM is the lead federal agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and will coordinate preparation of the environmental analysis. Cooperating agencies include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); National Park Service (NPS); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG); the Idaho Governor's Office of Energy Resources (OER); the City of Kuna, Idaho; and Twin Falls County, Idaho. The role of cooperating agencies is derived from the NEPA requirement for federal, state, and local governments to cooperate with the goal of achieving "productive harmony" between humans and their environment. The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA allow the lead agency to invite any other federal, state, tribal, or local agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental issue which will be addressed by the NEPA analysis, to serve as cooperating agencies in the preparation of EISs (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1501.6). Additionally, in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), in the development and revision of land use plans, the BLM has an

[1] Portions of the area managed under the 1987 RMP are not included in the 2015 Jarbidge RMP; therefore, the 1987 RMP still applies to these areas. Refer to Appendix F for details.

independent responsibility to coordinate with other units of government (43 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1712(c)(9)). Current BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610) emphasize the importance of working with federal and state agencies and local and tribal governments during land use planning, in addition to and alongside cooperating agency involvement required in CEQ and U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)regulations (43 CFR 46).

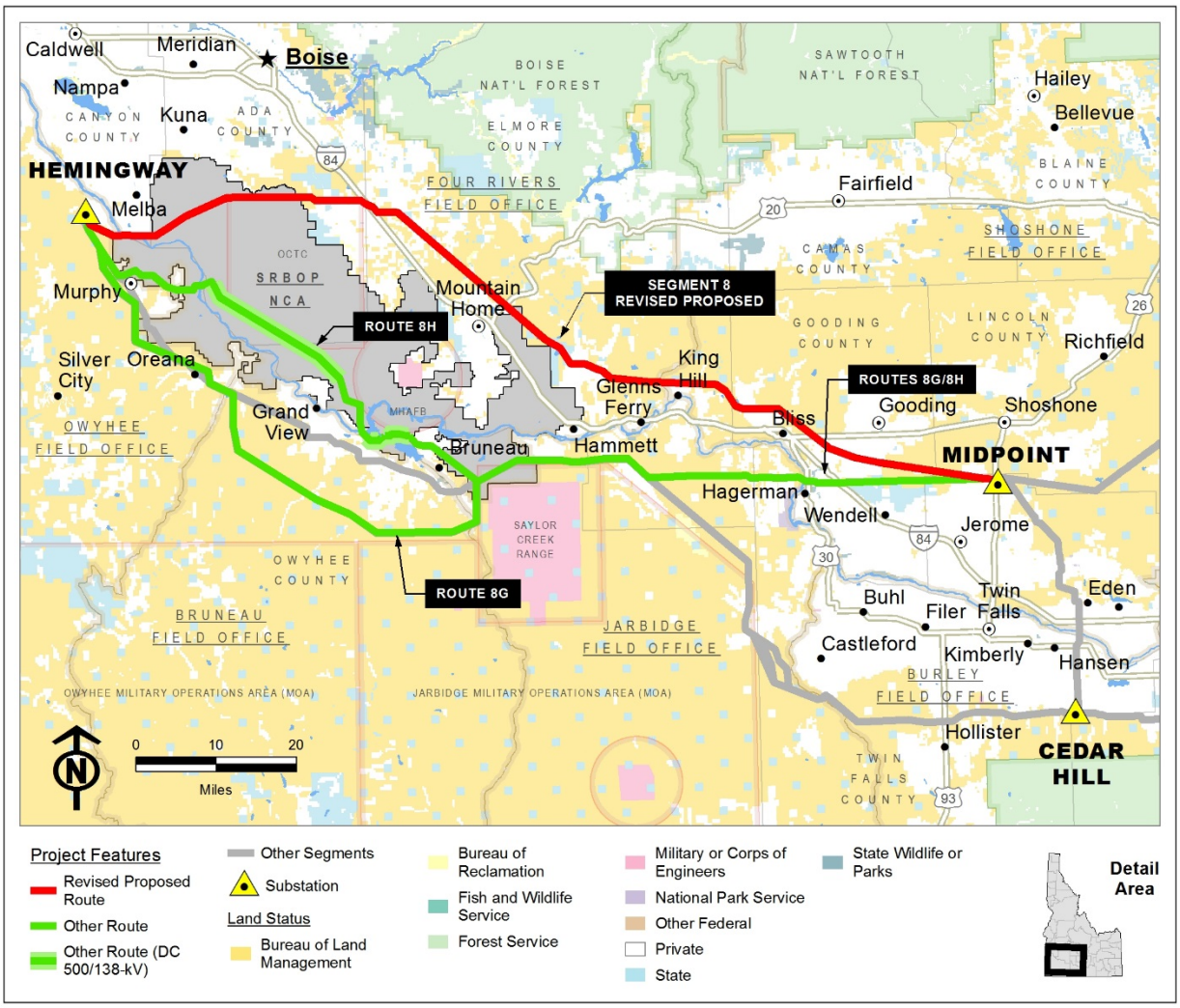

Figure 1.1-1a. Project Overview for Segment 8

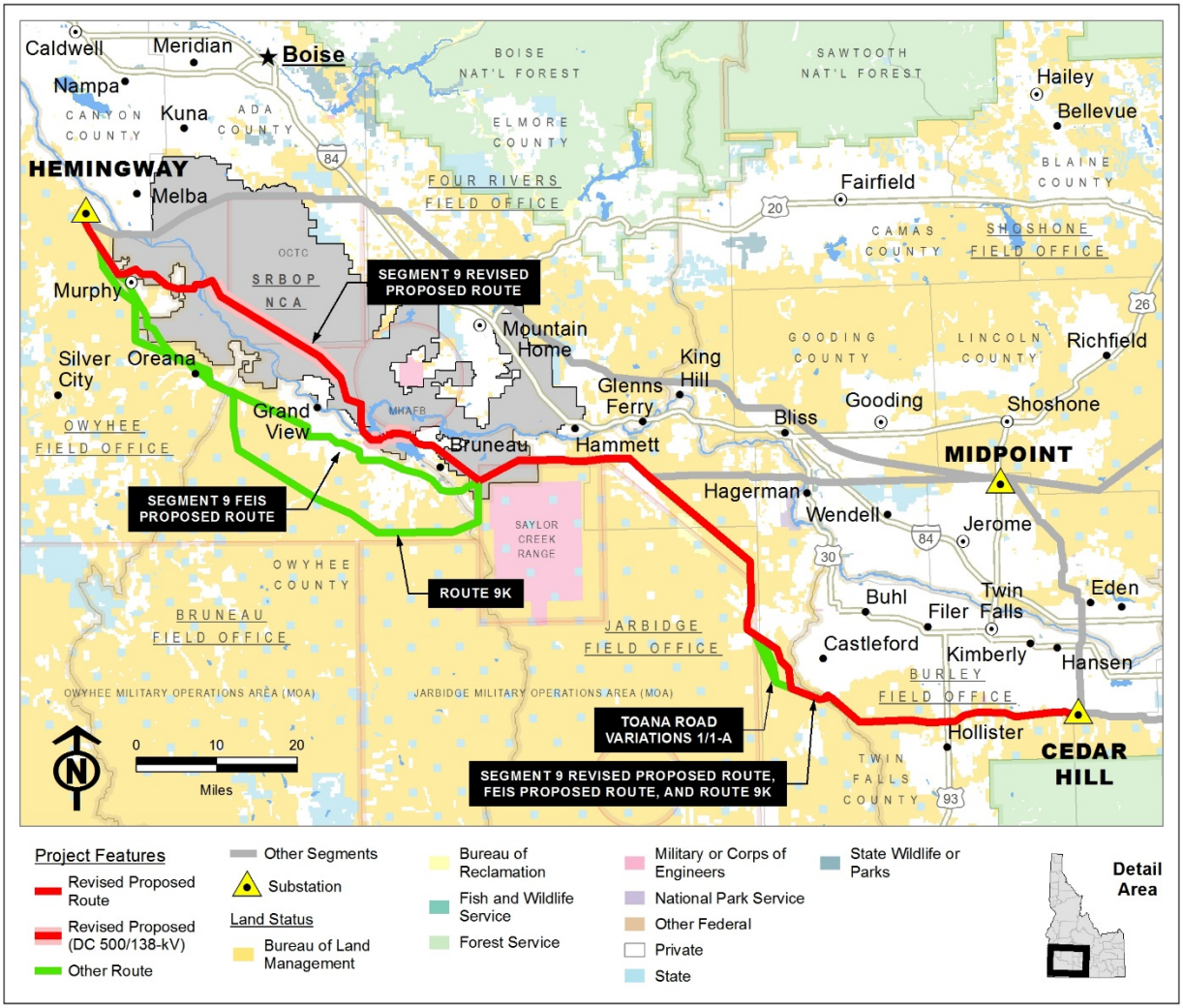

Figure 1.1-1b. Project Overview for Segment 9

1.2 NEW INFORMATION DEVELOPED SINCE THE FEIS

New information has become available since the FEIS for this Project was published in April 26, 2013. This new information includes the following:

- The Boise District RAC reviewed available information and local concerns and identified route options and design features for Segments 8 and 9.
- The Proponents submitted a revised application that adopted RAC-identified options as revised Proposed Routes for Segments 8 and 9.
- New routes and route variations have been developed, and the BLM has identified seven action alternatives based on the routes analyzed in this SEIS.
- The BLM has identified two Co-Preferred Alternatives for the Project.
- The Proponents submitted an MEP that offers mitigation and enhancement for resources and values found in the SRBOP.

- The Proponents revised the Proposed Action within the SRBOP in response to the new Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) guidelines for spacing of transmission lines and route options evaluated by the RAC.
- Public and agency comments on the Revised Proposed Action were received during the public scoping period
- BLM Manual 6280 direction for evaluating project impacts on National Historic Trails (NHT) was incorporated into the analysis.
- The BLM issued guidance on mitigation in a Regional Mitigation Manual (BLM 2013c) to implement Secretarial Order 3330 (October 31, 2013), Improving Mitigation Policies and Practices of the Department of the Interior.
- In October 2015, the DOI released Manual 600 DM 6, *Implementing Mitigation at the Landscape-scale* (DOI 2015), which also implements landscape-scale mitigation for impacts from projects.
- On November 3, 2015, the BLM received the *Presidential Memorandum: Mitigating Impacts on Natural Development and Encouraging Related Private Investment* (80[215] Federal Register 68743).
- The BLM has developed a draft model for identifying compensatory mitigation for resources and values in the SRBOP. The purpose of BLM's compensatory mitigation model for SRBOP is to achieve a result that enhances impacts to resources identified in the SRBOP legislation.
- The BLM issued a Revised RMP for the area managed under the Jarbidge Field Office.
- The BLM issued a ROD for Approved RMP Amendments for the Great Basin Region, Including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of Idaho and Southwestern Montana, Nevada and Northeastern California, Oregon, Utah.

1.2.1 Route Options from the Boise District Resource Advisory Council

In November 2013, the BLM requested the Boise District RAC to consider issues surrounding siting Segments 8 and 9 of Gateway West. The RAC, a citizen-based council chartered under Section 309 of FLPMA and the Federal Advisory Committee Act, advises and makes recommendations to the BLM on resource and public land management issues in southwestern Idaho. The RAC formed a subcommittee to examine options for resolving remaining issues associated with siting Segments 8 and 9. On June 5, 2014, the RAC submitted two reports to the BLM, one describing route options in the vicinity of the SRBOP and another evaluating resource considerations in the SRBOP and surrounding areas (see Appendix H).

1.2.2 Revised Proposal Routes for Segments 8 and 9

The Proponents submitted a revised Project Application for Segments 8 and 9 on August 7, 2014, in which they adopted the routes for Segments 8 and 9 that were recommended by a majority of the RAC Subcommittee. These routes differed from the Proposed Routes considered in the FEIS. Following is a brief description of the revised proposal; however, refer to Chapter 2 for a detailed description of these routes.

The revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 begins at the existing Midpoint Substation and continues west past the communities of Hammett and Mountain Home. It diverges

from the Proposed Route considered in the FEIS near milepost (MP) 97.7, northwest of Mountain Home. The revised Proposed Route then parallels the existing 500-kV transmission line at a distance of 250 feet for the remaining distance (30 miles) into the Hemingway Substation. Approximately 22.9 miles of the revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 would be within the SRBOP. Segment 8 of the Proposed Route considered in the FEIS was within the SRBOP for approximately 29.8 miles and, where it was adjacent to an existing line, separated by 1,500 feet.

The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 begins at the proposed Cedar Hill Substation and passes south of the communities of Twin Falls, Castleford, and Hammett. It diverges from the Proposed Route considered in the FEIS near MP 95.6, just east of the town of Bruneau. The revised route then follows the Route 9G alignment studied in detail in the FEIS to the Sinker Butte area, with the difference that the line would be placed on new structures along with the existing 138-kV line rather than 200 feet from that line as originally proposed. The line would turn west near Sinker Butte and continue into the Hemingway Substation. Approximately 53.8 miles of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 would be within the SRBOP, whereas the Segment 9 Proposed Route considered in the FEIS was within the SRBOP for approximately 13.6 miles.

1.2.3 Summary of Routes, Variations, and Alternatives

As described in detail within Chapter 2, three new routes (i.e., 8G, 8H, and 9K) and two new route variations (i.e., Toana Road Variations 1 and 1-A) are considered within this SEIS; in addition, the FEIS Proposed Route for Segment 9 (hereafter referred to as FEIS Proposed 9) is also considered in full within this SEIS.

Routes 8G, 8H, and 9K closely follow the versions of the Segment 8 and 9 routes that were analyzed in the FEIS, although in slightly different locations. Route 8G parallels the FEIS Route 8A before entering the Jarbidge Planning Area. At MP 36.6, it follows the FEIS Route 9B and then closely follows FEIS Route 9E to Birch Creek, after which it runs north toward Oreana and on to the Hemingway Substation. Route 9K generally follows the FEIS Preferred Route until approximately MP 96, at which point it follows FEIS Route 9E to Birch Creek and then runs north toward Oreana and on to the Hemingway Substation. Route 8H follows the same path as 8G until MP 44, where it then follows the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9. Like the Revised Proposed Route, it would be double-circuited with the existing 138-kV line; therefore, both 8H and Revised Proposed 9 could not be selected together. The Toana Road Variations were recommended by the BLM Jarbidge Field Office to avoid paralleling the Toana Freight Wagon Road (a National Register historic site), and consist of a minor variation to the Segment 9 routes.

In addition to these three new routes, FEIS Proposed 9 is fully analyzed in the SEIS because this route is considered as part of three of the seven new BLM action alternatives discussed in Chapter 2 (and listed below). Note that the SEIS analysis of FEIS Proposed 9 takes into account new data and information that has become available since the publication of the FEIS (in order to utilize best available science); therefore, the quantitative impact values reported in the FEIS for this route may differ from those reported in this SEIS.

This SEIS identifies seven new action alternatives, each of which is a combination of one route from Segment 8 and one from Segment 9. In addition, the BLM has identified two of the seven alternatives as the Co-Preferred Alternatives. The seven action alternatives, including the two Co-Preferred Alternatives, are described in detail in Chapter 2. The rationale behind the identification of the BLM Co-Preferred Alternatives is also provided in Chapter 2.

1.2.4 The Proponents' Draft Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio

As required by the SRBOP enabling statute (P.L. 103-64), the "Secretary shall allow only such uses of lands in the conservation area as the Secretary determines will further the purposes for which the Conservation Area is established." The BLM must demonstrate that any proposed use within the SRBOP meets the purpose for which the SRBOP was established. Congress established the SRBOP in relevant part "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" (Section 3(a)(2) of P.L. 103-64 [1993]). The BLM, thus, must demonstrate that the proposed ROW for the transmission line that would use portions of the SRBOP would meet the established purposes, and enhance SRBOP resources and values.

The Proponents have developed an MEP (August 2014) aimed at offsetting impacts to resources and values and enhancing the resources and values found in the SRBOP (Appendix C). The Proponents' MEP includes both compensatory and enhancement components to address Project-related impacts on the SRBOP (note that the MEP is considered as a design feature of the proposal; see Chapter 2 for more details). The proposed compensatory measures are intended to address the effects that persist after standard avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures have been implemented. The Proponents' intent for these measures is to return an impacted area to baseline conditions.

The Proponents' MEP includes enhancement measures such as 1) habitat restoration, 2) purchasing private inholdings within the SRBOP; 3) improved funding of law enforcement, 4) funding for visitor services, and 5) removal of existing powerlines within the SRBOP. In this SEIS, the BLM has reviewed this MEP for its compatibility with the purposes for establishing the SRBOP in the enabling statute (P.L. 103-64), its conformity with management objectives in the RMP, and to determine whether the proposed measures are sufficient to compensate for project-related impacts. An evaluation of the effects of these proposed measures is found in the applicable sections of Chapter 3.

1.2.5 WECC Policy for the Spacing of Electrical Lines

At the time the Project's DEIS was prepared (2011), the WECC guidelines required that high-voltage transmission lines be separated by at least "the longest span length of the two transmission circuits at the point of separation or 500 feet (whichever is greater) between the transmission circuits" (WECC 2008). The separation of transmission lines within a common corridor or lines serving the same load is measured between the center lines of the transmission lines. In the DEIS, the longest span length was

assumed to be 1,500 feet, thereby dictating the minimum distance between existing and proposed transmission lines serving the same load.

In December 2011, the WECC and the WECC Board of Directors relaxed its regional transmission planning criterion to allow a minimum separation of 250 feet from an existing line. This change became effective in April 2012. This change creates the possibility of constructing new transmission lines closer to existing lines, with subsequent possible changes in impacts to affected resources.

The Proponents reported to the RAC Subcommittee that, based on the changes in WECC guidelines described above, it was feasible to reduce separation of the proposed Segment 8 line where it would parallel an existing 500-kV line to approximately 250 feet. In its final report, the RAC Subcommittee therefore recommended a separation reduction wherever the Segments 8 and 9 routes would cross the SRBOP, and the Proponents have incorporated that recommendation into a 28.7-mile portion of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8.

The Proponents have also indicated that it would be feasible to "double circuit" portions of Segment 9 with existing 138-kV transmission lines (i.e., install the new 500-kV and existing 138-kV lines on the same tower structures, along Baja Road and in the C.J. Strike Reservoir, both in the SRBOP). Co-locating the 500-kV and 138-kV lines on the same structures (i.e., double circuiting) could reduce the physical and visual footprint of the new lines.

Both a reduced separation between the proposed Segment 8 single-circuit 500-kV transmission line and the existing 500-kV Midpoint to Hemingway line, as well as the option of double circuiting portions of the lines along Baja Road and in the C.J. Strike Reservoir areas, are incorporated into this environmental analysis.

1.2.6 Public Scoping

The purpose of public scoping is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the environmental analysis. The BLM invited and provided for full public participation and comment on issues, potential impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives associated with granting ROWs on public lands for Segments 8 and 9 that were not addressed in the original EIS. The scoping period began on September 19, 2014, and closed on October 24, 2014. During this period, four open house–style public meetings were held (in Boise on October 7, in Kuna on October 7, in Gooding on October 8, and in Murphy on October 9). Public input provided during the scoping process has been incorporated into this environmental analysis. See Section 1.9 for more details regarding public scoping.

1.2.7 BLM Manual 6280

BLM Manual 6280 provides policies for the management of National Scenic and Historic Trails. Specifically, this manual identifies requirements for the management of congressionally designated NHTs, trails undergoing a National Trail Feasibility Study; trails that are recommended as suitable for National Trail designation through the National Trail Feasibility Study; inventory, planning, management, and monitoring of designated National Scenic and Historic Trails; and data and records management requirements for National Scenic and Historic Trails. The manual also provides

guidance on the application of NEPA to NHTs and Trails Under Study (BLM 2012a). See Section 1.5.2 for more details.

1.2.8 BLM Regional Mitigation Manual

The BLM recently issued guidance on mitigation in a Regional Mitigation Manual (BLM 2013c) to implement Secretarial Order 3330 (October 31, 2013). Information regarding the BLM's Regional Mitigation Manual is discussed in Section 1.5.3.

1.2.9 The BLM's Draft Conceptual Model for Identifying Compensatory Mitigation for Resources and Values in the SRBOP

The BLM has developed a conceptual mitigation model that would be used to develop the habitat restoration treatment mitigation requirements (i.e., how to calculate the debits and credits, as well as providing an outline for the required habitat treatment types) related to impacts on the SRBOP. This conceptual model is found in Appendix K of this SEIS. The conceptual model is intended, in part, to ensure that offsetting impacts to the SRBOP will lead to a net benefit to resources and values, i.e., achieve the enhancements required by the SRBOP enabling legislation.

1.2.10 Revised Jarbidge RMP

The BLM approved a new Jarbidge RMP in July 2015 (BLM 2015a). This new RMP revised the original 1987 Jarbidge RMP, but only applies to land within the current Jarbidge Field Office boundary. However, the planning area for the 1987 RMP included land within the adjacent Four Rivers Field Office. Therefore, the 1987 Jarbidge RMP (unrevised) still applies to these areas. Appendix F of this SEIS provides more detail regarding these and other applicable land use plans.

1.2.11 BLM ROD for the Great Basin Region

The BLM's ROD for the Great Basin Region was finalized in 2015 (after the publication of the FEIS). This ROD affects, in part, habitat designations for the sage-grouse. More details regarding this new ROD, the new sage-grouse habitat designations, and how this affects the Gateway West SEIS are provided in Section 1.6.1.

1.3 FEDERAL AGENCIES' PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need of the federal action is to respond to the Proponents' ROW application to use federally managed lands for a portion of the Gateway West transmission line pursuant to FLPMA, 43 U.S.C. § 1701 *et seq.* In addition, per the requirements of the Clean Water Act[2] (CWA), the USACE must respond to an application for a permit to dredge or fill waters of the United States, including wetlands.

The purpose and need for major federal authorizing actions requested for the proposed Project to proceed are described in more detail below. Federal agencies use the Project's purpose and need to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action and make decisions. The information presented in Section 1.4 below describing the Proponents' objectives is provided for informational purposes only and does not frame the federal decision space.

[2] Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, 33 U.S.C. § 1251

1.3.1 BLM Purpose and Need

The BLM has received ROW applications from the Proponents and must determine whether to authorize the use of the National System of Public Lands for portions of Gateway West. In accordance with FLPMA and the BLM's ROW regulations, 43 CFR Part 2800, the BLM must manage public lands for multiple uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to grant ROWs for "systems for generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy" "over, upon, under, or through [public] lands" (43 U.S.C. § 1761(a)(5)). Taking into account the BLM's multiple use mandate, the BLM's purpose and need is to respond to an FLPMA ROW application submitted by Idaho Power Company and PacifiCorp to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission the Gateway West transmission line and associated infrastructure on public lands administered by the BLM in compliance with FLPMA, BLM ROW regulations, and other applicable federal laws and policies. In making its decision, the BLM must consider the environmental impact of granting a ROW across the National System of Public Lands.

The BLM must consider existing RMPs and MFPs in the decision to issue a ROW grant in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.0-5(b). RMPs and MFPs allocate public land resource use and establish management objectives. Applicable RMPs and MFPs are listed in Table 1.6-1. Portions of the proposed transmission line are not in conformance with several BLM land management plans, and therefore amendments to these plans are analyzed as part of this SEIS. In addition, the BLM must ensure that the authorized project would meet the requirements of the enabling statute for the SRBOP. The SEIS will use the SRBOP RMP as the framework for considering mitigation measures.

The BLM has prepared this SEIS to satisfy the requirements under NEPA, including facilitation of public participation. The BLM decisions to be made are to:

- Decide whether to grant, grant with modifications, or deny all or part of the ROW application for the transmission line;
- Decide if one or more BLM land use plans should be amended to allow the proposed transmission line;
- Determine the most appropriate location for the transmission line on the National System of Public Lands, considering multiple-use objectives; and
- Determine the terms and conditions (stipulations) that should be applied to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the transmission line on the National System of Public Lands.

The BLM Idaho State Director is the agency official who will issue a decision on this application and, if necessary, any associated plan amendments.

The analysis in this SEIS addresses only the portions of the Project related to Segments 8 and 9. It incorporates by reference the analysis found in the 2013 FEIS regarding Project-wide impacts. The BLM is considering several factors, including the proposed construction schedule, other authorizing entities' potential routes, environmental effects of the analyzed routes, and opportunities to reach complementary siting decisions with

other authorizing entities in deciding whether or not to authorize the Project on public land.

1.3.2 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Decision

Authorization from the USACE is required for Project features that cross over, through, or under navigable waters as defined under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 U.S.C. § 401 et seq.). Navigable waters must be designated as such by the USACE Division Commander following procedures defined at 33 CFR Part 329. The Snake River is navigable up to river mile 445.5 near Noble Island. The Revised Proposed Route would cross the Snake River upstream of the navigable reach.

Authorization from the USACE is also required for any activity that results in discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States as defined under Section 404 of the CWA (33 U.S.C. § 1344). The term "waters of the United States" has been broadly defined by statute, regulation, and judicial interpretation to include all waters that were, are, or could be used in interstate commerce such as rivers, streams (including ephemeral streams), canals, reservoirs, lakes, and adjacent wetlands. The USACE Wetlands Delineation Manual dated January 1987 (USACE 1987) and its current supplements must be used to determine if an area has sufficient wetland characteristics to be a water of the United States.

Many activities with “minimal” impacts on waters of the United States can be authorized by general permits and the most common are nationwide permits. On February 21, 2012, the USACE published nationwide permits in the Federal Register (Vol. 77, No. 34). Nationwide permits provide authorization in accordance with Section 404(e) of the CWA. The permits are available for a period of 5 years, currently until March 18, 2017. Standard (Individual) permits are required for activities with more than minimal impacts on waters of the United States.

Individual permits authorize activities in accordance with Section 404(a) of the CWA. The permit evaluation must be conducted in accordance with Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA as specified in guidelines promulgated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA; 40 CFR Part 230). No discharge shall be permitted if there is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge that would have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem, so long as the alternative does not have other significant adverse environmental consequences. An alternative is practicable if it is available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of the overall project purpose. In addition, where a discharge is proposed for a special aquatic site (wetland), all practicable alternatives to the proposed discharge which do not involve a discharge into a special aquatic site are presumed to have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem, unless clearly demonstrated otherwise.

Reasonable alternatives as defined under NEPA and practicable alternatives as defined above are not necessarily synonymous because some reasonable alternatives may not be available to the Proponents. The BLM is the agency that must select the preferred alternative on federally managed lands. Executive Order (EO) 11990, promulgated in 1977 for the protection of wetlands, requires “each agency, to the extent permitted by law, [to] avoid undertaking or providing assistance for new construction located in wetlands unless the head of the agency finds (1) that there is no practicable alternative

to such construction, and (2) that the proposed action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use. In making this finding the head of the agency may take into account economic, environmental and other pertinent factors (Section (2)(b)." Further, "[w]hen Federally-owned wetlands or portions of wetlands are proposed for lease, easement, right-of-way or disposal to non-Federal public or private parties, the Federal agency shall (a) reference in the conveyance those uses that are restricted under identified Federal, State or local wetlands regulations; and (b) attach other appropriate restrictions to the uses of properties by the grantee or purchaser and any successor, except where prohibited by law; or (c) withhold such properties from disposal (Section 4)."

If one of the BLM Co-Preferred Alternatives (see Chapter 2) is selected and approved in the ROD, it will reflect the agencies' full consideration of impacts to wetlands and all other resources. The ROD will then define the only alternative available to the Proponents for which a ROW could be granted on federally managed lands. The Proponents would be required to obtain a ROW on non-federal lands through negotiated easements or under eminent domain laws. Therefore, the ROW granted by the BLM, supplemented by acquisition of a congruent ROW that may be obtained by the Proponents, will define the only practicable alternative for the transmission line. However, it may be necessary for the USACE to evaluate alternatives for specific activities within the ROW such as tower locations and road alignments during the authorization process.

The USACE will determine whether authorization of proposed activities by nationwide permits is appropriate or whether certain activities require an individual permit evaluation. Evaluation of practicable alternatives is not applicable to nationwide permit authorizations as specified in 40 CFR Part 230.7(b)(1). However, mitigation measures in the form of avoidance, minimization, and compensation would be considered in all permit decisions. Verification by the USACE that activities are already authorized by nationwide permits is not a new federal action. The USACE would prepare a separate ROD for individual permit authorizations because issuance of a permit would be a new federal action.

1.4 PROPONENTS' OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROJECT

This section provides basic information about why the Proponents are proposing this Project and a description of the electrical transmission system needs that they believe would be met by the Project.

1.4.1 Proponents of the Project

1.4.1.1 PacifiCorp (Rocky Mountain Power)

PacifiCorp is an electric utility that transmits electricity via a grid of transmission lines located throughout a six-state region and a distribution system that serves more than 1.7 million retail customers. Rocky Mountain Power, a business unit of PacifiCorp, delivers electricity to approximately 1 million customers in Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. As an essential service provider, Rocky Mountain Power is required to operate under the oversight and regulatory controls of the Public Service Commission of Utah, the Wyoming Public Service Commission, and the Idaho Public Utilities Commission (IPUC). As a public utility under the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory

Commission (FERC), PacifiCorp is obligated to expand its transmission system to provide requested firm transmission service and to construct and place in service sufficient capacity to reliably deliver resources to customers.

PacifiCorp's system peak-hour load is forecast to increase from 10,450 megawatts (MW) in 2011 to 12,609 MW in 2020, a 2.1 percent average annual growth rate. PacifiCorp's eastern system peak is expected to continue growing faster than its western system peak, with average annual growth rates of 2.4 percent and 1.4 percent respectively, over the forecast horizon. PacifiCorp's system-wide average customer load is also forecasted to grow at a 2.1 percent annual rate from 2011 to 2020, increasing from 63,131,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) in 2011 to 76,137,000 MWh in 2020. This average forecasted growth rate is moderately higher than the average growth rate experienced from 1995 to 2005 when the average increase per year was 1.6 percent. PacifiCorp's three highest state loads—Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming (included in the MWh loads above)—are forecasted to grow at a rate of 1.4 percent, 2.4 percent, and 2.9 percent, respectively, through the same 2011–2020 period (PacifiCorp 2011). The growth rate is reflective of all customer loads.

For additional details about PacifiCorp's service area and load projections, please see Section 1.3.1.2 of the FEIS. PacifiCorp's Attachment K of the Open Access Transmission Tariff (OATT) also requires planning for the expansion of the system to ensure that its transmission system meets industry, regulatory, and reliability standards.

1.4.1.2 Idaho Power

Idaho Power is a wholly owned subsidiary of IDACORP, a holding company. Idaho Power is responsible for providing electrical service to its service area, which includes most of southern Idaho and a portion of eastern Oregon. The number of customers in Idaho Power's service area is expected to increase from around 492,000 in 2010 to over 650,000 by 2030. Firm peak-hour load (the peak hourly electricity that the system must supply when demand is at its highest) has increased from 2,052 MW in 1990 to over 3,000 MW in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. In June 2008, the peak-hour load reached 3,214 MW, which was a new system peak-hour record.

Average firm load (the average annual demand from customers) has increased from 10,500,000 MWh in 1990 to 15,800,000 MWh in 2008 (excluding Astaris/FMC) (IPC 2011a). While the economic downturn has affected customer demand for electricity in the near term, Idaho Power forecasts that on average their load will continue to grow at about 1.4 percent per year (an average of 29 MW annually) over the 20-year planning period. During the same 20-year planning period, the peak-hour load is expected to increase at 1.8 percent per year (69 MW annually) (IPC 2011a).

Idaho Power is a regulated public utility under the laws of the State of Idaho whose mission is to provide reliable, responsible, fair-priced energy. Idaho Power operates under the oversight and regulatory controls of the IPUC. Under Title 61 of the IPUC regulations, Idaho Power "shall furnish, provide and maintain such service, instrumentalities, equipment and facilities as shall promote the safety, health, comfort and convenience of its patrons, employees and the public, and shall be in all respects adequate, efficient, just and reasonable."

Idaho Power is also a public utility under the jurisdiction of the FERC. Idaho Power is obligated to expand its transmission system to provide requested firm transmission service, and to construct and place in service sufficient capacity to reliably deliver resources to network and native load customers as provided in their OATT under Sections 15.4 and 28.3 (FERC 2008). Idaho Power's OATT requires planning for the expansion of the transmission system to provide network integration transmission service that complies with regulatory reliability standards.

Idaho Power's 2011 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) divides the 20-year planning horizon into two 10-year segments. The first 10-year period is analyzed first (2011-2020), followed by the second 10-year period (2021-2030). It is likely that Idaho Power customer needs would be largely met in the first 10-year period with the construction of the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line project (B2H) if that project is approved and constructed. For the second 10-year period, 10 resource portfolios were analyzed in the IRP, and some of these portfolios required Gateway West transmission capacity to deliver energy to major load centers in southern Idaho while others did not. The need for Gateway West capacity in each of these portfolios was driven by the assumed locations of the resources in each portfolio.

While the selected portfolio for the second 10-year period was marginally able to deliver energy to major load centers without additional transmission capacity across southern Idaho, many of the other portfolios analyzed did require additional transmission capacity. The selection of resources in the second 10-year period is largely an academic exercise, and is likely to change substantially every 2 years when the IRP is updated.

Idaho Power has reported (see Appendix B of the FEIS) that without adequate transmission capacity across southern Idaho, its ability to site future generation resources will be limited. The long lead time required to permit, design, and construct high-voltage transmission lines simply will not allow new transmission capacity to be built in conjunction with the construction schedule of a new generation resource. Therefore, Idaho Power believes it is prudent to continue to pursue additional transmission capacity across southern Idaho through Gateway West.

1.4.1.3 Team Constructional and Operational Responsibilities

Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power signed an agreement in 2007 to approach the permitting process for the Project as a team. That teaming agreement is still in place, though Rocky Mountain Power has taken the lead in the permitting effort since January 2012. Construction and operation of Segments 8 and 9 are still under discussion between the two Proponents as of December 2014.

1.4.2 Federal Oversight of Transmission Planning

The Proponents are subject to federal and state oversight and regulation for the planning, construction, operation, and maintenance of their energy transmission system. Under the FERC's authority, the Proponents are required to conduct transmission planning necessary to reliably serve their native load customers and conduct planning for third-party transmission service requests in compliance with their FERC-approved OATT. Procedures and processes for transmission planning for network customers and for third-party requests are documented in OATT Section III - Network Integration

Transmission Service and subsections 28 through 33. Gateway West, as part of the larger Energy Gateway concept, has been developed, engineered, designed, and would be constructed (if approved) to reliably deliver designated network resources to network customer loads, both today and long term.

FERC Order 890 presently provides the transmission planning requirements for public utility transmission providers nationwide, including all public utility transmission providers within the WECC. Through Order 890, FERC requires that transmission providers participate in local planning processes as well as sub-regional and regional planning processes. PacifiCorp and Idaho Power both participate in the Northern Tier Transmission Group (NTTG), which is a sub-regional planning group comprising transmission providers and customers. PacifiCorp and Idaho Power are also active in WECC regional transmission planning committees and studies.

FERC issued Order 1000 in July 2011 with the requirement that public utility transmission providers make compliance filings on most of the issues by October 2012. NTTG members are in the process of identifying and modifying the existing compliance filings to address the requirements of Order 1000; however, it is believed that the transmission planning process under the Order 1000 requirements will remain largely unchanged from the Order 890 requirements within the NTTG footprint. NTTG's current planning process evaluates the reliability of the transmission system 10 years into the future. Each load serving entity provides 10-year projections for load and generation. The load and resource projections serve as the basis for analysis. The adequacy of the existing transmission system is evaluated for the future projections. The adequacy of the future transmission system is then evaluated for various seasonal demand and generation scenarios with proposed transmission improvements.

An Order 1000 modification of note, as differentiated from Order 890 requirements, is that the NTTG regional transmission plan must identify transmission facilities that "more efficiently or cost-effectively" meet the region's reliability, economic and Public Policy Requirements. In other words, a project's relative benefit and cost will now be analyzed as part of the transmission planning process, and the transmission plan (a single plan) will be a compilation of proposed projects that most "efficiently and cost-effectively" meet a region's needs.

Gateway West is one of the projects in the 2011 NTTG Biennial Transmission Plan included in the 2012-2013 NTTG regional planning process. The transmission planning process evaluates the efficiency and cost effectiveness of projects within the plan and consider any proposed alternatives that may address regional needs more efficiently or cost effectively than the projects proposed by the transmission providers in local transmission plans.

FERC granted the PacifiCorp incentive rate treatment and the Commission issued a 4-0 decision in which FERC stated:

> *…we find that PacifiCorp has adequately demonstrated that the Project (with the exception of segment A) will ensure reliability and reduce transmission congestion… We find that segments B through H of the Project[3] would establish for the first time a backbone of 500 kV transmission*

[3] Segment D in the FERC decision refers to Gateway West Segments 1 to 4 and Segment E refers to Gateway West Segments 5 to10.

lines in PacifiCorp's Wyoming, Idaho and Utah regions. This would provide a platform for integrating and coordinating future regional and sub-regional electric transmission projects being considered in the Pacific Northwest and the Intermountain West, connection existing and potential generation to loads in an efficient manner, thus reducing the cost of delivered power. Also, the Petition cites the 2006 DOE National Electric Transmission Congestion Study and the 2004 Rocky Mountain Area Transmission Study in stating that that proposed Project will reduce congestion or maintain reliability in the Western Interconnection. Additionally, the project would establish a direct link between PacifiCorp's east and west control areas, providing numerous benefits including increasing transfer capability, reducing the need for curtailments, and reducing transmission congestion.

The WECC 10-Year Regional Transmission Plan was approved by the WECC Board of Directors September 22, 2011, and a Plan Summary can be found at: *http://www.wecc.biz/library/StudyReport/Documents/Plan_Summary.pdf*. Energy Gateway, including Gateway West, is an integral part of the Foundational Transmission Project identified for the Regional Plan as shown in Section 3.2.3, Transmission. Independent stakeholders involved in data input, development, and review of the plan are identified in Section 6, Organizations Involved in Development of the Plan.

1.4.2.1 WECC Path Rating Review Process

The WECC has a three-phase process for rating proposed transmission projects. The rating process enables project sponsors to attain a WECC "Accepted Rating" and demonstrate how their projects will meet North American Electrical Reliability Corporation (NERC) and WECC planning standards. The rating process addresses planned new facility additions and upgrades and the re-rating of existing facilities. It includes coordination through a review group made up of the project sponsors and representatives of other systems that may be affected by the project.

Phase 1 begins when the project sponsor submits a progress report to the WECC or when WECC's Planning Coordination Committee and Technical Studies Subcommittee receive a formal letter of notification. It is the project sponsor's responsibility during Phase 1 to conduct sufficient studies to demonstrate the proposed non-simultaneous rating of the project. The project sponsor must also prepare a "Comprehensive Progress Report" that documents study results and describes project details. This report must also identify known simultaneous relationships between the proposed project and existing facilities. When the WECC accepts the project sponsor's comprehensive progress report, the project is granted a "Planned Rating."

In Phase 2 of the Rating Process, interested WECC members form a "Project Review Group" to evaluate the project's plan of service. When the appropriate committee or subcommittee of the WECC accepts the Project Review Group Phase 2 Rating report, Phase 2 is complete and the project is granted an "Accepted Rating." An accepted rating affords the project sponsor some protection against erosion of established capacity for its rated facilities as further expansion of the interconnection occurs or new limitations are discovered.

Phase 3 is the last part of the Rating Process. During Phase 3, WECC members and staff monitor the project and evaluate major changes in assumptions and conditions to enable the project to maintain its Accepted Rating. Phase 3 is complete when the project is placed into service.

The WECC path rating review is the foundation for determining Total Transmission Capability for transmission facilities in the Western Interconnection. WECC's approach for rating facilities, determining Total Transmission Capability, and calculating Available Transfer Capability are all intended to fully comply with applicable NERC, WECC, and FERC rules.

1.4.3 State Regulation of Transmission

Idaho has approved regulatory processes in place to review and determine the prudence and usefulness of any investment made on behalf of the Proponents' customers. Approval of investments occurs in the following two steps.

1. Each company files for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity in the states physically impacted by the investment. This process determines that an investment proposed by the Proponents is in the public interest and is necessary to provide safe, adequate, and reliable electric service. The Proponents will initiate this process when the BLM publishes the Final SEIS.

2. The Proponents file for cost recovery of an investment through a rate case. This step occurs after the investment is made and the respective project is constructed and placed in service. This review focuses on prudence of project alternative selection, cost control, customer benefits, and usefulness of the facilities resulting from the investment. Funds expended in advance of this prudency review and rate change approval by Idaho are "at risk" as transmission projects are rarely "preapproved" by the states before they are initiated.

In support of this two-step process, the Proponents engage in a series of regional activities to inform commissions and stakeholders about its projects, their objectives, and investment requirements. The IRPs are examples of this informational process. As regulated utilities, both Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power are required to produce and periodically update an IRP for each state in which they operate. The Public Utilities Commissions of the states where these utilities operate review and acknowledge these IRPs and their updates.

The Project will also need to comply with Title 67, Chapter 65 of the Idaho Code (i.e., the Land Use Planning Act), which gives the State and counties siting authority on non-federal lands.

1.4.4 Demand-Side Management

Part of the planning process that results in the IRPs and their updates includes addressing conservation and other means of reducing or controlling the growth of the demand for electricity among the utilities' customers. When the Public Utilities Commission for a given state acknowledges the IRP, it is agreeing that the balance of demand-side measures and development of additional generation resources, including associated transmission, is appropriate to meet the needs of the customers of its state while complying with the various laws and regulations on renewable energy requirements, carbon emissions, and other energy-related issues.

The Proponents have detailed their demand-side management in their respective IRPs, which have been acknowledged by the Public Utilities Commissions for which they were written (PacifiCorp 2011; IPC 2011a).

1.4.5 Existing Transmission System Reliability Constraints

Transmission systems in the United States must be planned, operated, and maintained under the NERC[4] reliability performance standards. These mandatory national standards govern the level of performance and reliability of the Bulk Electric System operated within the United States. Additionally, the Proponents state that they are governed by the WECC[5] policy procedures, criteria, and standards that may be more stringent than those required by the NERC. In compliance with the above standards, transmission systems must be planned, designed, built, and continually operated with sufficient levels of redundancy to enable the transmission system to reliably operate in the event of the loss of any single element (i.e., generation unit, transmission line segment or substation equipment) or loss of multiple elements, thereby providing adequate service to customers and to other interconnected utilities. Adding new transmission facilities to a network provides not only new transmission capacity but also levels of backup to each other during outage conditions when elements of the system are taken out of service during both planned and unplanned events.

Transmission paths consist of single lines or combinations of lines operated together as a single transmission unit to maximize capacity of the system and to maintain reliability. Path capacities are usually limited by the line in the path with the least capacity.

In siting new transmission facilities, the Proponents state that they are obliged to be prudent and site and install facilities to avoid a potential "common mode failure" (i.e., lines adjacent to each other on a common transmission tower or two parallel transmission lines in close proximity to each other failing together). Common mode failures include, but are not limited to, a snagged shield wire from one line being dragged into the adjacent line, an aircraft flying into more than one line, smoke from a fire across the ROW shorting out more than one line, lightning strikes affecting more than one line, high winds, dust storms, ice storms, blizzards, landslides, earthquakes, vandalism, and equipment failure.

As a minimum requirement, the NERC/WECC reliability performance standards require that a multiple contingency analysis (an analysis of the simultaneous failure of two lines) must be performed to evaluate the impact resulting from the loss of multiple transmission lines to the remaining transmission system. The power flowing on the two transmission lines removed from service must now flow across the remaining transmission system and may subsequently overload portions of the remaining system. In this event, the useable system capacity limit is reduced to protect the remaining system from this overload or unstable condition.

[4] The NERC's mission is to improve the reliability and security of the bulk power system in North America. To achieve that, NERC develops and enforces reliability standards; monitors the bulk power system; assesses future adequacy; audits owners, operators, and users for preparedness; and educates and trains industry personnel. NERC is a self-regulatory organization that relies on the diverse and collective expertise of industry participants. As the Electric Reliability Organization, NERC is subject to audit by the FERC and governmental authorities in Canada (NERC 2012).

[5] The WECC and the nine other regional reliability councils were formed due to national concern regarding the reliability of the interconnected bulk power systems, the ability to operate these systems without widespread failures in electric service, and the need to foster the preservation of reliability through a formal organization. The Western Interconnection encompasses a vast area of nearly 1.8 million square miles. It is the largest and most diverse of the eight regional councils of the NERC. WECC's territory extends from Canada to Mexico. It includes the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, the northern portion of Baja California, Mexico, and all or portions of the 14 western states in between (WECC 2011).

When transmission lines are separated from each other, common mode failures pose a significantly reduced risk and the NERC/WECC reliability standards only require evaluation of one line out of service at a time. Constructing transmission lines physically separated from each other allows the Proponents to operate their interconnected electric system at a higher electrical capacity than would otherwise be possible. The Proponents state that the net result of line separation is that fewer transmission lines are needed overall to adequately serve customers' energy needs. Due to the high transfer capacity requirements necessary for Gateway West, high-capacity lines must be located on separate corridors to increase reliability and to provide the highest capacity possible.

Due to questions that have surfaced concerning common mode failure of transmission lines constructed adjacent to other transmission lines, the WECC Board of Directors approved a regional transmission planning criterion (TPL [001-004]-WECC-1-CR), on April 18, 2008. This planning criterion specifies that utilities must plan for two lines to be out of service at the same time if they are located adjacent to each other unless those lines are separated by at least "the longest span length of the two transmission circuits at the point of separation or 500 feet, whichever is greater, between the transmission circuits" (WECC 2008).[6] This criterion has subsequently been revised, but the initial siting study for Gateway West was based on this criterion.

The Proponents report that the recent WECC revision of this criterion affects only one of many criteria that need to be considered when planning transmission projects. Specifically, WECC has relaxed its definition of a common corridor from the greatest span or 500 feet from an existing line to a minimum of 250 feet from an existing line. The remaining criteria still obligate a transmission provider to take into consideration the potential impacts to reliability. As a result, the RAC Subcommittee recommended a separation reduction across the SRBOP, and the Proponents have reduced the separation of the Project from existing lines to approximately 250 feet along 28.7-mile portion of the proposed route for Segment 8.

Even though the WECC separation criterion has been revised, the WECC/NERC requirements to provide reliable electricity have remained the same. Acts of nature such as fires or micro bursts or other acts such as vandalism or required fire suppression management may impact the reliability of the bulk transmission system if lines are sited in close proximity. Common corridor outages, in particular outages caused by smoke and fire, are prevalent through the open areas along the Project. During the drier parts of the year, fires can ignite and move extremely fast. When heavy smoke rises to the level of the conductors, the air between the conductors loses some of its insulation properties, and the conductor will begin to conduct electricity to ground, or "fault"; protective instrumentation will disconnect the transmission line from the electrical system. If the Gateway West transmission lines are constructed close to other transmission lines and the two lines disconnect in rapid succession, the Proponents state that major problems may result for the electrical grid, potentially leading to wide-spread outages (area blackouts).

There have been numerous occurrences of fire, wind, geological, and other related corridor outages. If a major event did occur, preparation for a future similar outage

[6] A transmission "circuit" is a set of wires energized at transmission voltages extending beyond a substation which has its own protection zone and set of breakers for isolation, and the "span length" is the distance between two transmission line support structures. See also Glossary.

would likely be mandated. The first step toward preparing for a similar occurrence would be to reduce the rating and capacity of the facilities, resulting in a project that is vastly inferior to the purpose and need. For example, following the WECC westwide disturbance in 1996, PacifiCorp was required to make a significant reduction in transmission system capacity ratings on its WECC rated Path C between southeast Idaho and northern Utah. A significant system capacity reduction, from 1,000 MW to 600 MW, was a direct result of the disturbance investigation by WECC, to reduce the stress on the system and gain more reliability. As a result, PacifiCorp constructed the Populus to Terminal transmission line to restore reliability. The Proponents believe the first step to avoid a common corridor outage is to locate the lines as far apart as feasibly possible, without creating additional undue impact to the environment and surrounding areas. The Proponents state that forcing Gateway West into close proximity to other lines undermines the overall purpose and need of the Project.

The Proponents report several instances where outages on their systems and others have led to serious consequences. In 2007, a fire burned through the Jim Bridger transmission line ROW resulting in an outage of all three 345-kV lines and three of the four Jim Bridger generating units (Gerrard 2010). Also in 2007, a fire caused the Mona – Huntington and Mona – Bonanza 345-kV lines in Central Utah to de-energize (Gerrard 2010). In California, two adjacent 500-kV line transmission structures failed in 2005, leaving an estimated 5.2 million customers in California, Nevada, Oregon, and Texas without power (California ISO Corporation 2005).

1.4.6 Purpose of the Gateway West Proposed Action

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) supplies wholesale power to six utilities (two towns and four rural cooperatives) in Southeast Idaho. Until recently, a portion of that power has come from PacifiCorp and a portion from BPA's hydroelectric facilities. PacifiCorp has given BPA a 5-year notice that it will no longer supply power under the old agreement. Therefore, by 2017, BPA must come up with another source of power for its six small utility clients in Southeast Idaho. As a part of future planning, BPA has entered into an agreement with PacifiCorp and Idaho Power to help fund the permitting of B2H and to consider the possibility of asset swaps in the future.

BPA is considering five alternatives to provide that power:

- Power purchase with OATT Service
- B2H with OATT service
- B2H with transmission asset swaps
- Two BPA construction scenarios from Montana to Southeast Idaho

The second alternative depends upon the capacity of Gateway West through Idaho as well as on the completion of B2H. The other options do not depend upon the completion of Gateway West. BPA conducted a public comment period on these options that closed August 27, 2012. In October 2012, the BPA announced that it had selected the "BPA with transmission asset swaps" as its top priority for pursuit (BPA 2012a). BPA must still conduct a NEPA analysis on its options to supply power to its Southeast Idaho customers (BPA 2012b).

Gateway West is independent of, and would be built regardless of, any particular new generation project. The transmission grid of which it would become a part can be

thought of in terms of hub and spokes, with a backbone connecting to the hubs. Each substation is a hub and receives or sends electricity along the spokes. For this system to work, a backbone of high-capacity transmission lines is needed to connect the hubs and transport the electricity from where it is or can be generated, to where it is needed.

Segments 8 and 9 would provide two separate paths connecting the Midpoint and Hemingway Substations. This link would improve the Proponents' ability to move power both east and west into their service areas in Idaho and Oregon.

1.4.6.1 Substations

The overall Project (including all 10 segments) would connect 12 substations, which are essential control points for the route. Three of these substations would be located along Segments 8 and 9, and are discussed in this SEIS. The purposes of these substations are listed in Table 1.4-1. Two of the substations along Segments 8 and 9 are in service now, while one is associated with the segments approved in the 2013 Gateway West ROD.

Table 1.4-1. Substations That Would Be Connected by Segments 8 and 9 of Gateway West

Substation	Description	Purpose
Midpoint	Existing: interconnection and load-driven	The substation expansion would allow interconnection of new transmission lines from Cedar Hill and Hemingway and allow for the existing 345-kV transmission line between Borah and Midpoint Substations to be energized at 500 kV, thereby creating a continuous 500-kV system expansion and reliability tie with the Cedar Hill Substation.
Cedar Hill	To be built for Gateway West Segments 7 and 10, load-driven	The substation would serve two purposes: 1) a reliability tie between the proposed Gateway West north and south transmission lines, and 2) a 500-kV to 230-kV transformation station for serving the Magic Valley load. This would complement the existing service from Midpoint to the north of the Magic Valley. The Magic Valley Electrical Plan is under development, with this station being considered as a future source to the valley.
Hemingway	Existing; interconnection and load-driven	The substation expansion would serve as an interconnection point for the Gateway West, Summer Lake, Boardman, and Captain Jack transmission lines. The station itself currently serves the Treasure Valley load. The station is the southwestern 500-kV to 230-kV transformation point in the Treasure Valley 500-kV loop, as defined in the Treasure Valley Electrical Plan. The Hemingway Substation is the western terminus of the Gateway West Project because it is the major load point for the generation resources brought in from the east, primarily Wyoming.

1.4.6.2 Gateway West Transmission Line Segment Purposes

Table 1.4-2 summarizes the purpose for Segments 8 and 9 of Gateway West. Each segment's Project description is presented in detail in Chapter 2.

Table 1.4-2. Gateway West Transmission Line Segments

Transmission Line Segment	Purpose
Segment 8—Midpoint to Hemingway, single-circuit 500-kV line	Transport existing and new energy resources to load demand centers throughout the system. Provide physical separation to meet reliability criteria between a northern route (Populus – Borah – Midpoint – Hemingway) and a southern route (Populus – Cedar Hill – Hemingway). Physical separation is needed due to existing transmission line congestion (multiple lines in the same area) and wildland fires resulting in outages.
Segment 9—Cedar Hill to Hemingway, single-circuit 500-kV line	Transport energy resources to serve load demand centers throughout the system. Provide physical separation to meet reliability criteria between a northern route (Midpoint – Hemingway) and a southern route (Cedar Hill – Hemingway). Physical separation is needed due to existing transmission line congestion (multiple lines in the same area) and wildland fires resulting in outages.

1.5 AUTHORIZING LAWS AND REGULATIONS

1.5.1 Overview

Table 1.5-1 lists the major federal, state, and local permits, approvals, and consultations identified for the construction and operations of the portion of the Gateway West Project along Segments 8 and 9. The Proponents would be responsible for obtaining all permits and approvals required to implement the proposed Project regardless of whether they appear in this table.

Table 1.5-1. Major Permits, Approvals, and Consultations for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project

Regulatory Agency	Required Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Agency Action
Federal		
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Section 106 Consultation, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)	Has the opportunity to comment if the Project may affect cultural resources that are either listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).
U.S. Department of Defense, Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Omaha District, Walla Walla District	Section 10, Rivers and Harbors Act Permit	Consider issuance of a Section 10 permit for construction across the Snake River.
	Section 404, Clean Water Act Permit	Consider issuance of a Section 404 permit for the placement of dredge or fill material into all waters of the United States, including wetlands.
U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	Antiquities and Cultural Resource Use Permit	Consider issuance of antiquities and cultural resources use permit to conduct surveys and to excavate or remove cultural resources on federal lands.
	Various Resource Management Plans	Consider amending the plans.
	ROW Grant	Consider issuing long-term ROW grant for operations and maintenance of those portions of the Project that would encroach on the National System of Public Lands, including easements across federally owned waterways.
	Short-Term ROW Grant	Consider issuance of a short-term ROW grant for temporary activities in the construction ROW, on lands leading into the ROW, and associated areas such as staging areas that are within the National System of Public Lands.
	Plan of Development (POD)	Consider approval of detailed POD.
	Notice to Proceed	Following issuance of a ROW grant and approval of a POD, consider issuance of a Notice to Proceed with Project development and mitigation activities.
	Public Law 103-64, Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Act, Sections 3(a)(2) and 4(a)(2)	Determine that any use authorization in the SRBOP furthers the purposes for which it was established, including "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."

Table 1.5-1. Major Permits, Approvals, and Consultations for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (continued)

Regulatory Agency	Required Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Agency Action
U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration	Encroachment Permit	Consider issuance of permit for transmission line crossing of federally funded highways (typically delegated to the state department of transportation).
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10	Section 401, Clean Water Act (CWA) Water Quality Certification	In conjunction with states, consider issuance of water use and crossing permits.
	Section 402, CWA, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activity for Idaho	Review and issue NPDES permit for discharge of stormwater in Idaho.
	Section 404, CWA	Review CWA, Section 404 applications for dredge-and-fill applications for the USACE with 404(c) veto power for permits issued by the USACE.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Region 1	Section 7 Consultation, Biological Opinion (Endangered Species Act)	Consider lead agency finding of impact on federally listed or proposed species. Provide Biological Opinion if the Project is likely to adversely affect federally listed or candidate species or their habitats.
	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act	Provide comments to prevent loss of and damage to wildlife resources.
	Migratory Bird Treaty Act	Provide comments for the protection of migratory birds.
	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act	Provide comments for the protection of eagles.
USFWS (Refuge Division)	Compatibility Determination	Provide concurrence for the BLM to issue a ROW grant covering USFWS fee lands within National Wildlife Refuges (no fee lands presently crossed by proposed or alternative routes as of July 2011).
State		
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	Fugitive Dust Control Plan	Consider measures to control fugitive dust emissions at each construction site.
	Section 401, CWA, Water Quality Certification	Consider certification of a 404 permit issued by the USACE as consistent with state law and Section 401.
Idaho Department of Transportation	Encroachment Permit	Consider issuance of permit to cross or bore under state highways or be within a state highway ROW.
Idaho Public Utilities Commission	Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity	Consider issuance of a certificate to allow construction of a public utility, including transmission lines
Idaho State Historic Preservation Office	Section 106 Consultation, NHPA	Consult with the BLM, the Proponents, other land management agencies, and others regarding activities potentially affecting cultural resources.
Idaho Department of Lands	Lease on Endowment Trust Lands	Consider issuance of ROWs across state lands.
Idaho Department of Fish and Game	Potential Project Impacts to Fish and Wildlife Species and Their Habitat	Coordinate with the BLM and USFWS on wildlife issues/impacts associated with the Project.

Table 1.5-1. Major Permits, Approvals, and Consultations for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (continued)

Regulatory Agency	Required Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Agency Action
Idaho Department of Water Resources	Stream Channel Alteration Permit and Wetland Removal Fill Permit (IC Title 42 Chapter 38)	Consider alteration of any stream channel or wetland.
Various (may also require federal and local approvals)	Explosives Permit	Consider issuance of a license to store and use explosives.
Local and County		
County Commissioners	Conditional Use Permits	Consider issuance of conditional use permits for construction of transmission line and substations (varies by county).
Planning Department	Temporary Use Permit, Grading Permit	Consider issuance of Temporary Use Permit for material and contractor yards and a grading permit for noxious weed control coordination.
Public Works Department	Encroachment Permit	Consider issuance of an encroachment permit for new access roads where they intersect with existing county roads.
	Road Crossing Permit, Road Maintenance Agreement	Consider issuance of road crossing permit and road maintenance agreement for overhead transmission line.
City of Kuna, Idaho	Variance and special use permits	Consider issuance of a variety of exceptions to existing land use plans, zones, etc.

1.5.2 Regulatory Framework

Chapter 3 of the FEIS addressed the regulatory framework of the Project, by resource, in the Affected Environment subsection of each environmental resource section. The following subsections address new regulations that have been implemented or changed since the publication of the FEIS, or regulations that were not described in detail in the FEIS. All other regulations that have been unchanged or whose changes did not affect the Gateway West Project are included in this document by reference to the FEIS. Additional details regarding federal policies, plans, and programs are discussed in Section 1.6.

1.5.2.1 National Trails System Act

The National Trails Systems Act (NTSA) of 1968, as amended, established a network of scenic, historic, and recreational trails to provide for outdoor recreation needs; promote the enjoyment, appreciation, and preservation of open-air, outdoor areas, and historic resources; and encourage public access and citizen involvement. According to the NTSA of 1968, the Secretary charged with administration of the NHT may permit other uses along the trail provided that they do not "substantially interfere with the nature and purpose of the trail" (16 U.S.C. § 1246). In this regard, "reasonable efforts shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to such trails and, to the extent practicable, efforts shall be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which such trails were established" (16 U.S.C. § 1246). Easements or ROWs granted by the Secretary of the Interior or Secretary of Agriculture must comply with laws applicable to the national park system and national forest system, and conditions established in the easements or ROWs must reflect the policy and purposes of the NTSA (16 U.S.C. § 1248).

The Project may directly or indirectly impact segments of the Oregon NHT, NHT-associated resources, and the North Alternate Study Trail present within the Analysis Area (see Section 3.1.5.2 for impacts analysis). NHTs, which are authorized and designated only by an act of Congress, commemorate historically significant routes (i.e., historic routes of exploration, migration, trade, communication, and military action) whose location is known sufficiently to permit public recreation and historical interest (NPS 2013). To be designated by Congress, NHTs must follow as closely as possible the actual route of historic use, be of national significance, and have significant potential for public recreation and/or interpretation opportunities (16 U.S.C. § 1242).

1.5.2.2 National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; 54 U.S.C. § 300101 *et seq.*) requires that the federal agency permitting the undertaking "take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register" and provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) an opportunity to comment. Effect is defined in the implementing regulations for Section 106 (36 CFR 800.16(i)) as "alteration to the characteristics of a historic property qualifying it for inclusion in or eligibility for the National Register."

As a historic property listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Oregon NHT requires evaluation of effect under Section 106. Segments and sites associated with the trail located in the direct and indirect area of potential effects established for the Project will be assessed through a cultural resources inventory associated with the Section 106 process, and effects will be determined in consultation with tribes and parties to the Project Programmatic Agreement (PA). A PA for the Gateway West Project was executed in conjunction with the 2013 ROD. The PA applies to all segments of the Project, including Segments 8 and 9.

This section draws upon the NRHP eligibility assessments of segments through previous documentation; fieldwork performed in conjunction with the inventory and analysis did not reevaluate the NRHP eligibility of previously documented trail segments and sites. BLM Manual 6280 requires the BLM to consider how the proposed action would affect designated NHT properties, including "remnants and artifacts from the associated period of use that may be eligible or listed on the National Register" (BLM 2012a). The BLM, therefore, is required to coordinate the analysis of cultural resources associated with the Oregon NHT and North Alternate Study Trail with the Manual 6280 Inventory and Impacts Analysis. While the Manual 6280 Inventory and Impacts Analysis covers Project impacts to segments of the Oregon NHT and North Alternate Study Trail on BLM-managed land, 36 CFR Part 800 requires the BLM to consider a more comprehensive assessment of Project impacts to NRHP-eligible segments of these two trails on both federal and non-federal lands.

1.5.2.3 Federal Land Policy and Management Act

FLPMA (P.L. 94-579, Section 102(a)) states that it is the policy of the United States that: (7) "management be on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield unless otherwise specified by law"; (8) "the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values." FLPMA in Section 302(b) states that in

"managing the public lands the Secretary shall, by regulation or otherwise, take any action necessary to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands".

The SRBOP was established in 1993 "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 public lands in the conservation area." (P.L. 103-94, Section 3(a)(2)).

1.5.2.4 BLM Manual 6280

As required by BLM Manual 6280, for any implementation-level action proposed or that may potentially affect NHTs, the BLM is required to do the following as part of the NEPA analysis:

- For each alternative, describe and analyze the potential impacts to the nature and purposes of the National Trail; the National Trail resources, qualities, values, and associated settings; and the primary use or uses of the trail.
- Describe the impacts to the national significance of National Trails, based on NHPA criteria and other NTSA criteria, as well as impacts to the significance of properties that are eligible or listed on the National Register, as applicable.
- Ensure adequate public involvement in the BLM's management activities through NEPA, land use planning, and/or other applicable processes.
- To the greatest extent possible, consider opportunities for mitigation to a level commensurate with the adverse impact to the nature and purposes; resources, qualities, values, and associated settings; and the primary use or uses of the National Trail.

For trails under feasibility study, the NEPA analysis for the proposed action is required to consider existing data, including data from the completed National Trail Feasibility Study (if available) or additional data collected as necessary for alternative formulation and analysis of the proposed action (i.e., Gateway West Transmission Line Project). In evaluating whether to approve the proposed action, the BLM's NEPA analysis is required to:

- Describe the values, characteristics, and settings of trails under study and trails recommended as suitable in the affected environment section of the NEPA document;
- Analyze and describe any impacts of the proposed action on the values, characteristics, and settings of trails under study or trails recommended as suitable; and
- Consider an alternative that would avoid adverse impacts to the values, characteristics, and settings of the trail under study or recommended as suitable and/or incorporate and consider applying design features to avoid adverse impacts.

To analyze the potential for Project impacts, the manual stipulates that the inventory include an interdisciplinary assessment of NHT-related recreation, historic/cultural, and natural resources, qualities, and values and settings (BLM 2012a).

1.5.2.5 BLM Manual 6400 – Wild and Scenic Rivers – Policy and Program Direction for Identification, Evaluation, Planning, and Management.

Manual 6400 states:

> *To the extent possible under existing legal authorities (e.g., FLPMA, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and Archaeological Resources Protection Act), the BLM's policy goal for eligible and suitable rivers is to manage their free-flowing condition, water quality, tentative classification, and any outstandingly remarkable values to assure a decision on suitability can be made for eligible rivers… For BLM-identified eligible and suitable rivers, the BLM should consider exercising its discretion to deny applications for right-of-way grants if the BLM determines through appropriate environmental analysis that the right-of-way proposal is not compatible with the river's classification and the protection and enhancement of river values. Where the right-of-way proposal is found to be compatible, additional or new facilities should be located, to the greatest extent possible, to share, parallel, or adjoin an existing right-of-way.*

1.5.2.6 Elmore County Plans

The Elmore County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004, amended in 2007 and 2011, and updated in 2014 (Elmore County 2014). The 2014 Elmore County Comprehensive Plan (which was published after the release of the Gateway West FEIS) lists seven goals for electrical power, including three most relevant to this Project:

- *Recognize the need for long-range planning and build out of electrical infrastructure as detailed in the Eastern Treasure Valley Electrical Plan (ETVEP), developed by a local Community Advisory Committee. See Map #11 in the map appendix* [of the Elmore County Comprehensive Plan] *for the conceptual locations of future electrical infrastructure;*
- *Recognize that the ETVEP is a conceptual plan and is the first step in planning for new and upgraded transmission lines and substations. Each project will still require jurisdictional approval and will be subject to the public siting process; and*
- *Recognize other types and sources of energy beyond the existing electrical infrastructure have a role to play in the future of the Gem Community (e.g., solar, wind, gas).*

1.5.3 Federal Mitigation Policies

On November 3, 2015, the BLM received the *Presidential Memorandum: Mitigating Impacts on Natural Development and Encouraging Related Private Investment* (80[215] Federal Register 68743). The memorandum directs agencies to implement landscape-scale mitigation for project development impacts. The Presidential Memorandum states that mitigation "occurs through policies that direct the planning necessary to address the harmful impacts on natural resources by avoiding and minimizing impacts, then compensating for impacts that do occur." In addition, the memorandum states that "Agencies' mitigation policies should establish a net benefit goal or, at a minimum, a no net loss goal for natural resources the agency manages that are important, scarce, or sensitive, or wherever doing so is consistent with agency mission and established natural resource objectives."

In October 2015, the DOI released Manual 600 DM 6, *Implementing Mitigation at the Landscape-scale* (DOI 2015), which also implements landscape-scale mitigation for

impacts from projects. The mitigation guidance states that "compensatory mitigation means to compensate for *remaining* unavoidable impacts after all appropriate and practicable avoidance and minimization measures have been applied, by replacing or providing substitute resources, or environments."

The BLM Interim Mitigation Policy (2013-WO-IM-142) provides interim guidance that states the BLM will identify, analyze, and require compensatory mitigation, as appropriate, to address reasonably foreseeable residual effects to resources, values, and functions from land use activities.

The Presidential Memorandum instructs agencies to consider the extent to which the beneficial environmental outcomes that will be achieved are demonstrably new and would not have occurred in the absence of mitigation (i.e., additionally). It also calls for mitigation to provide for improvement of mitigation sites and be durable, transparent, monitored, and adaptively managed. The DOI manual (600 DM 6) and BLM's interim policy on mitigation (IM 2013-142) also direct the agency to implement similar mitigation standards, which are among the considerations for the Gateway West Project.

1.5.4 Major Federal Consultations

Before the BLM can decide whether to grant the ROW, consultation with several tribal as well as federal and state agencies is required, including concurrence from the USFWS in the form of a concurrence letter or Biological Opinion (BO) and concurrence from the Idaho SHPO concerning the treatment of historic properties.

1.5.4.1 Government-to-Government Consultation

The BLM is responsible for compliance with a host of laws, EOs and Memoranda, treaties, departmental policies, and other mandates regarding their legal relationships with and responsibilities to Native Americans. The government-to-government relationship that the United States has with federally recognized Indian Tribes started with the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution, where Tribes were recognized as sovereign nations, and has continued in federal laws and policies including but not limited to the NHPA[7], NEPA, Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), and EOs 12875, 12898, 13007, 13084, and 13175. Compliance with this body of law requires consultation with Tribes on the effects of proposed actions. Specific guidance includes, but is not limited to, formal government-to-government consultation, treatment of discoveries of burials and Native American objects, and treatment of traditional cultural properties (TCPs) and sacred sites and landscapes.

A list of Tribes that have been contacted to date and invited to government-to-government consultation is found in Chapter 5. Tribes were also invited to participate as concurring parties in a PA developed for this Project under Section 106 of the NHPA (see Appendix N of the FEIS).[8]

[7] 54 U.S.C. § 300101, et seq. (as recodified in 2014)

[8] Congress recodified the NHPA on December 19, 2014. The agency review provision of the NHPA, formally Section 106 of the NHPA, is now 54 U.S.C. § 306108. While the citation has changed, the BLM will refer to the review process in this SEIS as "Section 106," "Section 106 process," or "Section 106 of the NHPA."

1.5.4.2 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Consultation with the USFWS is required to comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1536(a)(2) [1988]), for species listed as threatened or endangered. As lead federal agency, the BLM must analyze the effects of the proposed Project on the species and on their designated critical habitat, if present. The Biological Assessment (BA) prepared for this Project identifies the nature and extent of impacts and addresses avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts. The USFWS published their final BO for the Project, as well as their Conference Opinion for slickspot peppergrass, on September 12, 2013.

The BLM will continue to consult with the USFWS regarding the Project's compliance with both the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

1.5.4.3 Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Federal agencies are required by Section 106 of the NHPA to consider the effects on historic properties (listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP). The BLM, as the lead federal agency, must provide the ACHP an opportunity to comment on adverse effects on properties listed on or eligible for the NRHP. The ACHP formally requested to participate in the development of a PA for the Project. A PA was developed for the Project (found in Appendix N of the FEIS) through a collaborative process with the invited participation of all interested parties. It specified phased survey and reporting and provided the framework and direction for a project-wide Historic Properties Treatment Plan (HPTP; the Proponents' draft can be found in Appendix C-1 of the FEIS) and for site-specific segment HPTP development. The executed PA addresses the entire Project, including Segments 8 and 9.

1.5.4.4 State Historic Preservation Office

The Idaho SHPO is a signatory to the 2013 PA. The BLM will continue to consult with the SHPO regarding adverse effects from the Project and to request concurrence on the BLM's determination of eligibility for the NRHP of historic properties that may be adversely affected by the Project. If historic properties would be subjected to adverse effects that cannot be avoided, the BLM will consult with the Idaho SHPO and the ACHP to determine eligibility and effect. See Section 3.3.2.6 in Chapter 3 for additional information.

1.6 RELATIONSHIP TO FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES, PLANS, AND PROGRAMS

Land use plans, in various forms, are written by agencies to guide the management of resources and uses on lands within their jurisdictions. The BLM has RMPs or MFPs in place for all BLM-managed lands affected by this Project. Table 1.6-1 lists the various federal land use plans (including the year of publication) that provide direction and management standards for activities within their jurisdiction that are applicable to Segments 8 and 9 of the Project. These land use management plans were recently amended by the Great Basin Region ROD (BLM 2015b).

Table 1.6-1. BLM Land Use Plan Status along Gateway West Segments 8 and 9

Segment	Administrative Unit	Applicable Plan Name	Plan Year
8	Shoshone Field Office	Monument RMP	1986
8	Shoshone Field Office	Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP	1980
9	Burley Field Office	Cassia RMP	1985
9	Burley Field Office	Twin Falls MFP	1982
8	Jarbidge Field Office	Jarbidge RMP	2015
8 and 9	Four Rivers Field Office	Jarbidge RMP	1987
8	Four Rivers Field Office	Kuna MFP	1983
8 and 9	Four Rivers Field Office	Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area RMP	2008
8 and 9	Bruneau Field Office	Bruneau MFP	1983
8 and 9	Owyhee Field Office	Owyhee RMP	1999

MFP – Management Framework Plan; RMP – Resource Management Plan

1.6.1 Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Approved RMP Amendment

The BLM's ROD for the Great Basin Region (BLM 2015b), which was published after the FEIS was written, amended BLM Idaho's land use plans to establish greater sage-grouse management areas and to provide management direction for species.[9] The ROD established four sage-grouse habitat designations. These include Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA), General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA), Important Habitat Management Areas (IHMA), and Sagebrush Focal Areas (SFA). Below is a brief summary of these new BLM sage-grouse habitat designations:

- PHMAs are BLM-administered lands identified as having the highest habitat value for maintaining suitable sage-grouse populations. The boundaries and management strategies for these areas are derived from and generally follow the PPH boundaries.
- GHMAs are BLM-administered sage-grouse habitats that are occupied seasonally or year-round by sage-grouse, but which are located outside of PHMA. The boundaries and management strategies for GHMA are derived from and generally follow the PGH boundaries.
- IHMAs are BLM-administered lands located in Idaho that provide a management buffer around or connect patches of PHMAs. IHMAs encompass areas of generally moderate to high habitat value, but which have been determined by the BLM to not be as important as PHMAs.
- SFAs are a subset of PHMAs, and correspond to areas identified by the USFWS as "strongholds" or "represent a priority habitat most vital to the species persistence within which [the USFWS] recommend the strongest level of protection" (USFWS 2014).

These new sage-grouse habitat designations are now included in the suite of tools used by the federal agencies to manage sage-grouse populations and their habitats.

[9] The Great Basin ROD states the following: "Management Decisions, Lands & Realty #12: PHMA (Idaho and Montana) and IHMA (Idaho), and GHMA (Montana only) are designated as avoidance areas for high voltage transmission line and large pipeline ROWs, except for Gateway West and Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Projects."

1.6.2 Plan Amendments

In some cases, the Project would not conform to the management objectives provided in the applicable BLM land use plans. Where possible, the proposed Project has already been modified to conform to the plans; however, portions of the Project would still not conform to one or more of the plans. In these cases, the BLM can deny the Project, require modifications to the Project so that it is in conformance, or amend the applicable plan. As part of the ROD, the BLM will decide whether to implement a plan amendment for a corresponding route or alternative if the BLM decides to grant a ROW. Table 2.3-1 of this SEIS identifies amendments that would be needed for the routes considered in this document. Chapter 3 resource sections discuss plan amendment consequences. Chapter 4 discusses the cumulative effects of potential plan amendments. Appendix F of this SEIS contains the specific plan amendment language, and Appendix G contains the rationale and analyses for consideration of amending Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications. Documentation on the need to amend plans is located in the administrative record. Except for those land use plan decisions listed Table 2.3-1 in Chapter 2, the Revised Proposed Action and the alternatives comply with all applicable decisions for the plans listed in Table 1.6-1.

1.6.3 West-Wide Energy Corridors

In response to Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the BLM participated in a programmatic EIS (PEIS) for the designation of energy corridors on federal land in the 11 western states (DOE/EIS-0386 [DOE and BLM 2008]), commonly known as West-Wide Energy corridors or WWE corridors, in which the DOE and the BLM were the lead federal agencies, while the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Forest Service) and other agencies were cooperators.

A Final PEIS was published on November 28, 2008 (DOE and BLM 2008). A ROD on the PEIS signed January 14, 2009, designates energy corridors and provides guidance, best management practices, and mitigation measures to be used where linear facilities are proposed across BLM-managed lands.

Where the PEIS identifies new corridors for the managing agencies, the ROD also amended relevant land management plans to include the new corridor. Designation of corridors does not require their use nor does such designation exempt the federal agencies from conducting an environmental review on each project. While the PEIS amended the relevant land management plans to add a corridor, it did not necessarily amend underlying land allocations, including visual resource management designations, to allow for overhead transmission lines.

The Final ROD for the PEIS is available online at *http://corridoreis.anl.gov/index.cfm*. The Gateway West SEIS takes into consideration the WWE corridors and tiers to the Final PEIS for these corridors. Further discussion regarding the use of the WWE corridors for the Project is found in Section 2.5.5. The Final ROD contains Interagency Operating Procedures, which were developed under the Section 368 Corridor program. These procedures establish minimum requirements that would be incorporated as appropriate into projects such as Gateway West. Appendix H of the FEIS describes the consideration given to Final ROD Interagency Operating Procedures for Gateway West.

On July 7, 2009, a consortium of environmental groups (Plaintiffs) filed a Complaint in the *Wilderness Society, et al. v. United States Department of the Interior, et al.*, challenging various aspects of decisions associated with the energy corridor

designations. In July 2012, the federal agencies reached a settlement agreement with the Plaintiffs. The United States District Court for the Northern District of California dismissed the case on July 11, 2012. Under the settlement agreement, the federal agencies agreed to review and update training for corridor planning, designation, and use, and invite Plaintiff representatives to participate in that training; review and update agency guidance; develop a corridor study plan by July 11, 2013, and complete that study by July 11, 2014; and create an interagency Memorandum of Understanding that will outline procedures to periodically review designated corridors to assess the need for corridor revisions, deletions, or additions.

In the Complaint, the Plaintiffs identified 45 Corridors of Concern in 11 states. The BLM issued agency guidance addressing the siting of proposed projects within the WWE corridors and in the Corridors of Concern. See BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2014-080 (April 7, 2014). Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West Project would not use any of the Corridors of Concern identified by the Plaintiffs.

1.7 RIGHT-OF-WAY EASEMENT ACQUISITION PROCESS FOR NON-FEDERAL OWNERS

The Proponents would negotiate details regarding required land acquisition across privately owned lands, either in fee or as an easement, for the transmission line and associated facilities (substations, etc.) with each landowner. In exchange for the right to operate the transmission line and facilities, the Proponents would compensate the landowner for the use of the land. The negotiations between the Proponents and the individual landowner could include compensation for the loss of use during construction, loss of nonrenewable or other resources on the land, and the restoration of unavoidable damage to the property that may occur during construction. The BLM does not have the legal authority to enforce stipulations on private lands but has the obligation to recommend stipulations to reduce impacts as part of the NEPA process. Private landowners may negotiate stipulations as part of their agreements.

If a fee ownership or an easement cannot be negotiated with a landowner, the Proponents may acquire the rights needed under eminent domain laws prevailing in Idaho. State statutes have been enacted that define the acquisition process on private and non-federal public lands for utilities.

1.8 SCOPE OF THE ANALYSIS

1.8.1 Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of this analysis varies by resource. In Chapter 3, each resource section begins by defining the geographic area of analysis relevant to that resource. In addition to larger geographic areas specifically defined for individual resource analyses, two areas are defined here and used consistently throughout this EIS.

Right-of-Way – ROW refers to the area, generally centered on the transmission line centerline, requested by the Proponents, the BLM, and/or other landowners and managers, for the construction, operations, and maintenance of the transmission line. For the most part, the ROW would be 250 feet wide for the 500-kV portion of the Project; however, the agreed ROW width on non-federal lands may vary based on local agency permits or landowner negotiations. Additional lands outside the ROW would be required for associated facilities such as substations and access roads. Access roads may be

within the ROW but can also occur outside of the ROW. Estimated acres of land required for construction and operations, including ROW and associated facilities by landowner, are summarized in Table 1.8-1 and detailed in Chapter 2 and Appendix B.

Table 1.8-1. Land Ownership Distribution in the Gateway West Revised Proposed Action ROW for Segments 8 and 9

Land Owner/ Land Manager	Construction		Operations	
	Acres [1/, 2/]	Percent [2/]	Acres [2/]	Percent [2/]
Bureau of Land Management	8,505	75	6,926	75
Bureau of Reclamation	153	1	128	1
Military Reservations/ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	7	<1	2	<1
National Forest	0	0	0	0
Private	1,955	17	1,603	17
State	714	6	578	6
State Fish and Game	3	<1	1	<1
Other State Lands	8	<1	8	<1
Water	15	<1	12	<1
Total	**11,359**	**100**	**9,259**	**100**

1/ Construction right-of-way (ROW) acres are greater than operations ROW acres due to additional areas needed for staging areas, fly yards, and wiring pulling/splicing sites; however, not all of the ROW would actually be disturbed.
2/ Numbers are rounded to the nearest acre/percent; therefore, columns may not sum exactly.

Right-of-Way for Geotechnical Assessment – The Proponents conducted geotechnical surveys on federal lands under a short-term ROW granted by the BLM. These surveys were needed in order to collect geotechnical soil property information for the design of tower foundations and support structures. An Environmental Assessment was completed in June 2010 to analyze the application for the ROW. The Environmental Assessment is incorporated by reference into this SEIS (BLM 2010a).

1.8.2 Temporal Scope

The analysis will address the effects of the Revised Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative, including construction (short term), operations and maintenance (long-term), and decommissioning and abandonment (long term). Construction would occur between 2017 and 2020, depending on permitting; therefore, short-term effects occur within that time frame. The BLM ROW grant will usually be issued for a 30-year term; however, typically transmission lines of this size are designed for a working life of 50 years (although in practice the useful life is often much longer). Therefore, 50 years is considered long term.

1.8.3 Actions Not Connected

Connected actions (those that are closely related and therefore should be discussed in the same impact statement) are defined by the CEQ (40 CFR Part 1508.25) as actions that automatically trigger other actions that may require an EIS. Connected actions cannot or will not proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously, or are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification. For this Project, interdependent parts of the Project considered as part of the overall Project include construction and operations of the Project's segments, the associated substation expansions or constructions, the fiber optic communication system and its regeneration stations, access roads, and all temporary staging areas and

fly yards used during construction. Potentially related energy considerations and development actions discussed below were reviewed to determine if they were connected to the Revised Proposed Action. No actions currently proposed were determined to be connected actions.

1.8.3.1 Generation

Given the CEQ's definition, electrical generating sources that might use the Gateway West Project to transmit their power are not connected actions. Therefore, electrical generating sources are not analyzed in the direct and indirect effects analysis, but are included in the consideration of cumulative impacts. The requests for generation interconnection, whether they be fossil or renewable, to which the Proponents must respond under FERC regulations, are made to multiple carriers, including other utilities. If they are unable to respond to an interconnection request due to a denial of a ROW grant from the BLM, other carriers may respond. Therefore, the new generation requests do not qualify as connected actions under the "automatically trigger" criterion.

The Gateway West Project can proceed without any one generation project. Multiple generators have made interconnection requests. The overall demand, rather than any one project, provides part of the impetus for the Project. Therefore, no particular generation project is necessarily tied to Gateway West.

Independent producers are building new wind farms. Some of these projects would be constructed, sending power into the grid before Gateway West is permitted. Therefore, their wind farms are not driving the Project and are not "connected actions" under the "part of a larger action" criterion.

There are other proposals to carry new generation to various markets, including markets farther south in Nevada, California, and Arizona. If Gateway West is not built, the generation project would likely still be built and other projects could reasonably be expected to carry the additional electricity to market. Therefore, the generation projects do not induce or automatically trigger the Project.

1.8.3.2 Load Growth (Demand)

Load growth, whether industrial, commercial, or residential, puts a strain on the existing grid to supply additional electricity. While the existing grid can, and does, supply the demand, as the load on each of the transmission lines grows, the opportunity for spreading that load on remaining transmission lines, should one fail, drops until the loss of a single transmission line can cause a cascading blackout scenario reminiscent of the Northeast disaster of August 14, 2003. While Gateway West would alleviate the strain on the grid, it is not "automatically triggered" by load growth. There are other transmission lines that use other routes from other generation sources that could also help to supply and support the load, such that the Project is not required simply because of load growth.

Another connected action question is whether Gateway West "automatically triggers" load growth. Because the public utilities commissions of Idaho must allow the utilities to pass on the capital costs of system improvements, including but not limited to Gateway West, those commissions prohibit "speculative" construction and only permit capital improvements that show a clear demand ahead of construction. While this does include predictive models that estimate future growth, they are subject to review and approval

by the commissions. Therefore, a project like Gateway West is in response to, rather than in anticipation of, load growth.

There is some concern that the mere presence of a competent grid that can manage current and future loads would incur further or greater growth than would occur without the grid in place. A large industrial facility, for example, if sited in the service area of either utility, could bring its own load growth and also bring direct and indirect employment that might increase local populations and therefore further increase load growth. In the absence of reassurances from the utilities that electrical supplies in the volumes needed by the industry would be available, the industry would locate elsewhere. While that is true for the grid as a whole, no individual project is responsible for the presence or absence of growth, because there are multiple paths along which such load demand could be satisfied. Gateway West, in and of itself, is not required to meet such growth nor would it, by itself, trigger such growth.

Load growth is a cumulative term assigned to a variety of smaller events, including population increases and new commercial and industrial projects that provide jobs to that population. None of those events is directly linked to Gateway West, and Gateway West would proceed independent of any one of those events. They do not qualify as a "larger action" because they are not, individually or collectively, part of any federal action, and are not an organized "action" in any permitting venue.

1.8.3.3 Other Electric Transmission Lines in the Region

Rocky Mountain Power's Web page[10] includes the Project as part of its larger system planning for an "Energy Gateway" for its service area. Idaho Power's Web page[11] includes the Project as part of its larger vision for improved grid efficiency, which includes other transmission lines. The WECC[12] and the NTTG[13] Web sites all show Gateway West as one of several new projects needed to complete an efficient Northwest electrical service grid.

The other lines are either planned to be in service before Gateway West, planned well after the in-service dates of Gateway West, or serve different components of the service area. The construction of one of these components of the grid does not automatically trigger another because each can and will be built and operated independently. Each responds to a set of generation requests and demand growth projections for different parts of the overall service area. Some parts of the projected new grid have not yet been formally proposed and therefore would not be considered "connected" actions in any case.

While other proposed new transmission lines must be considered as part of the cumulative impacts analysis for Gateway West, they are not "connected" actions as they fail all three tests for connectivity:

1. No new transmission line would "automatically trigger" the construction of the Gateway West and the Project would not "automatically trigger" the construction of other transmission lines. Each of these lines serves a particular purpose in

[10] http://www.rockymountainpower.net/ed/tp/eg.html
[11] http://www.idahopower.com/AboutUs/PlanningForFuture/ProjectNews/GatewayWest/default.cfm
[12] https://www.wecc.biz/TransmissionExpansionPlanning/Lists/Project%20Portal/AllItemsCorrected.aspx
[13] http://www.nttg.biz/site/

strengthening the overall grid. Though the grid will be more robust when several additional transmission lines are built, each is designed to function as a single addition to the grid, and must calculate how the grid would carry its increased load if for some reason the new transmission line fails. The grid only allows the construction of a new line if the old grid can still carry its additional load. Therefore, new transmission lines do not "automatically trigger" one another.

2. Gateway West has sufficient justification to be built in the absence of the other proposed transmission lines. It does not require the construction of another transmission line to be put into service. Therefore, it can and would proceed without other actions taken previously or simultaneously, failing the second test for connected action.
3. The electrical grid that supplies energy to North America, including Canada, is a complex and interconnected system. Any new transmission line proposed will be part of the interconnected whole. Therefore, Gateway West, along with any other new or existing transmission line, is part of an electric system. However, the mere existence of an interconnected electric grid is not an "action" in and of itself. Instead, it is an existing system with requirements for new participants, which Gateway West must meet to interconnect. Further, the justification for the Project is expressed in terms of a required response to new generation and an equally required response to increased load demand, rather than in terms of meeting the needs of "the grid." Therefore, it fails the third test because it is not part of a larger action or dependent on the larger action for its justification.

1.9 SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

1.9.1 Scoping and Public Involvement conducted for the SEIS

The agency initiated public scoping with publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an SEIS in the Federal Register on September 19, 2014 (79 Federal Register 56399). The NOI was followed by a series of four public meetings in 2014:

- Tuesday, October 7, 2014, in Boise, Idaho;
- Tuesday, October 7, 2014, in Kuna, Idaho;
- Wednesday, October 8, 2014, in Gooding, Idaho; and
- Thursday, October 9, 2014, in Murphy, Idaho.

Information about the Project was provided at the public meetings and via a BLM-hosted Internet Web site. Public comments were taken at the public meetings (oral and written), through the Web site (*http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/gateway-west.html*), and via e-mail and regular postal service.

The public scoping period lasted 35 days and closed on October 24, 2014. All the comments were collected and read, and substantive comments were sorted by subject. Issues were identified that could be used to develop alternatives or identify resource effects and sources of information. The Scoping Report is posted on the BLM project Web site (*http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/gateway-west/Documents.html*)

1.9.2 Scoping and Public Involvement Conducted for the FEIS in 2008

Scoping was also conducted for the original FEIS in 2008. The agencies initiated public scoping with publication of a NOI to prepare an EIS for the original proposal in the Federal Register on May 16, 2008 (73 Federal Register 28425). The NOI was followed by a series of nine public meetings in 2008:

- Tuesday, June 3, 2008, in Twin Falls, 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;
- Monday, June 9, 2008, in Casper, Wyoming;
- Tuesday, June 10, 2008, in Rawlins, Wyoming;
- Wednesday, June 11, 2008, in Rock Springs, Wyoming; and
- Thursday, June 12, 2008, in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

The public scoping period for the original FEIS lasted 45 days and closed on July 3, 2008. Due to the Independence Day holiday on July 4, any comments received by July 11, 2008, were included in the scoping comment analysis. Comments were collected and sorted using a process similar to the one described in Section 1.9.1.

After the formal public scoping period and during an internal review by the BLM and cooperating agencies, non-federal cooperating agencies requested an extended period of time to develop additional alternatives. The BLM responded by incorporating all comments received by September 4, 2009, into a revised scoping report. More information on details of the original scoping comment analysis process and outcome can be found in the Gateway West Transmission Line Project Scoping Summary Report (Tetra Tech 2009) and online on the BLM project Web site (*http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/nepa_register/gateway-west/Documents.html*).

In addition, the Proponents conducted multiple meetings to which landowners within a 2-mile-wide corridor were invited in 2008 and 2009. The comments received from these meetings or provided in writing thereafter were documented and submitted to the BLM and were incorporated, if received by September 4, 2009, in the revised scoping report.

1.10 ISSUES TO BE ANALYZED

This SEIS focuses on new data and information that have become available since the publication of the FEIS and ROD. However, the alternatives considered in this document are analyzed based on all the issues included in the FEIS (refer to Section 1.10 of the FEIS), as well as new issues, direction in agency handbooks, and requirements of federal and state laws and regulations. The following describes the issues that were identified from public scoping conducted for the SEIS.

1.10.1 Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas

- How would the Project affect climate change?

1.10.2 Agriculture

- Would routing the Project through agricultural areas adversely affect farming practices?
- Would the transmission line prevent future developments of pivot agriculture?
- Would the electric and magnetic field (EMF) created by the transmission lines adversely affect sensitive farm and dairy equipment, and cattle health and production?
- How would dairy operations, including milk quality, milk production, dairy cow behavior, feeding, and conception rates, be affected?
- Would sensitive milk barn equipment be affected from the transmission lines?

1.10.3 Cultural Resources and Historic Trails

- How would impacts to the Oregon Trail be avoided?
- How would the Project affect visual resources associated with historic resources, including historic trails?
- Would appropriate mitigation be applied to compensate for impacts to trails and cultural resources if impacts could not be otherwise avoided?
- How would Native American sites along Owyhee Front in the Oreana area be impacted by the Project?
- How would the requirements of the enabling statute for the SRBOP (P.L. 103-64), including the requirement to maintain cultural resources and values of the area, be implemented?
- How would the BLM protect the visitor experience at the Oregon National Historic Trail?

1.10.4 Cumulative Effects

- How would the cumulative impacts of multiple power lines, energy developments, and other disturbances on native vegetation and greater sage-grouse (hereafter referred to as “sage-grouse”) migration and movement be addressed?

1.10.5 Effects on the State and Counties

- How would the Project affect State Endowment Lands and Public Trust Lands (including navigable lakes and streams)?
- Would the purchase of private lands to mitigate impacts to cultural resources be contrary to county goals of keeping current acreage in private ownership (citing effects to the tax base)?

1.10.6 Fire

- Would the Project increase fire danger, particularly from new roads and increased access to the area?

1.10.7 Geologic Hazards, Safety, and Electrical Environment

- How would the health and safety of people living close to high-voltage transmission lines be affected, particularly in areas where transmission lines already exist?
- How would noise affect people living close to the transmission lines?

1.10.8 Historic Trails

- What are the impacts to NRHP-eligible historic resources?
- What would be the visual and recreational impacts be on historic trails?
- Where the setting is an important aspect of the integrity of a property, would the setting be affected?
- How will the BLM avoid and/or minimize impacts to the Oregon NHT?
- How will the BLM work with the Proponents to locate the Project near areas already visually impaired and away from NHTs?
- How will the BLM actively coordinate with other organizations and agencies on effects to the Oregon NHT?
- How will the BLM protect visitor experiences associated with the Oregon NHT?
- How will the BLM develop potential mitigation to be commensurate with the Project's impacts on NHTs?

1.10.9 Land Use

- Is there a need to build new transmission lines on private land?
- How would the Project affect the SRBOP?
- How would State Endowment Lands and Public Trust Lands, which include the beds of navigable lakes and streams, be affected?
- Would there be conflicts with existing management plans?

1.10.10 Plants

- How will new biological information that has become available since the publication of the FEIS be assessed?
- Would increased access increase noxious weeds infestations?

1.10.11 Plants: Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species

- How will new biological information that has become available since the publication of the FEIS be assessed?
- How would the alternatives affect slickspot peppergrass?

1.10.12 Purposed Action

- Is there a need to construct two new lines rather than one?
- Can the new lines be placed on existing towers?

1.10.13 Recreation

- Would the Project result in adverse impacts on wildlife recreation activities that were not previously analyzed during the FEIS process?
- How would all recreational opportunities, including night sky viewing, be affected by alternatives routed near the Bruneau Dunes State Park?
- How would Celebration Park and Guffey Bridge be affected?
- Would a transmission line interrupt recreation opportunities on BLM-managed land south of Kuna, such as hiking, cross country running, biking, or four-wheeling?
- How would the visitor experience at Oregon National Historic Trail remnants be protected, particularly in the Monument, in the vicinity of Three Island Crossing State Park and other public and private lands?
- Would increased public access resulting from new roads associated with the transmission line degrade areas that were not previously as accessible?
- Would vandalism, weed spread, litter, and recreational shooting increase?
- Would the BLM close the area to recreational shooting or study of the effects of recreational shooting, including lead, on raptor and prey populations?

1.10.14 Scenery and Visual Resources

- How would the Project affect visual values the SRBOP?
- How would the Project affect views from private land and how would this affect land values?
- Would the Project affect the pristine character of the Owyhee Front?
- How would the Project affect public parks, specifically the Bruneau Sand Dunes (night sky viewing), Celebration Park, and Hagerman Fossil Beds? Would these viewsheds change to an industrial landscape?
- Would the Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument be affected by the Project?
- Would the Project impact scenery, land values, agricultural production land, and land development?

1.10.15 Socioeconomic Issues

- How would the Project affect economic growth in the area?
- Would increased access to reliable power have a positive effect on economic development?
- Would the Project adversely affect adjacent property values?
- Would the purchase of private lands to mitigate impacts to cultural resources be contrary to county goals of keeping current acreage in private ownership (citing effects to the tax base)?

1.10.16 Transportation

- Would new road building associated with the transmission lines in the SRBOP affect the spread of weeds, vandalism, litter, and recreational use?
- Would the new transmission lines affect airport construction?

1.10.17 Water and Riparian Resources

- The USEPA requested that the EIS disclose the structure and management of the In-Lieu-Fee program as well as why an In-Lieu-Fee program would be appropriate mitigation for these impacts.
- Would the unavoidable aquatic impacts on State Endowment Lands and Public Trust Lands, including navigable waters, be compensated?
- What are the potential impacts to water resources along Segment 8, from MP 126 to the Hemingway Substation?

1.10.18 Wild Horses and Burros

- How would the alternatives affect wild horses?

1.10.19 Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

- How would the alternatives affect raptor species, pygmy rabbits, burrowing owls, mule deer, antelope, and mountain sheep?
- How will new biological information that has become available since the publication of the FEIS be assessed?
- Would the Project cause fragmentation of habitats; increased human access to previously inaccessible wildlife habitats; increased avian collision risks and subsequent mortality; increased predation of small animals by ravens and raptors; or noxious weeds infestations;
- Would the Project affect wildlife habitats by increasing wildfires, including fires caused by raptors being electrocuted and falling to the ground on fire?
- Would additional transmission lines benefit raptor populations, due to the increase in new perching structures resulting from the towers?
- Would the Project impact the South Hills Important Bird Area?
- What are the long-term effects of transmission lines on raptors?

1.10.20 Wildlife: Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species

- How would the alternatives affect sage-grouse and their habitat?
- How will new biological information that has become available since the publication of the FEIS be assessed?

1.11 ORGANIZATION OF THIS SEIS

The analysis in this SEIS only addresses the portions of the Project related to Segments 8 and 9; this document incorporates by reference the analysis found in the original FEIS regarding Project-wide impacts. This SEIS supplements the analysis found in the 2013 FEIS by assessing new information that has been made available since the FEIS and original ROD were published. Per the guidance found in the BLM 1790 Manual (BLM

2013c), all elements of the Proponents' proposal will be identified as Project *design features*, while any additional measures required by the BLM will be identified as *mitigation*.

This document is organized into several chapters. Chapter 2 presents the Revised Proposed Action and a range of reasonable alternatives to that action. Chapter 3 presents the affected environment and environmental consequences, by resource and by segment, of the Project. Chapter 4 describes cumulative effects of the Project in combination with past, present, and other reasonably foreseeable projects overlapping in geography and time. Chapter 5 provides a record of consultation and coordination conducted during the NEPA process, including a summary of the public scoping process, and a list of preparers. Chapter 6 contains a glossary and index for this document. Chapter 7 contains the references for other chapters of the SEIS. Appendix A contains maps of the Project routes and alternatives. The Proponents' supplemental POD is presented in Appendix B. The Proponents' MEP is included as Appendix C. Appendix D contains oversized or lengthy tables referenced in the SEIS sections, and Appendix E contains oversized figures (including simulations) referenced in the SEIS sections. Appendix F provides plan amendments to the BLM RMPs and MFPs for the Project. Appendix G provides the visual resource analysis that supports the plan amendments provided in Appendix F. Appendix H contains the RAC Subcommittee reports. Appendix I presents the SEIS scoping report. Appendix J contains the *BLM Manual 6280 Inventory and Impacts Analysis for National Historic Trails and Study Trails* report. Appendix K contains the BLM's conceptual framework regarding mitigation on the SRBOP. The conceptual model is intended, in part, to ensure that offsetting impacts to the SRBOP will lead to a net benefit to resources and values, i.e., achieve the enhancements required by the SRBOP enabling legislation.