Appendix G
VRM Amendment Analysis

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	area of critical environmental concern
AOI	area of inconsistency
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
Gateway West	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
GIS	geographic information system
IDT	Interdisciplinary Team
KOP	Key Observation Point
kV	kilovolt
LRT	Linear Routing Tool
MEP	Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio
MFP	management framework plan
MP	milepost
NHT	National Historic Trail
ORV	outstandingly remarkable value
Project	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
Proponents	Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power
RMP	resource management plan
ROW	right-of-way
SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
SR	State Route
SRBOP	Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
US	U.S. Highway
VCR	visual contrast rating
VRI	Visual Resource Inventory
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WSA	Wilderness Study Area
WSR	Wild and Scenic River
WWE	West-wide Energy

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides an analysis of locations where visual resource management–driven amendments to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource management plans (RMPs) and/or management framework plans (MFPs) may be necessary for additional routing options for Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project) discussed in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). Gateway West consists of 10 segments between the Windstar Substation at Glenrock, Wyoming, and the Hemingway Substation approximately 30 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho. This document reviews routing for Segments 8 and 9 (both in Idaho) as developed for the SEIS (see Figure 1-1).

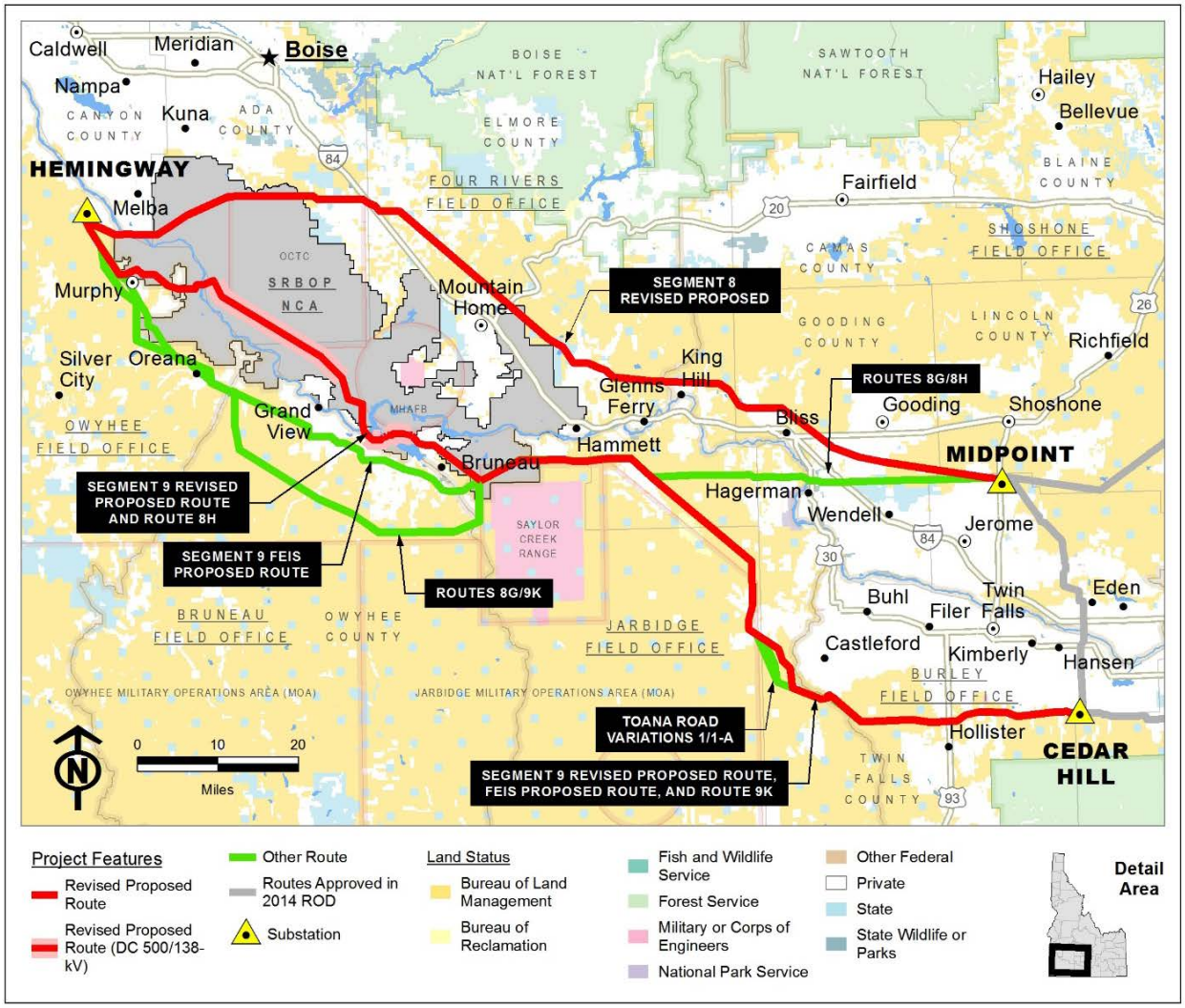


Figure 1-1. Project Overview

The transmission line would cross several BLM district and field offices. Activities on BLM-managed land are governed by direction found in individual RMPs and MFPs. These lands are subject to visual resource management objectives as developed using the BLM Visual Resource Management (VRM) System (BLM 1984) and are presented

in the RMP or MFP. The BLM system identifies four VRM Classes (I through IV) with specific management prescriptions for each class. The system is based on an inventory of the existing scenic quality, viewer sensitivity, and viewing distance zones. The management class for a given area is typically arrived at by comparing the scenic quality, visual sensitivity, and distance zone with the overall goals set forth for the area. The objectives of each VRM classification from the VRM Visual Resource Inventory Manual are stated below:

- VRM Class I. The objective is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
- VRM Class II. The objective is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- VRM Class III. The objective is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate or lower. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- VRM Class IV. The objective is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

The VRM classifications are assigned after a Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) has been conducted of the area. VRI information is presented for each area of inconsistency (AOI) where information was available. The following description is taken from BLM Manual H-8410-1 (BLM 1986a):

> *The visual resource inventory process provides BLM managers with a means for determining visual values. The inventory consists of a scenic quality evaluation, sensitivity level analysis, and a delineation of distance zones. Based on these three factors, BLM-administered lands are placed into one of four visual resource inventory classes. These inventory classes represent the relative value of the visual resources. Classes I and II being the most valued, Class III representing a moderate value, and Class IV being of least value. The inventory classes provide the basis for considering visual values in the resource management planning (RMP) process…*
>
> *…Scenic quality is a measure of the visual appeal of a tract of land. In the visual resource inventory process, public lands are given an A, B, or C rating based on the apparent scenic quality which is determined using seven key factors: landform, vegetation, water, color, adjacent scenery, scarcity, and cultural modifications…*

> *…The planning area is subdivided into scenic quality rating units for rating purposes. Rating areas are delineated on a basis of: like physiographic characteristics; similar visual patterns, texture, color, variety, etc.; and areas which have similar impacts from man-made modifications…*
>
> *…Visual resource classes are categories assigned to public lands, which serves two purposes: (1) an inventory tool that portrays the relative value of the visual resources, and (2) a management tool that portrays the visual management objectives. There are four classes (I, II, III, and IV). … Visual resource inventory classes are assigned through the inventory process. Class I is assigned to those areas where a management decision has been made previously to maintain a natural landscape. This includes areas such as national wilderness areas, the wild section of national wild and scenic rivers, and other congressionally and administratively designated areas where decisions have been made to preserve a natural landscape. Classes II, III, and IV are assigned based on a combination of scenic quality, sensitivity level, and distance zones. … Inventory classes are informational in nature and provide the basis for considering visual values in the RMP process. They do not establish management direction and should not be used as a basis for constraining or limiting surface disturbing activities.*

The presence of a transmission line in VRM Classes I and II areas usually does not conform to visual management objectives. Areas where this occurs are identified as AOIs.

Best Management Practices for tower design and location were applied to reduce plan inconsistency as much as possible. This report describes each of the AOIs and explains why the VRM Class I and Class II area would be crossed and what consideration was given to avoiding the area. The type of amendment required, should routing in a co-preferred alternative or other alternative be selected, is then discussed. The analysis is provided in this appendix to meet the documentation requirements of the RMP. Maps showing the distribution of VRM classes within RMP and MFP boundaries are shown in Section 5.

2 PROJECT FEATURES AFFECTING VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

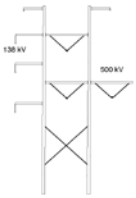
2.1 Facility Components

The Project facility components that affect the visual environment include:

- Two transmission line segments, their associated access roads, multipurpose and helicopter fly yards, and other temporary construction ground disturbances;
- Proposed substation and expansions or modifications at two existing substations and at one substation approved under the 2013 Record of Decision, and removal of one small existing substation;
- Relocation of portions of an existing 138-kV line;
- Other associated facilities including communication systems and optical fiber regeneration stations; and
- Access roads and distribution supply lines where needed for proposed substations and optical fiber regeneration stations.

Details of construction and operation activities are described in the Plan of Development Supplement included as Appendix B to the Draft SEIS. The August 2014 Draft Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio Proposal (MEP) submitted by Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power (the Proponents) is part of the Proposed Action and is included in Appendix C of the Draft SEIS. Environmental protection plans are included as appendices to the August 2013 Plan of Development. All of these plans are considered part of the Project description for the proposed Project. Table 2.1-1 describes aspects of the primary proposed structures that would affect the visual environment.

Table 2.1-1. Primary Transmission Structures – Visual Description

Project Facility	Description
Transmission Line Segments	
Transmission Line Features Common to All Proposed 500-kV Segments Example single-circuit structure	• Conductors: Bundled with three subconductors per phase. Non-specular (dull) finish rather than a shiny finish. • Estimated subconductor diameter: 1.504 inches. • Bundle spacing: Distance between subconductors is 18 inches and 25 inches. • Non-reflective, non-refractive insulators. • Typical ground clearance: 35 feet. • Structure types: lattice steel single- and double-circuit structures. Dulled galvanized steel finish. • Structure heights: Single-circuit structure varies between 145 and 180 feet. Average height of 156 feet. • Approximate distance between structures: 1,200 to 1,300 feet. • Right-of-way (ROW) width: 250 feet.
Proposed Double-Circuit 138/500-kV Structure (Revised Proposed – Segment 9/8H)  Example double-circuit structure	• 500-kV Conductor: Bundled with three subconductors per phase. Non-specular (dull) finish rather than a shiny finish. • Estimated subconductor diameter: 1.51 inches. • 500-kV Bundle spacing: Distance between subconductors is 18 inches and 25 inches. • 138-kV Conductor: Single aluminum conductor steel reinforced Estimated subconductor diameter: 1.05 inches • Non-reflective, non-refractive insulators • Minimum ground clearance: - 138-kV: 24 feet - 500-kV: 35 feet • Structure types: double-circuit steel H-frame structures, dull galvanized or self-weathering steel. • Structure heights: varies between 125 and 200 feet. • Approximate distance between structures: 900 to 1,200 feet • ROW width: 250 feet

2.2 Project-wide Visual Mitigation Measures Proposed by the Proponents

The Proponents have incorporated three mitigation measures into the Project to reduce visual impacts:

1. Transmission towers would be constructed of dulled galvanized steel to minimize visual impacts.
2. Non-specular (dull appearance) transmission line conductors would be used.

3 STUDY ASSUMPTIONS

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) assumed that BLM land use plan amendments would be required for AOIs. The IDT also assumed that design elements and/or other mitigation measures that reduce impacts would not always reduce the visual contrast to a level that conformed to an area's VRM class.

For the purpose of this study, the following approaches were used:

- The location of a route across VRM Class III is consistent with the class objectives if consideration was given to route alignments that would avoid the area and feasible mitigation was applied. It was determined that the Revised Proposed Routes and the other routes considered in this Draft SEIS would comply with VRM Class III; however, additional existing condition influences resulted in one instance of changing the VRM to Class IV.
- Direction for considering visual resource values stated in RMPs and MFPs were taken into consideration. Where absent or general in nature, the management direction provided in BLM Handbook H-1601-1, *Land Use Planning,* was considered (BLM 2005).
- The AOI analysis area consisted of up to 15 miles from either side of the centerline of the Project routes.

4 PROJECT-WIDE ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

During transmission line siting, VRM Class I and Class II lands were avoided where possible. The routes were also sited to avoid historic trails (where possible) and monuments, wildlife refuges, state or federal parks or monuments, prominent peaks, and populated areas and a variety of natural resources including raptor nests, sage-grouse leks, and core areas. The objective was to have the least overall impact.

The following text lists the steps that were taken to develop the routing considered in the two Co-Preferred Alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 5) and other five Alternatives considered in the SEIS.

Constraint analyses have been used for the Project to assist in siting the transmission line routes and alternatives. In the initial phase, the Proponents attempted to locate the routes between required interconnection points (substations) using a comprehensive set of avoidance and opportunity criteria. Using this information, the Proponents initially identified, evaluated, and compared corridors for each of the 10 segments. A Proposed Route was selected and corridors for additional routes were also evaluated for each segment.

Two general approaches were used to identify and evaluate various routes and select the Proposed Route and other routes carried forward for detailed study for each segment.

1. In proposed and established utility corridors[1] such as the Section 368 Energy Act West-wide Energy (WWE) corridor (DOE and BLM 2008) or BLM-designated utility corridors, and/or where existing transmission lines exist, analyses were completed to characterize the resources present in the areas crossed by the corridors and to determine if use of such corridors would result in significant environmental effects. A combination of constraint mapping, stakeholder input, and field reconnaissance was used to confirm the use of existing or planned corridors. In several cases, new routes deviating from the existing or planned corridors were proposed because of adjacent environmental constraints such as sage-grouse leks, historic features, and raptor nests.
2. Where no existing or planned corridors existed, a "Greenfield" siting approach was followed.[2] In those cases, a geographic information system (GIS) computer analysis (Linear Routing Tool [LRT]) was used to identify initial corridors for further evaluation. Using data from numerous public sources, the LRT was used to develop alternate transmission line corridors by considering both routing constraints and opportunities. Constraints are defined as resources or conditions that may be negatively affected by transmission line routing. Opportunities are defined as resources or conditions that are favorable to facility construction or operation because of their characteristics.

Opportunities included, but were not limited to, WWE corridors, BLM-designated utility corridors, and existing transmission lines. Many constraints were considered. These included railroads, pipelines, highways, state and national parks, wildlife refuges, BLM areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), wilderness study areas (WSAs), Department of Defense land, Bureau of Indian Affairs land and reservations, prime farmland, irrigated agriculture, confined animal feeding operations, dairies, airports, residences, cities and towns, oil and gas wells, surface and underground mining, erodible soils, geologic hazards, steep slopes, paleontological and historical resources, wetlands and floodplains. A wide variety of plant and animal concerns were also considered, including plant and animal species of concern, sage-grouse leks and core areas, raptor nests, crucial big game winter and parturition ranges, wild horse and burro management areas, and sensitive fisheries. Visual considerations included BLM VRM Class I, II, and III areas; scenic overlooks; scenic highways; federally designated scenic areas; and state and local scenic byways. Following selection of proposed and other routes via the LRT process, the routes were further refined by reviewing aerial photography and topographic

[1] In order to achieve the capacity rating needed to serve present and future loads within the Proponents' service area, the Western Electricity Coordinating Council requires a minimum separation from existing transmission lines that serve substantially the same load as that served by each of the new Gateway West transmission segments. As described in Chapter 1 of the environmental impact statement, that minimum separation depends on the purpose of the existing line, the load it now serves, and the remaining capacity of the rest of the grid to absorb the load if the several co-located lines fail at once. For the purposes of the initial siting study, the longest span was assumed to be 1,500 feet, thereby dictating the minimum distance between existing and proposed transmission lines serving the same load.

[2] "Greenfield route" is a route that would be located away from linear corridors, thereby creating a new land use.

maps or on the basis of important input received from stakeholders, field reconnaissance, and other sources.

The BLM evaluated the initial routes, made adjustments, and added additional routes to minimize impacts. Later cooperators and other stakeholders identified routes, often to accomplish a dominant objective based on a single resource such as agriculture or historic sites over other resources including VRM classes. Following the 2013 Record of Decision, the BLM convened a Resource Advisory Committee to consider additional options in Segments 8 and 9. After considerable review, the BLM came up with two Co-Preferred Alternatives that incorporate specific routing options for Segments 8 and 9, and 5 additional Alternatives incorporating combinations of routing for Segments 8 and 9. Refer to Chapter 2 of the Draft SEIS for a discussion of this process. Taking all of the various constraints and opportunities into consideration, crossing of VRM sensitive lands could not be avoided throughout the Project. Section 5 of this report describes each AOI and identified proposed land use plan amendments for the Project to conform to the applicable land use plan.

5 AREAS OF INCONSISTENCY

This section of the report summarizes the conditions for each AOI. It is organized by RMP or MFP from east to west by route segment and by individual AOI. Analyses of the routes not being addressed in the SEIS were presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The description for each AOI includes a summary of the applicable BLM land use plan and any visual considerations described in the plan. The route segments and alternatives are then described by location and the rationale provided for why routes could not avoid VRM Class I and II areas. The general discussion is followed by a summary of the existing landscape conditions within the study area.

Site maps are included that show VRM classes and a visual analysis conducted for an area within a 15-mile radius of the AOI. Viewshed analyses were run using 180-foot transmission structures. Actual tower heights will vary depending on topography and other design considerations. The range for tower height discussed in Chapter 2 of the SEIS is between 125 and 200 feet. The intent of the viewshed analyses is to provide an indication of areas that could potentially have a view of the Project in the AOIs.

The last section of each AOI discussion is a consistency analysis describing the results of the analysis, and the degree to which the AOI conforms or differs from the VRM class objective. Included in some AOIs are photographic simulations of the Project, showing how the Project would appear within the landscape. A detailed description of the method for these simulations is provided in Section 3.2 of the FEIS. The analysis also describes proposed plan amendments for the AOIs that do not conform to existing land use plans.

The routes associated with the Co-Preferred Alternatives and with other Alternatives for the Project would require BLM actions to account for visual impacts in the planning areas under five different BLM land use plans. Affected land use plans include the Twin Falls MFP, 1987 Jarbidge RMP, Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP) RMP, Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, and Bruneau

MFP. The Project would be in conformance with the 2015 Jarbidge RMP; therefore, some of the amendments for routes analyzed in the 2013 FEIS would no longer apply. Segments 8 and 9 contain a total of seven AOIs.

Table 5-1 lists AOIs by RMP/MFP and VRM class. Figure 5-1 is an overview map showing AOIs Project-wide.

Table 5-1. BLM RMP and MFP Areas of Inconsistency

Land Use Plan	AOI Designation	Area Name	Route Designation (Maximum Transmission Structure Height)	VRM Class Crossed
Twin Falls MFP	TF-1	Salmon Falls Creek	Revised Proposed 9 (180 feet) Route 9K FEIS Proposed 9	I and II
1987 Jarbidge RMP	J-5	North Oregon Trail	Revised Proposed 8 (180 feet)	I
SRBOP RMP/ 1987 Jarbidge RMP	BOP-1/J-3	South Oregon Trail	Revised Proposed 9/8H (180 feet)	II
SRBOP RMP	BOP-2	Sinker Butte	Revised Proposed 9/8H (180 feet)	II
	BOP-3	Guffey Butte	Revised Proposed 9/8H (180 feet)	II
Bennett Hills/ Timmerman Hills MFP	BH-1	Burnt Ridge	Proposed 8 (180 feet)	II
Bruneau MFP	B-1	Castle Creek	Routes 8G, 9K, FEIS Proposed 9	II

AOI – Area of Inconsistency; MFP – Management Framework Plan; RMP – Resource Management Plan; SRBOP – Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area; VRM – Visual Resource Management

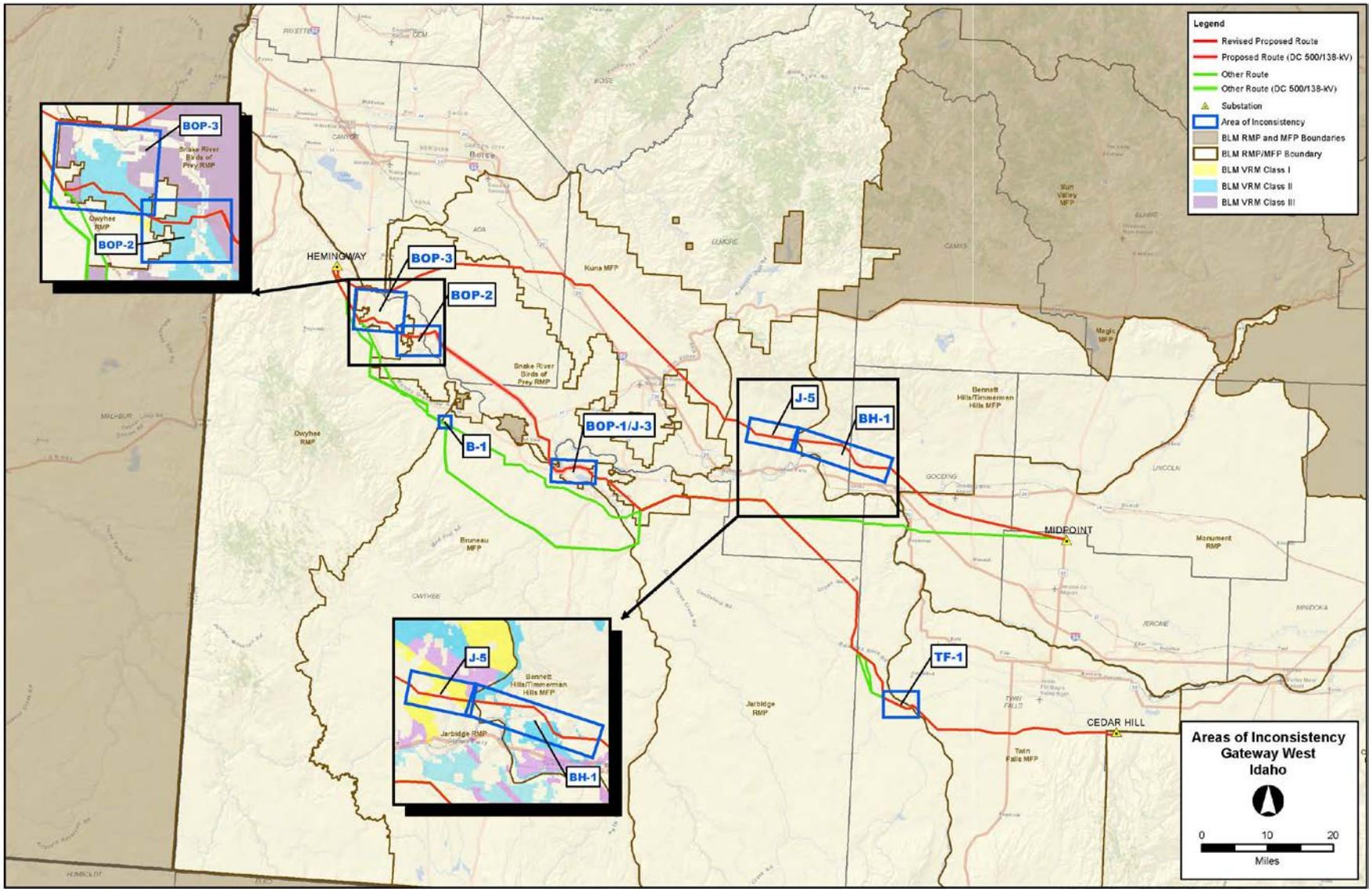


Figure 5-1. AOI Overview Map

5.1 Twin Falls MFP

All Alternatives would cross land managed under the Twin Falls MFP in the same alignment, though with different route names. Segment 9 of Co-Preferred Alternative 2 would cross following the alignment under the route label of 2013 FEIS Proposed Route for Segment 9 (hereafter referred to as FEIS Proposed 9). For Co-Preferred Alternative 5, the alignment would be followed using the route label of 9K. Alternative 1 follows the Revised Proposed Route, Alternatives 3 and 7 follow 9K, and Alternatives 4 and 6 follow FEIS Proposed 9.

The Twin Falls MFP (BLM 1982) provides direction for management of public land within its Planning Area under the jurisdiction of the Burley Field Office in south-central Idaho. The Twin Falls MFP Planning Area consists of approximately 809,000 acres in eastern Twin Falls County (see Figure 5.1-1). The Twin Falls MFP includes Objective L-4, which states "Confine future power transmission lines and oil and gas pipelines to designated corridor locations.

Objective VRM-1 states that the district is to "Manage all public lands in manner which will protect and maintain the existing visual qualities and provide for enhancement where consistent with management policies." The Twin Falls MFP lists various VRM decisions starting with a high priority for the protection of Salmon Falls Creek. The VRM decisions are detailed as:

- "VRM-1.1 – Manage Salmon Falls Canyon between the Salmon Falls Dam and Lilly Grade for natural ecological change in accordance with a VRM Class I designation. This designation would include only the area from rim to rim. Manage the canyon from Lilly Grade to Balanced Rock under a VRM Class II designation."
- "VRM-1.2 – Designate 12,695 acres as VRM Class II. This Class requires management activities to be designated and located to blend into the natural landscape and not to be visually apparent to the casual visitor. The following resource management guidelines shall apply:
    1) Range Management – Juniper and sagebrush removal must be made to simulate adjacent natural openings. Fences, water developments, etc., would require construction with mostly hand tools and be of natural materials. No red fence posts allowed.
    2) Structures – Structures must incorporate the natural lines, colors, and materials of the natural landscape, skylined structures would be prohibited.
    3) Roads – Required roads must be concealed by vegetation, follow natural landforms, and be seeded as soon as possible. Overland "roads" may be necessary in some areas to protect the scenic values. Cut and fill areas that exceed 5 feet will generally not be accepted unless the fill can be replaced and vegetation established in 2 years."
- "VRM 1.3 – Designate 32,819 acres as VRM Class III. This class provides the management activities may be evident to the casual visitor; however, the activity should remain subordinate to the visual strength and natural character of the landscape. The following resource management guidelines shall apply:

1) Range management – Juniper and sagebrush clearings shall simulate typical natural openings.
2) Structures – Structures should incorporate the natural lines, colors and materials of the natural landscape. Skylined structures should be avoided, if possible.
3) Roads – Roads should be partially concealed by vegetation, follow natural landforms, and be seeded as soon as possible."

Data from the visual resource inventory process are not available at this time, but it can be assumed that the above language from the MFP should be applied to the various VRM objectives assigned throughout the planning area.

An amendment to the MFP was approved in 1989, designating the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC to protect natural and scenic values. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 would cross this area and therefore would not be in conformance with the management objectives.

Revised Proposed Route: The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 (Alternative 1) would cross land managed under the Twin Falls MFP. An amendment is proposed for AOI T-1. It would amend the Twin Falls MFP to change the VRM Class II area in the Salmon Falls ACEC crossed by the Project to VRM Class III.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route is 165.3 miles long and connects the proposed Cedar Hill Substation with the Hemingway Substation. The line would be constructed as a single-circuit 500-kilovolt (kV) line. The primary concerns for siting in the eastern portion of this segment were avoidance of irrigated farmland and dairy operations; scattered residential development; interference with the Jarbidge Military Operating Area; making use of the WWE corridor; and minimizing impacts to visual resources. In the western portion of the Revised Proposed Route (within the Jarbidge and Owyhee Field Offices), following the WWE corridor was a primary objective. Other concerns included minimizing impact to Bruneau Dunes State Park and scenic qualities associated with the Bruneau River, avoiding conflicts with the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Military Operating Area, and issues associated with crossing the SRBOP. Use of Public Land versus private land was an important issue for all portions of the route.

Additional Routes: FEIS Proposed 9 (Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternatives 4 and 6) and Route 9K (Co-Preferred Alternative 5 and Alternatives 3 and 7) follow the same alignment as the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 through the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area and would require the same amendment action.

Segment 8 (Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route, 8G, and 8H) does not cross land managed under the Twin Falls MFP.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed. Therefore, Project objectives would not be met, but no Project-related plan amendments would be required.One VRM Class II area in the Twin Falls MFP would be affected by the Project. AOI TF-1 was identified as an AOI because it is managed as VRM Class II. This AOI is located within Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. The presence of the proposed transmission line in this location would not conform to the visual management objectives. This section of Salmon Falls Creek is an eligible Wild and

Scenic River (WSR) segment; however, the Jarbidge Field Office has determined that this portion of the eligible river is Recreation eligible and that the transmission line crossing would not be in violation of managing for WSR eligibility.

5.1.1 AOI TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek (Segment 9 – Revised Proposed Route / Route 9K / FEIS Proposed 9)

The Salmon Falls Creek AOI is located approximately 4 miles south of Castleford, Idaho, in Twin Falls County. The AOI overlapped both the Twin Falls MFP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries before approval of the 2015 Jarbidge RMP, which designated the west side of the canyon in this area as VRM Class III. This means that the AOI now only applies to the Twin Falls MFP-managed areas, to the east side of Salmon Falls Creek. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9, FEIS Proposed 9, and Route 9K all follow the same alignment in this area, which proceeds west and north from the proposed Cedar Hill Substation, avoiding areas of irrigated agriculture. After crossing State Route (SR) 93, the route proceeds west to eastern border of Salmon Falls Creek ACEC, then turns northwest to parallel the east side of Salmon Falls Creek adjacent to an existing 138-kV transmission line for about 4.4 miles before turning west again and crossing the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC north of Lilly Grade, just north of the Salmon Falls Creek WSA, and VRM Class I designated area, but still part of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC and eligible WSR segment. WSR eligibility requires management that prevents activities that could result in the river being declared WSR-unsuitable. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9/FEIS Proposed 9/9K would cross a Recreation portion of the river, adjacent to an existing single-phase low-voltage distribution line, just north of the Lilly Grade Road.

The AOI is managed as Class II and is crossed for 0.14 mile. Figure 5.1-2 shows the viewshed of the Salmon Falls Creek AOI; Revised Proposed Route, FEIS Proposed 9, 9K; and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.1-3 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation.

5.1.1.1 Routes Considered

Several routes were analyzed in the 2013 FEIS that avoided the sensitive resources affected by the Revised Proposed Route/FEIS Proposed 9/9K. One of these routes (9B) would cross VRM Class II land near the Snake River as well as impacting residential and agricultural lands, and another route (9C) would cross Salmon Falls Creek in the vicinity of Balanced Rock County Park. The alignment for the Revised Proposed Route/FEIS Proposed 9/9K, which is the same as the FEIS Preferred Route in the Salmon Falls area, was selected by the Proponents based on its preferred location by Twin Falls County due to concerns over residential and agricultural impacts from the 2013 FEIS Route 9B.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.1.1.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The 15-mile-radius study area for the Salmon Falls Creek AOI is located in southern Idaho. Approximately 75 percent of the study area is in Twin Falls County, and the remaining land is in Owyhee County. The topography is mostly flat to rolling with much

steeper slopes along the banks of Salmon Falls Creek and other drainages. Salmon Falls Creek traverses the study area in a canyon from the southeast, north to its confluence with the Snake River just north of the area at about mile 58.6. There are numerous farms and farmland in the northeastern part of this area with scattered farmland in other locations. The majority of the area is undeveloped. The small communities of Buhl and Filer are located along U.S. Highway (US) 30, in the northeast quadrant.

Attachment A, Figure TF-1a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from Key Observation Point (KOP) 1068. The land adjacent to the proposed alignment is very flat and grass covered. In such an area, there is no topography or vegetation to screen views of the proposed line, which means skylining would occur. The steep topography along Salmon Falls Creek is not seen in the view from KOP 1068; however, it is discussed for KOP 1067 in the SEIS. KOP 1067 would not have a direct view of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route but it is representative of the existing landscape in the area and the views travelers would have both before and after seeing the Project.

Attachment A, Figure TF-1c shows the existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1065. This represents the views of recreational users crossing the canyon at Lilly Grade. The Salmon Falls Creek Canyon is an aesthetic landscape element in the foreground and middle ground and represents a focus point at this location. Open panoramic views of the rolling (plains) to rugged (canyon) terrain are considered to have moderate scenic quality due to the muted sagebrush grassland vegetation adjacent to the rocky faces of the canyon. The view is representative of the Dissected High Lava Plateau eco-region which has alluvial fans, rolling plains, and sheer-walled canyons that are cut into extrusive rocks. This parcel of land administered by the BLM is managed to conform to VRM Class II objectives.

Attachment B, Figure B-1 shows views of the existing conditions as viewed from KOP 1067.

5.1.1.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.1-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Attachment A, TF-1b simulates landscape conditions showing for the Revised Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1068, and Figure TF-1d simulates conditions as viewed from KOP 1065.

Sensitive views of the sagebrush steppe and rolling grasslands west of Twin Falls adjacent to Salmon Falls Creek are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers such as recreational drivers, represented by views from KOPs 1068 and 1067, as well as the numerous residences on the east side of the creek. The flat to rolling landscape views from KOP 1068 exhibit little diversity in form, line, color, or texture. There is very little development visible this far from Twin Falls, Idaho. From this broad open vantage point it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts would not be successful in lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The flat plain and strong horizon line would be directly contrasted with the proposed transmission structures for the proposed transmission line would be visible and dominant. Views in the Salmon Falls Creek Canyon are also an important scenic resource and located in an interesting and diverse canyon landscape. The VRM Class II and scenic outstandingly remarkable values (ORV) objectives in the MFP have been assigned from canyon rim to canyon rim

to protect the viewshed of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon. Views from KOP 1065 represent the views of recreational users at the crossing of Lilly Grade Road and Salmon Falls Creek looking southeast toward rolling, undulating terrain of the Antelope Pocket. The view is representative of the Dissected High Lava Plateau eco-region, which has alluvial fans, rolling plains, and sheer-walled canyons that are cut into extrusive rocks. Open panoramic views of the rolling (plains) to rugged (canyon) terrain are considered to have moderate scenic quality due to the muted sagebrush grassland vegetation adjacent to the rocky faces of the canyon. The canyon for Salmon Falls Creek is an aesthetic landscape element in the foreground and middleground views, and is a focus point for the view. Through micrositing, it is likely that towers could be set back from the canyon rim such that the visual intrusion within the canyon would be confined to the conductors. The view from KOP 1067 would be typical of travels within the canyon and demonstrates the potential for micrositing to minimize visual impacts. Nevertheless, any intrusion would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. In addition, it would not conform to the management of the area according to the 1989 Salmon Falls ACEC amendment to the Twin Falls MFP, which prohibits powerline crossings and other such visual intrusions (see Appendix F of the SEIS).

5.1.1.4 Proposed Plan Amendment

There is a high degree of visual sensitivity in the crossing of Salmon Falls Creek due to its VRM Class II management objective, ACEC designation, and eligible WSR status. An amendment to the ACEC objectives and an amendment to the MFP VRM objectives would be needed to build this route.

The 1989 amendment establishing the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC directed the management of the Twin Falls MFP side to be consistent with the direction in the existing Jarbidge RMP. The 1987 Jarbidge RMP was more recent and had established protection measures for the area; therefore, the amendment directed management to be consistent on both sides of the creek. The 2015 Jarbidge RMP established a corridor (the Roseworth Corridor) where the Project would cross the canyon. Management within this corridor allows for overhead transmission lines and designates the majority of the ACEC area within the corridor as VRM Class III.

It is recommended that if the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1), FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternatives 2, 4, and 6), or Route 9K (Alternatives 3, 5, and 7) is selected, the Project be allowed to cross the ACEC and change the VRM classification to VRM Class III within this AOI area. This would provide similar management guidance to that provided on the Jarbidge side of the canyon and provide consistency with adjacent management goals.

If this route is selected, it is recommended that the Proponents be required to microsite structures to minimize the visibility from within the Salmon Falls Creek canyon. As discussed in Appendix F, this amendment, in addition to the amendment allowing the overhead crossing of the canyon by Gateway West, would affect how the BLM is able to manage the land according to the amendment to the MFP establishing the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. The ACEC direction specifically states that no overhead crossing would be permitted. The Jarbidge BLM Field Office has stated that the crossing would not affect WSR eligibility because this section is only eligible for recreation, and they have

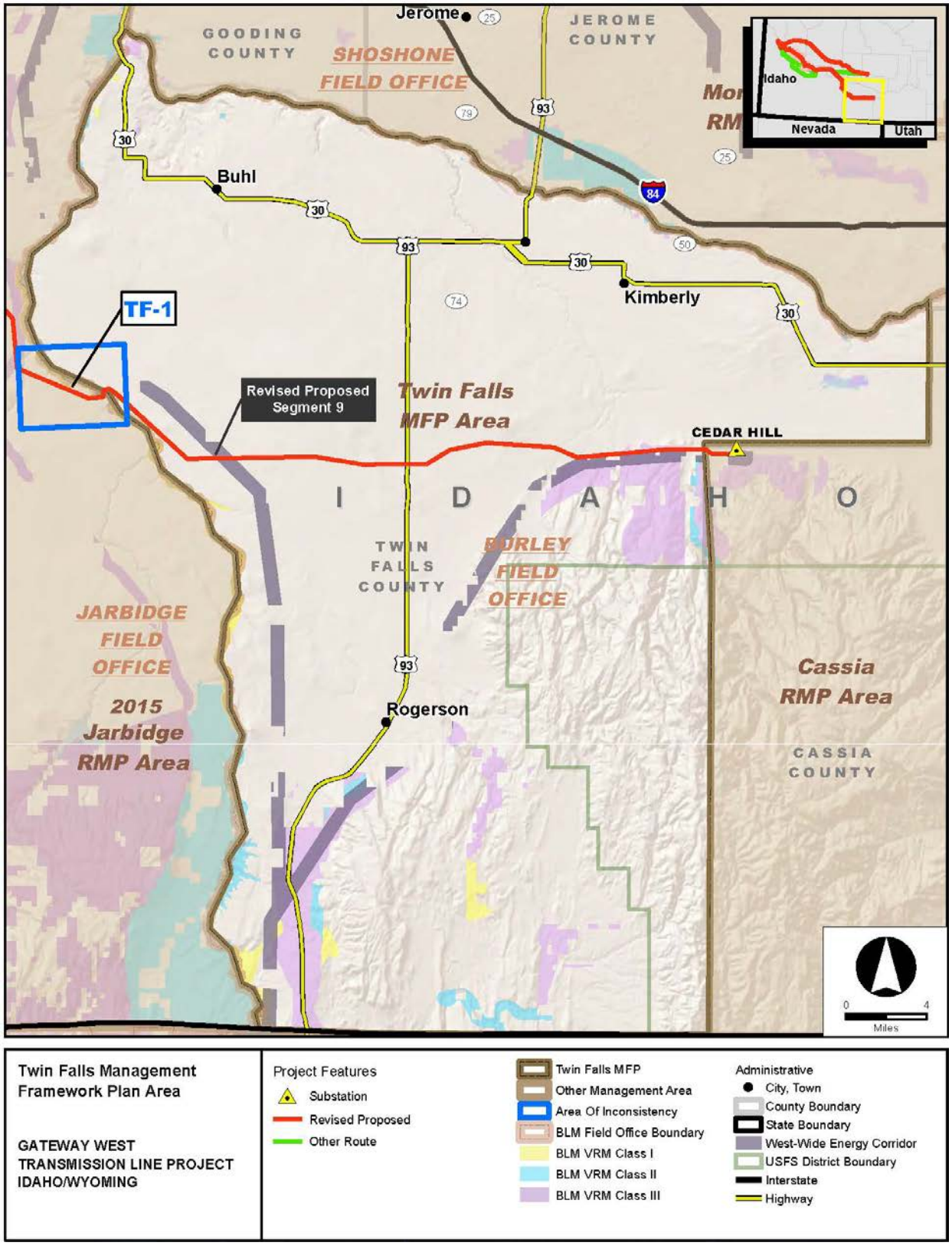


Figure 5.1-1. Twin Falls MFP Boundary Map

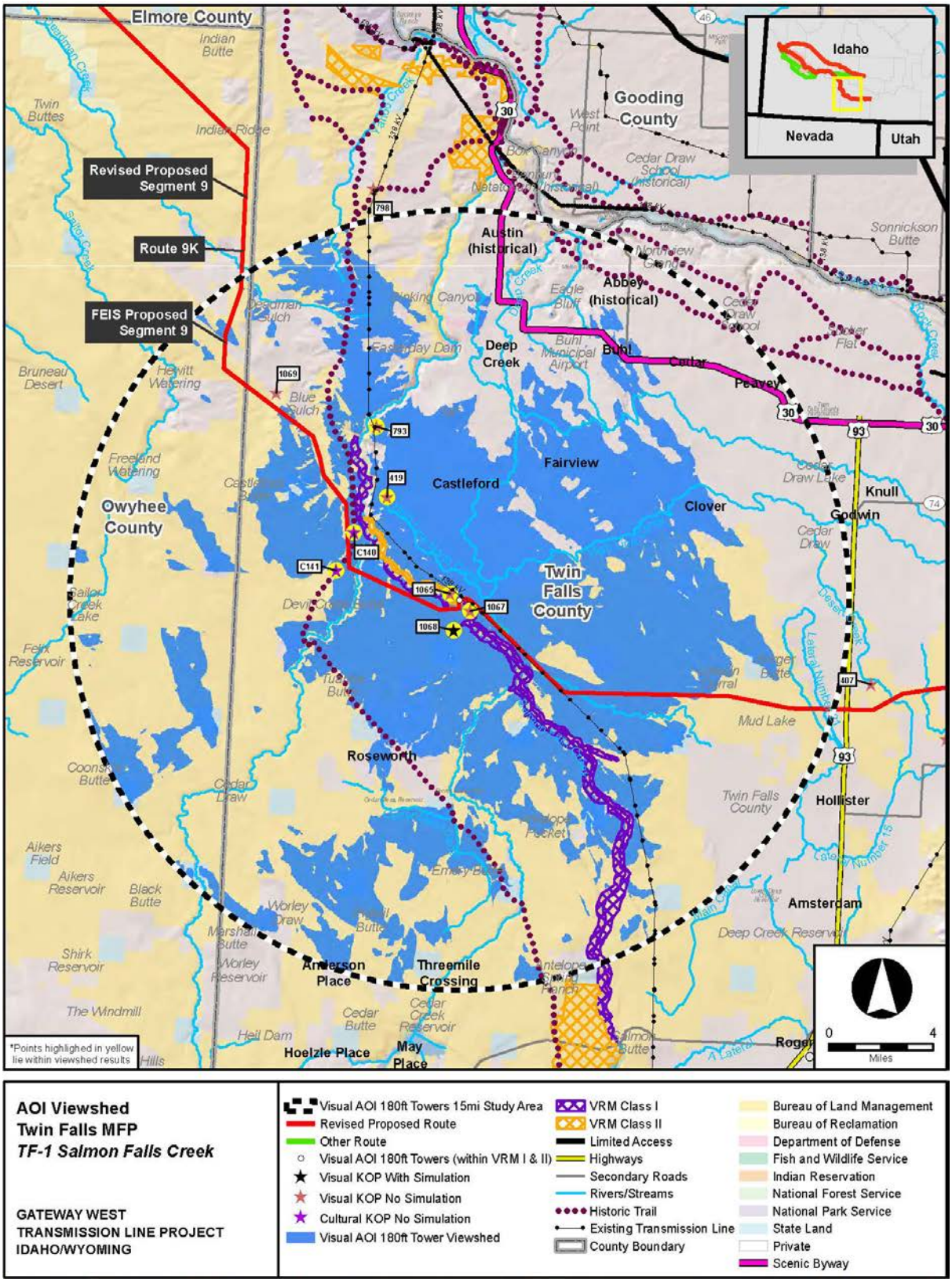


Figure 5.1-2. AOI TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek Visual Analysis for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/FEIS Proposed 9/9K (Amendment SEIS-2)

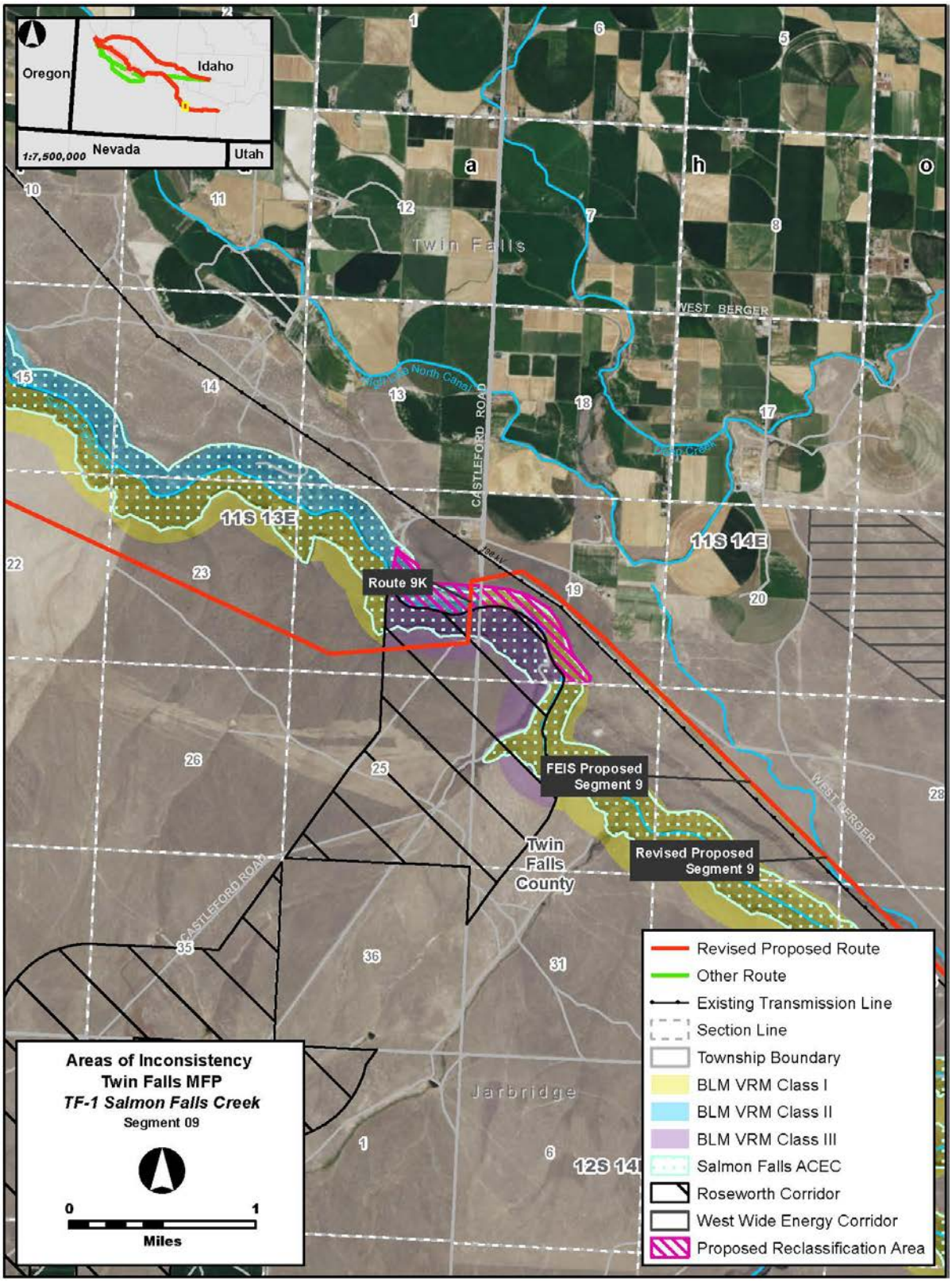


Figure 5.1-3. AOI TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-2 within the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area

stated that such a crossing would not impair the ORVs. The crossing would result in a high visual impact at the canyon rims, but visibility would be reduced once in the canyon. While the area of the AOI within the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area is relatively small, it is part of the protective management actions for the Salmon Falls Creek canyon. Changing this VRM Class would result in a lower level of management protection for this resource.

5.2 1987 Jarbidge RMP

In August 2015, the BLM approved a new RMP for the Jarbidge Field Office area. This new RMP modified VRM designations within the current Jarbidge Field Office boundaries. The proposed Project and Alternatives would be in conformance with these new VRM designations within the area covered by the 2015 RMP. The boundaries for this RMP coincide with the current boundaries of the Jarbidge Field Office, which is smaller than the area covered by the 1987 RMP; therefore, there are still a few areas crossed by the Project that are managed under the 1987 RMP where the land is not included in any more recent land use plans. This includes the area north of the Snake River (which is crossed by the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8) and the arm of land extending to the west of the Field Office that joins with the SRBOP (which is crossed by the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9). The 1987 Jarbidge RMP includes a map of VRM classified lands (Map 9). In addition, the RMP provides locations of utility lines and utility avoidance areas (Map 7). Segments 8 and 9 of the Revised Proposed Route as well as Route 8H would cross areas managed under the 1987 RMP that would not conform to VRM designations.

Revised Proposed Routes: The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Co-Preferred Alternative 2, Alternatives 1 and 3) would cross a VRM Class I area near the Oregon Trail in an area still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP within the Four Rivers Field Office (AOI J-5). An amendment would be needed to change the area from VRM Class I to VRM Class IV. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1) would cross a small parcel of VRM Class II just west of the SRBOP (AOI J-3). An amendment would be needed to change the area from VRM Class II to VRM Class III.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would be 129.7 miles long and connect the Midpoint Substation to the Hemingway Substation with a single-circuit 500-kV line. The route location was selected to follow the WWE corridor or existing transmission lines and avoid agricultural lands, especially in the southeastern portions. The Revised Proposed Route is within the WWE corridor for a portion of its total length. Constraints on federal land include historic trails, wetlands, steep slopes, and raptor nests. Route 8G (and the part of 8H that is identical to 8G) was developed to avoid the SRBOP and the city of Kuna. This route would follow the WWE corridor and parallel Route 9K for the majority of its route through the Jarbidge RMP Planning Area. Additional routes were identified and discussed within the 2013 FEIS.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would be a 165.3-mile-long 500-kV single-circuit line that would connect the proposed Cedar Hill Substation with the Hemingway Substation. Primary siting considerations in the eastern portion of this segment were avoidance of irrigated farmland, dairy operations, and scattered residential development; avoiding interference with the Jarbidge Military Operating Area; making

use of the WWE corridor; and minimizing impacts to visual resources. In the western portion, following the WWE corridor was a primary objective, with other concerns such as minimizing impact to Bruneau Dunes State Park and scenic qualities associated with the Bruneau River, and avoiding conflicts with the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Military Operating Area. This route was developed to utilize public land and would follow an existing transmission line through the SRBOP. In addition, certain areas through the SRBOP would be double-circuited (see route description in Chapter 2 of the SEIS). Route 9K would follow the same alignment as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route through much of the Jarbidge RMP Planning Area; however, at the western edge, it diverges and travels south, following a modified version of the alignment for FEIS Route 9E. This route avoids most of the SRBOP.

Additional amendments were proposed in the 2013 FEIS; however, the Project would now be in conformance with the VRM in these areas (AOIs J-1, J-2, and J-4) under the 2015 RMP. The Jarbidge RMP (BLM 1987) and 1989 amendment provided VRM guidance, management for the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC, which precluded new overhead utility lines. The 2015 RMP establishes the Roseworth Corridor for utility use and designates the VRM in the ACEC within the corridor as VRM Class III; therefore, an amendment is no longer required. The Saylor Creek AOI (J-2) was designated VRM Class II in the 1987 RMP, but is within the Saylor Creek Corridor and VRM Class IV in the 2015 RMP, so an amendment is no longer needed.

Other Routes: Route 9K (Co-Preferred Alternative 5, Alternatives 3 and 7) follows the same route as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route through most of its alignment through the Jarbidge Field Office, turning south before Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route heads northwest towards the SRBOP, and AOI J-3. This route would not cross any AOIs in the Jarbidge Field Office under the 2015 RMP, and does not cross any areas managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. FEIS Proposed 9 (Co-Preferred Alternative 2, Alternatives 4 and 6) follows the same alignment as Route 9K through the Jarbidge Field Office. Route 8G crosses into the Jarbidge Field Office near the northeast corner of the management area and heads west until it meets up with Route 9K, at which point it would parallel that route through the remainder of the Field Office. Route 8G (Co-Preferred Alternative 5 and Alterative 4) conforms to the VRM in the 2015 RMP and does not cross land managed under the 1987 RMP. Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7) would follow the same alignment as the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9, east of the Jarbidge Field Office, crossing the same AOI (J-3).

The former AOI J-4 area crossed by Route 8G was designated as VRM Class I in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP, but was designated as the Saylor Creek and Shoestring Corridors in the 2015 RMP with a VRM of Class III and IV. The former AOI J-2 area crossed by Routes 8G and 9K was designated VRM Class II in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP but was designated as the Saylor Creek Corridor in the 2015 RMP with a VRM of Class IV.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed. Therefore, Project objectives would not be met, but no Project-related plan amendments would be required. While approval of the 2015 Jarbidge RMP means that the Project is now in conformance with the VRM requirements within the Jarbidge Field Office, there are two areas where the Revised Proposed Routes (and Route 8H, following the same alignment as the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9) cross

land that is now in the Four Rivers FO and still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP and where the routes would not conform to the 1987 RMP VRM objectives. As a result, BLM action would be necessary to modify the visual classifications and management to conform to the RMP. The AOIs are described in Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, below.

5.2.1 Former AOIs Where the Project Now Conforms to the VRM Objectives, due to Reclassification in the 2015 Jarbidge RMP

Three AOIs in the 2013 FEIS are no longer considered AOIs for the SEIS analysis due to the approval of the 2015 Jarbidge RMP. The new RMP has new VRM designations that the Project would conform to. A brief summary for each of these former AOIs is provided below. As stated above, however, this RMP only applies to the current Jarbidge Field Office boundaries; therefore, the Project still does not conform to the VRM classification where the AOIs were located outside of the current Jarbidge Field Office boundaries, and where no more recent management plans have been adopted.

5.2.1.1 2013 FEIS AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek (Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/FEIS Proposed 9/9K)

The Salmon Falls Creek crossing is located approximately 4 miles south of Castleford, Idaho, in Twin Falls County. This area overlaps both the Twin Falls MFP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route, FEIS Proposed 9, and Route 9K follow the same alignment across Salmon Falls Creek. The 1987 Jarbidge RMP and 1989 ACEC amendment designated the area as VRM Class II and prohibited new overhead utility lines, respectively, which the Project would not be in conformance with. The 2015 Jarbidge RMP, however, designated this location as part of the Roseworth Corridor and classified the area as VRM Class III. This designation allows for the utility line crossing, if done according to RMP requirements; therefore, an amendment is no longer required and an AOI analysis is not needed. This area is not discussed further in this section.

5.2.1.2 2013 FEIS AOI J-2 Saylor Creek (Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ FEIS Proposed 9/9K, 8G, 8H)

The Saylor Creek area crossing is located about 4 miles south of the Snake River, approximately 18 miles south of Mountain Home, Owyhee County, Idaho, and is less than 1 mile west of the Elmore County/Owyhee County boundary. As the routes proceed west, constrained on the south by the Saylor Creek Range Air Force restricted area and on the north by Bruneau Dunes State Park, they cross approximately 2 miles of land classified as VRM Class II in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. This area is located in a low interval of hills within the WWE corridor. Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route, FEIS Proposed 9, and Routes 8G, 8H, and 9K would all cross this area. If an alternative including Route 8G or 8H is selected (Co-Preferred Alternative 2, or Alternatives 1, 3, 6, or 7), two lines would run parallel through this area. The 2015 Jarbidge RMP classifies this area as VRM Class IV and designates a corridor where the route alignment is located. The Project would now conform to the VRM objectives of the managing RMP and is no longer inconsistent with management in the area. This area is therefore not discussed further in this section.

5.2.1.3 2013 FEIS AOI J-4 Oregon Trail (Segment 8 – Route 8G/8H)

This area is located approximately 13 miles east and slightly north of Hagerman, Idaho. Routes 8G and 8H share the same alignment, which passes through the area of the former Oregon Trail AOI. Route 8G/8H follows a route similar to portions of the 2013 FEIS Routes 8A and 9B, which passed less than 1 mile from each other. Both alignments were identified as potential routes because they follow the WWE corridor for much of their lengths. Route 8G/8H would follow existing transmission lines through this area and crosses the Oregon Trail AOI in a westerly fashion, crossing just south of the southern portion of the AOI crossed by FEIS Route 8A and at an almost identical location as FEIS Route 9B. The 1987 Jarbidge FEIS designated land crossed by the route in this area as VRM Class I; however, the 2015 Jarbidge RMP designates this area as a utility corridor and VRM Class IV. The route would conform to these updated designations and an amendment would not be needed. Therefore, this area is not further discussed in this section.

5.2.2 AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail (Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H)

The South Oregon Trail AOI is located north and south of the Snake River, beginning at the C.J. Strike Reservoir dam. This AOI overlaps both the SRBOP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. This route follows a modified version of FEIS Route 9D/9G and FEIS Route 9F/9H, leaving the alignment for FEIS Proposed 9 and Route 9K near Bruneau, Idaho, heading northwest for about 6 miles before intercepting the C.J. Strike Reservoir, formed at the junction of the Bruneau River and the Snake River. Land surrounding the reservoir has been designated as VRM Class II due to its scenic qualities and close proximity to the Oregon National Historic Trail (NHT). The route initially enters the SRBOP briefly then re-enters the SRBOP, double-circuiting with the existing C.J. Strike – Bruneau Bridge 138-kV transmission line in the current right-of-way (ROW) at milepost (MP) 106.2 for approximately 3.1 miles (the existing 138-kV structures would be removed). At MP 109.4, the two circuits separate to permit a more feasible crossing of the Narrows between C.J. Strike Reservoir and the Bruneau Arm. On the west side of the Bruneau River, the two lines again become a double circuit at MP 110 across the Cove non-motorized and recreation areas, and continue west approximately 2 miles to the C.J. Strike Dam, where the lines again separate at MP 112 and the existing 138-kV line enters a substation at the dam. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route continues west on the south side of the reservoir crossing back to the north side of the Snake River approximately one-half mile downstream from C.J. Strike Dam. Although not located within a WWE corridor, this route follows existing transmission lines through much of its alignment.

The portion of the AOI within the Jarbidge RMP crosses 0.3 mile of BLM-administered land managed for VRM Class II objectives. The land crossed is along the northern plateau to the north of the Snake River.

Figure 5.2-2 shows the viewshed of the South Oregon Trail AOI, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H, and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.2-3 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation.

5.2.2.1 Routes Considered

Three routes in the western portion of Segment 9 were analyzed in the FEIS as a means of connecting the Cedar Hill and Hemingway Substations. The FEIS Proposed 9 is largely within the WWE corridor but crosses more private land than the other routes. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route is a modification of FEIS Routes 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H through the SRBOP, which are part of an alignment identified by the Owyhee County task force and recommended by Owyhee County to avoid private land and maximize the use of public land. The revisions from the FEIS routes include adjusting where the route crosses south of the Snake River. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross at the western edge of the narrows of the Bruneau Arm. This is a modification from the FEIS route, which crossed at the eastern end of the narrows and then followed the southern edge of the Cove non-motorized area. The revision crosses a small section of the Cove non-motorized area in the northwest corner. No VRM Class I or Class II areas managed by the 1987 Jarbidge RMP are crossed by FEIS Proposed 9, Route 9K, or FEIS Route 9E.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.2.2.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the South Oregon Trail AOI. The river crosses the middle of the area from west to east and leaves the study area in the vicinity of Indian Cove. C.J. Strike Reservoir is located at the northern end of the Bruneau Valley in the center of the area. The topography is generally flat to rolling with numerous drainages. Although much of the area is undeveloped, there are large areas of farms and farmland along the Snake River, south of Mountain Home, and in other locations such as the Bruneau Valley and Twentymile Flat. SR 78 is the major road and generally follows the Snake River east to west. SR 51 extends north to south though the area. There are a number of communities along the local highways and Snake River including Grandview and Bruneau. Mountain Home Air Force Base is located in the northeast portion of the study area. Numerous transmission lines cross this area. In addition to the highways and communities, other potential viewing areas include recreation areas such as Bruneau Dunes State Park, the SRBOP, and historic sites and trails. KOP 1155 shows views of the Snake River from Oregon NHT visitor's center. KOP 1154 shows views of existing transmission lines at the C.J. Strike Reservoir.

The Jarbidge portion of this AOI consists of a small parcel of VRM Class II land just east of the SRBOP. KOP 1156 is located southwest of this area and is more relevant to the BOP-1 AOI but describes some of the typical area of interest in the general vicinity. The Jarbidge portion of the AOI area consists of flat topography above the Bruneau Arm of the C.J. Strike Reservoir (see Figure 5.2-3), and approximately 0.2 mile north of the South Alternate Oregon Trail. KOP C117 is approximately one mile northwest of this location, on a segment of the Oregon NHT – South Alternate, where it consists of an undisturbed set of swales. A transmission line with wooden, H-frame support structures is visible approximately 100 feet west of the trail at this location, and an additional transmission line with wooden, single-pole supports is visible approximately 150 feet

west of the trail. The landscape consists of flat land to rolling hills with grass and sagebrush dominating the vegetation.

Attachment B, Figure B-2 shows the view of the existing conditions from KOP C117. Figure B-3 shows an alternate view of the existing conditions from KOP 1156. Figure B-4 shows the view of the existing conditions from KOP 1155.

5.2.2.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.2-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Due to topography, only portions of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would be visible from this location. The Project is located to the south of KOP C117, away from existing impacts to the cultural landscape. Due to the proximity of the KOP and the introduction of new elements in a new area of the resource's viewshed, the visual contrast rating (VCR) for this KOP is assessed as moderate to strong. The proposed Project elements would dominate the setting to the south; therefore, there would be an adverse impact to the resource at this location.

Scenic views of the C.J. Strike Reservoir and the surrounding Snake River Plain are available to sensitive recreational viewers at nearby locations including KOPs 1154 and 1156, and visitors to the Oregon NHT (KOP 1155). The views of the undulating to rocky terrain from these viewpoints exhibit diversity in form, line, and texture with numerous human-made features such as high voltage transmission lines and a dam. From these KOPs, it is apparent that the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H would be visible in the foreground and middle ground, sometimes skylined and at other times backdropped. In this location, the existing wood pole H-frame structures would be replaced with double-circuit 500/138-kV structures. Screening and other mitigation efforts would be moderately successful at lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The undulating and rugged terrain with mottled and diverse vegetation and expansive waters of the reservoir would be moderately contrasted by an additional set of structures. These additions would draw the attention of the casual observer in certain portions of the area; represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture of the surrounding landscape; and thus would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. The Boise District office has stated that the alignment to the east and north of the river within the VRM Class II area would be buffered by topography and thus would not attract the attention of the casual observer. It appears that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor and adjacent landscapes.

5.2.2.4 Plan Amendment for Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route

A high-voltage transmission line would not conform to the VRM Class II management goals for those VRM Class II areas west of the Snake River. It is recommended that, if the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1) or Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7) is selected, VRM Class II areas associated with the route be reclassified to VRM Class III for the Jarbidge RMP portion of AOI BOP-1/J-3 (see Figure 5.2-3).

5.2.3 AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail (Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route)

The North Oregon Trail AOI is located about 4 miles north of Glenns Ferry, Idaho. From Midpoint Substation, the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route proceeds to the west-northwest following existing transmission lines. As the route approaches King Hill Creek, approximately 3.2 miles of VRM Class I land is crossed, just south of Blair Trail Reservoir. Visually sensitive features in this area include views of Bennett Mountain to the north, Kings Crown to the east, and several Oregon NHT segments. Figure 5.2-4 shows the viewshed of the North Oregon Trail AOI, the location of the Revised Proposed Route and other routes, historic trails and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.2-5 shows the AOI and amendment management recommendations.

5.2.3.1 Other Routes Considered

Route 8G/8H would avoid this area and would cross the Jarbidge Field Office south of the Snake River within the Shoestring and Saylor Creek Corridors. It would parallel Route 9K through much of the Jarbidge Field Office and continue to do so through the Owyhee and Bruneau Field Offices, where it would cross one isolated parcel of VRM Class II land. No VRM amendments to the 1987 or 2015 Jarbidge RMPs would be needed for Route 8G/8H, although a VRM amendment would be needed for the Bruneau MFP.

There are no routes in the vicinity of the Revised Proposed Route that would completely avoid VRM Class I and II land, due to the presence of scenic local features, historic trails, and the Snake River Canyon. Several Segment 8 routes were reviewed for the 2013 FEIS in locations north of the Proposed Route; however, these routes had even greater impacts to sensitive visual resources, steep terrain, and Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) and ACECs. The FEIS Route 8A is the nearest feasible alternate route within the vicinity of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. This route was described in the 2013 FEIS.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.2.3.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the North Oregon Trail AOI. It crosses the southern half of the area from east to west and leaves the study area just east of the community of Mountain Home. The flat to rolling topography on both sides of the river is cut by numerous drainages, many with steep, canyon-like walls. The northern part of the area is occupied by steep terrain of the Bennett Hills. Although much of the area is undeveloped, there are large areas of farms and farmland along the Snake River and in other locations such as Indian Cove, Deadman Flat, Black Mesa, and Pasadena Valley. Interstate 84 crosses southeast and then east through the study area. Communities such as Hammett, Glenns Ferry, and King Hill are located along local highways and the Snake River. Numerous transmission lines cross northwest to southeast through this area. Potential viewing areas include highways, communities, historic sites and trails, and recreation areas such as Three Island Crossing State Park. Scenic views of Kings Crown along the foothills of Bennett Mountain are represented by KOPs C108, 1209, and 1210. KOPs 1209 and 1210 represent local residents whereas KOP C108 represents recreational viewers on the Oregon NHT.

Attachment A, Figure J-5a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1350. The land in close proximity to the alignment is very flat and grass-covered. In such an area, there is no topography or vegetation to screen views of the proposed line, which means skylining would occur.

Attachment A, Figure J-5c shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP C83. This KOP is located on a segment of the North Alternate Oregon Trail near the site of the Canyon Creek Stage Station where the trail intersects King Hill Road. The KOP is approximately 1.1 miles west of King Hill Creek and 2.7 miles northwest of the Snake River. The KOP is 0.5 mile south of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. The resource at this location consists of a moderately deep swale. The setting contains a wooden, H-frame transmission line less than 0.25 mile to the north and modern ranching properties are visible approximately 2 miles to the east.

Attachment B, Figures B-5, B-6, and B-7 show the existing conditions as viewed from KOPs C108, 1209, and 1210, respectively.

5.2.3.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.2-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Attachment A, Figure J-5b simulates landscape conditions showing for the Revised Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1350. Attachment A, Figure J-5d simulates landscape conditions showing for the Revised Proposed Route as viewed from KOP C83. The Project's design shares some similarities with existing structures in the area but would introduce new elements that are of different form, material, and texture. Due to these factors, the KOP's proximity to the route, and the potential for the elements to blend into the backdrop, the VCR for this KOP is assessed as weak to moderate. The Project elements may draw the attention of the casual observer; therefore, there would be an adverse impact to the resource at this location.

The views of the undulating terrain adjacent to KOPs C108, 1209, and 1210 exhibit some diversity in form, line, and texture and include numerous human-made features. KOP C108 has a view of a high-voltage transmission line. KOPs 1209 and 1210 have views of numerous high-voltage transmission lines and a wind farm. From these KOPs, the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 would be moderately visible due to the presence of existing transmission lines and structures. Screening and other mitigation efforts would not lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area.

The additional set of transmission structures and access roads would be in contrast with the landscape topography, draw the attention of the casual observer, and represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture, which would not conform to VRM Class I objectives.

5.2.3.4 Plan Amendment for Revised Proposed Route

An amendment is proposed if the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) is selected. The amendment would reclassify the area that would be impacted by the transmission line, now managed to conform to VRM Class II objectives, to be managed under VRM Class IV objectives (see Figure 5.2-5).

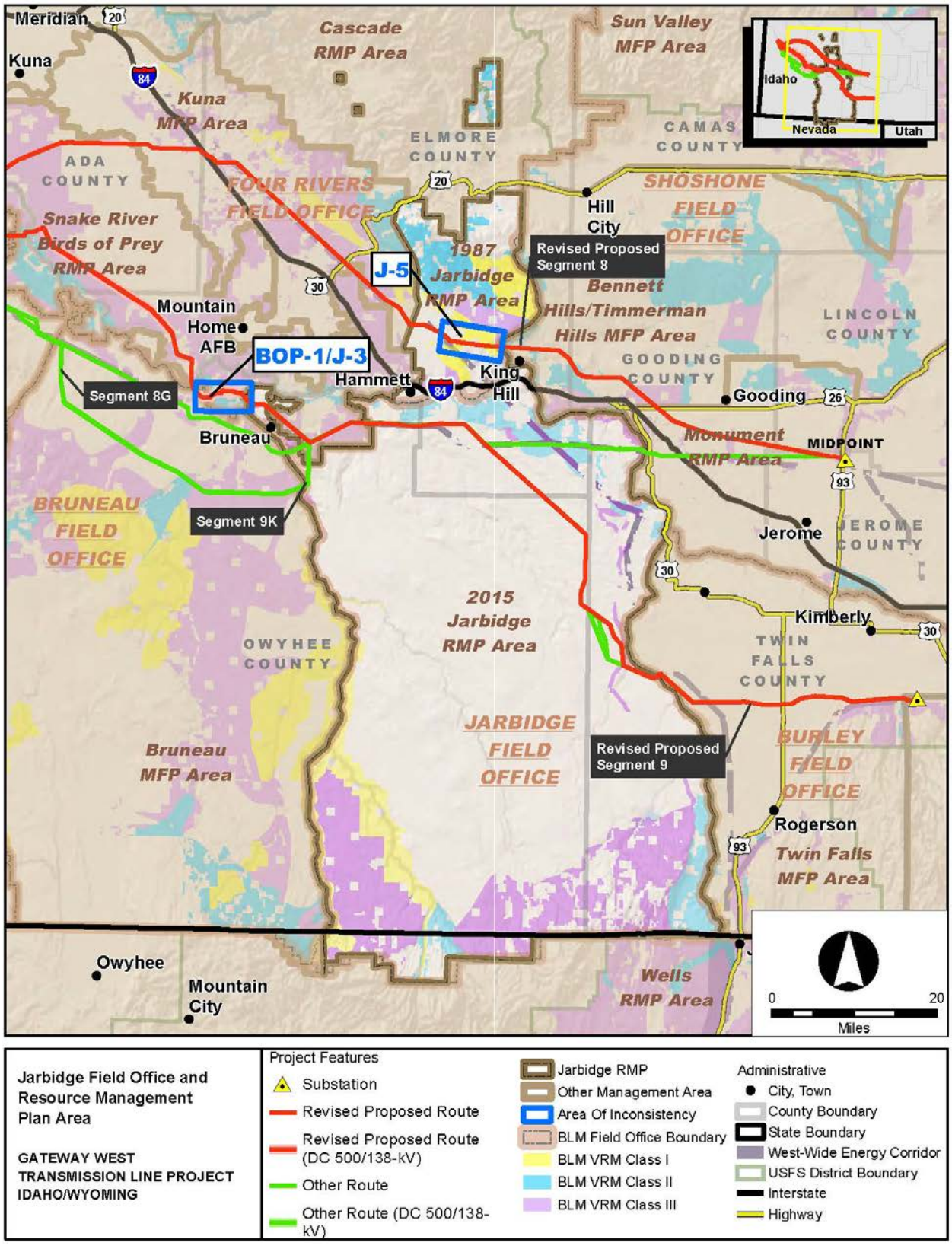


Figure 5.2-1. Jarbidge RMP Boundary Map

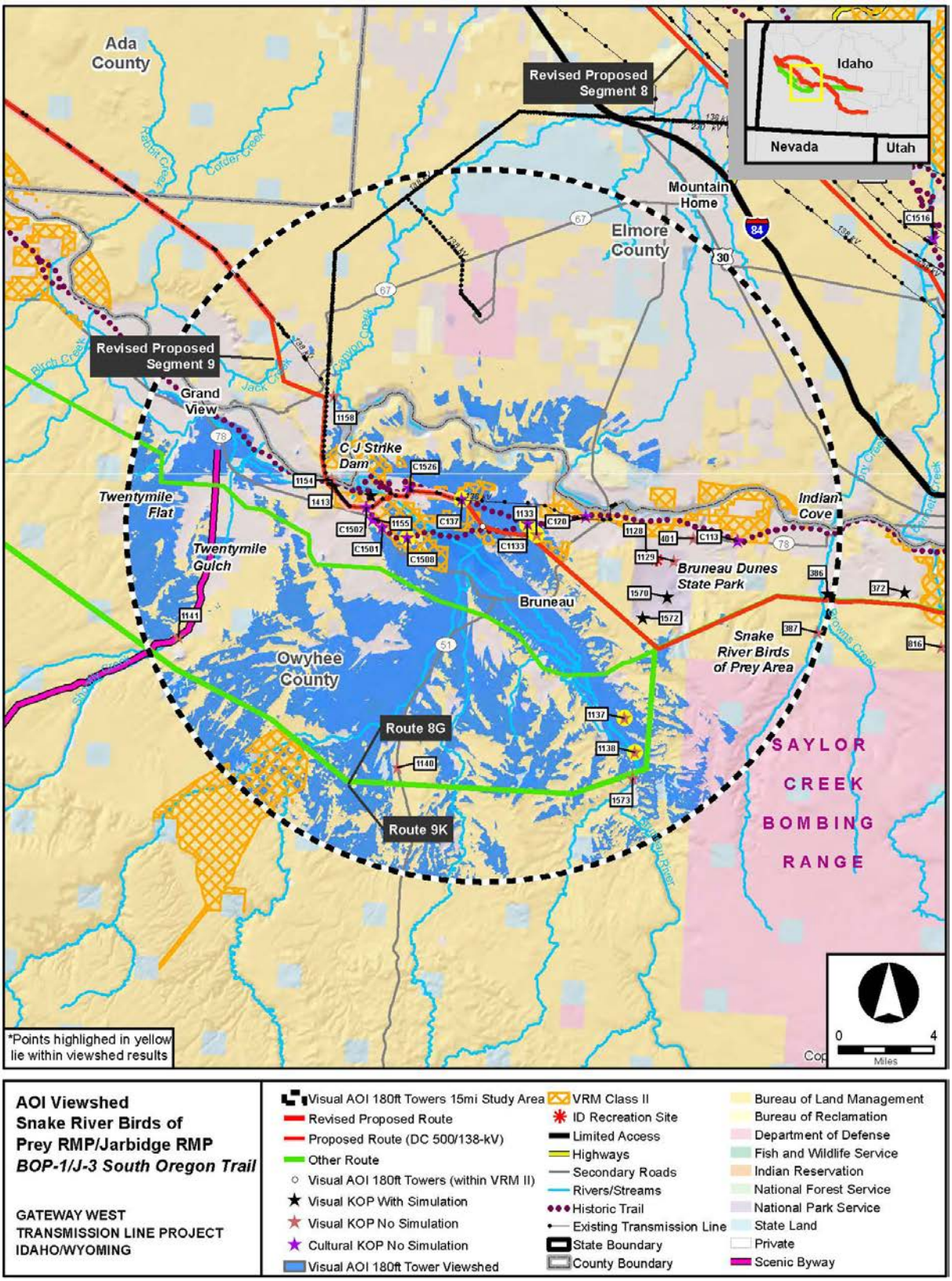


Figure 5.2-2. AOI J-3 South Oregon Trail Visual Analysis for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H (Amendment SEIS-14)

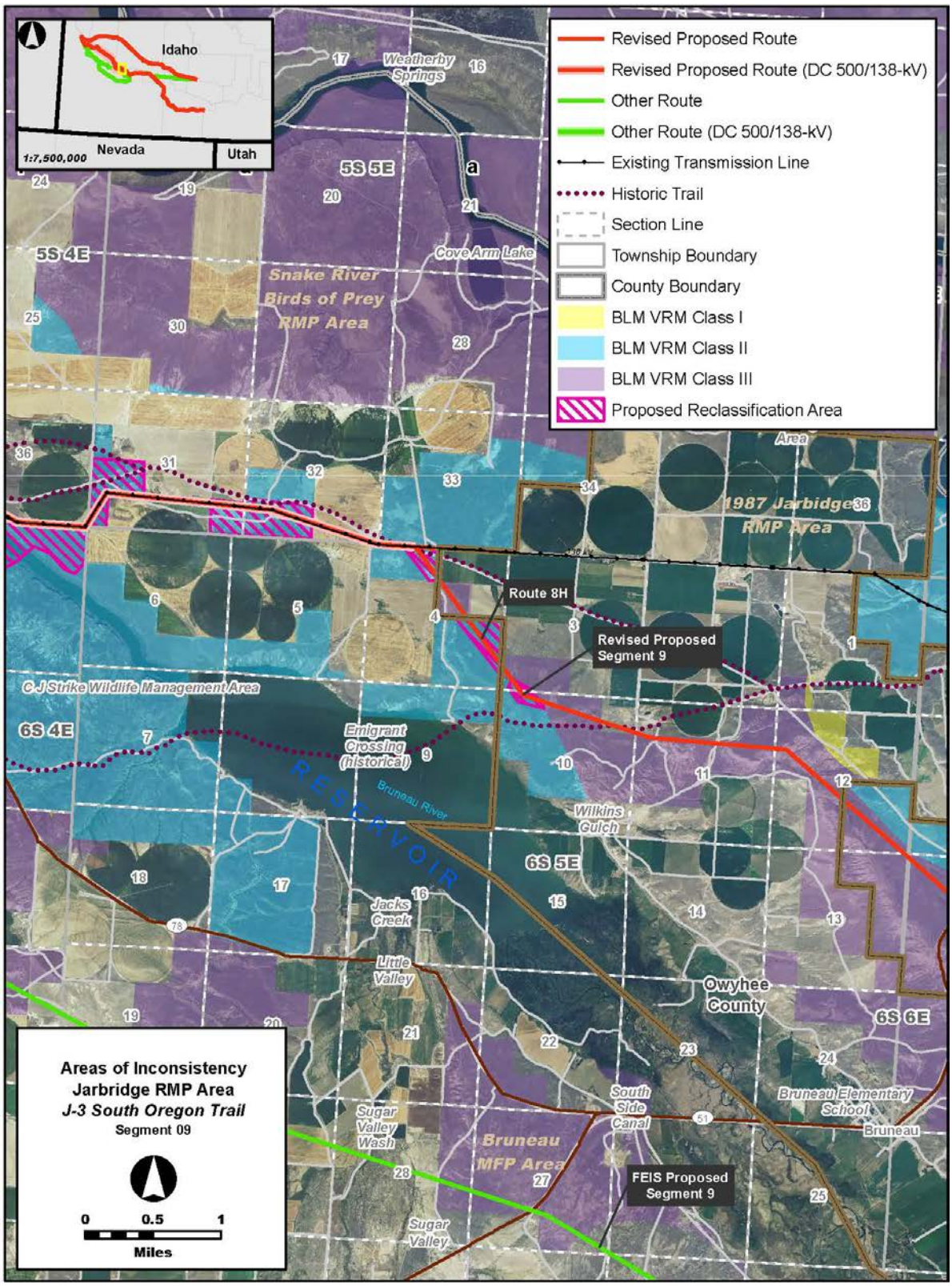


Figure 5.2-3. AOI J-3 South Oregon Trail Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-14 (located where Revised Proposed Segment 9 label is pointing) within the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area

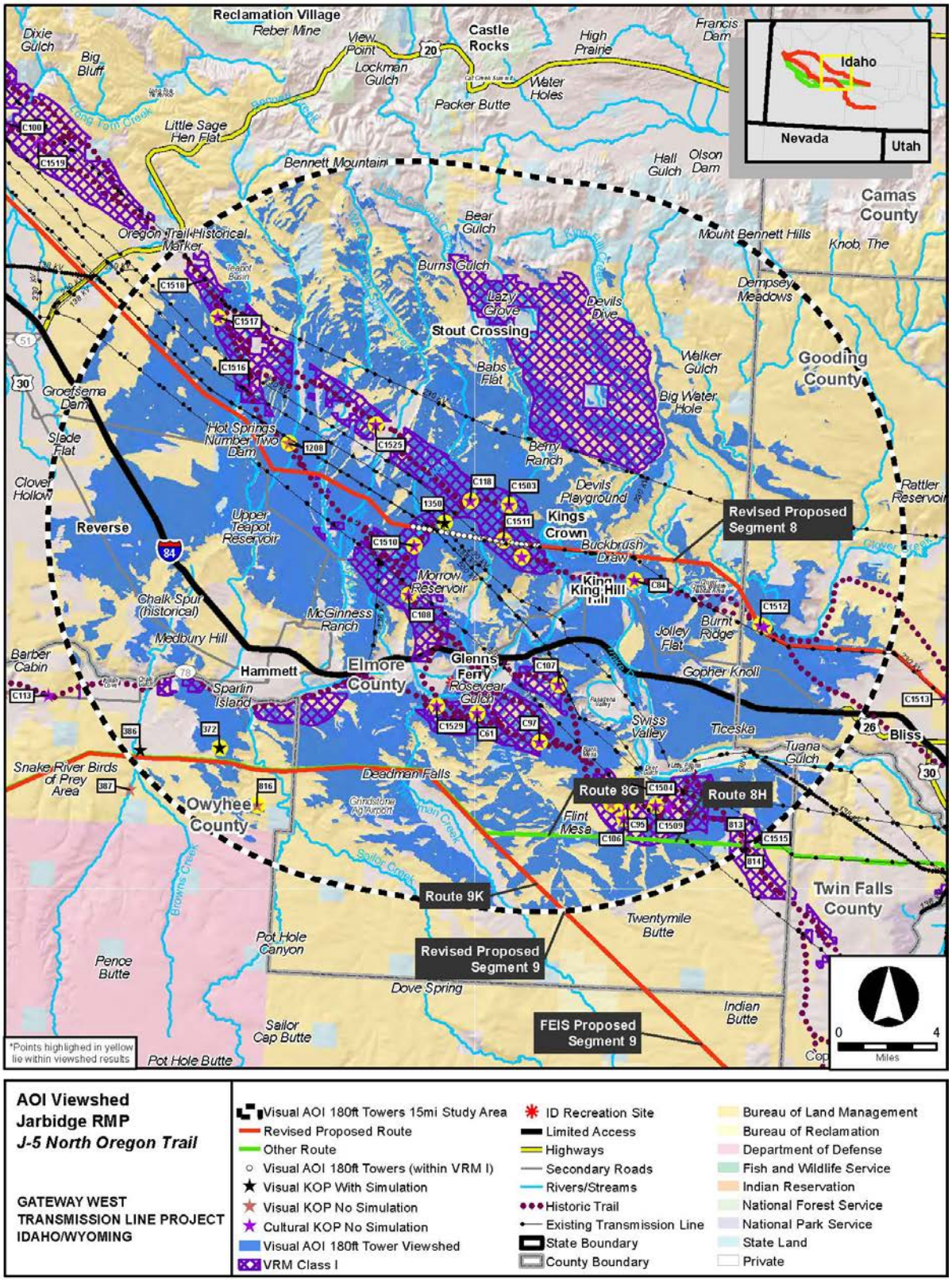


Figure 5.2-4. AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail Visual Analysis for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

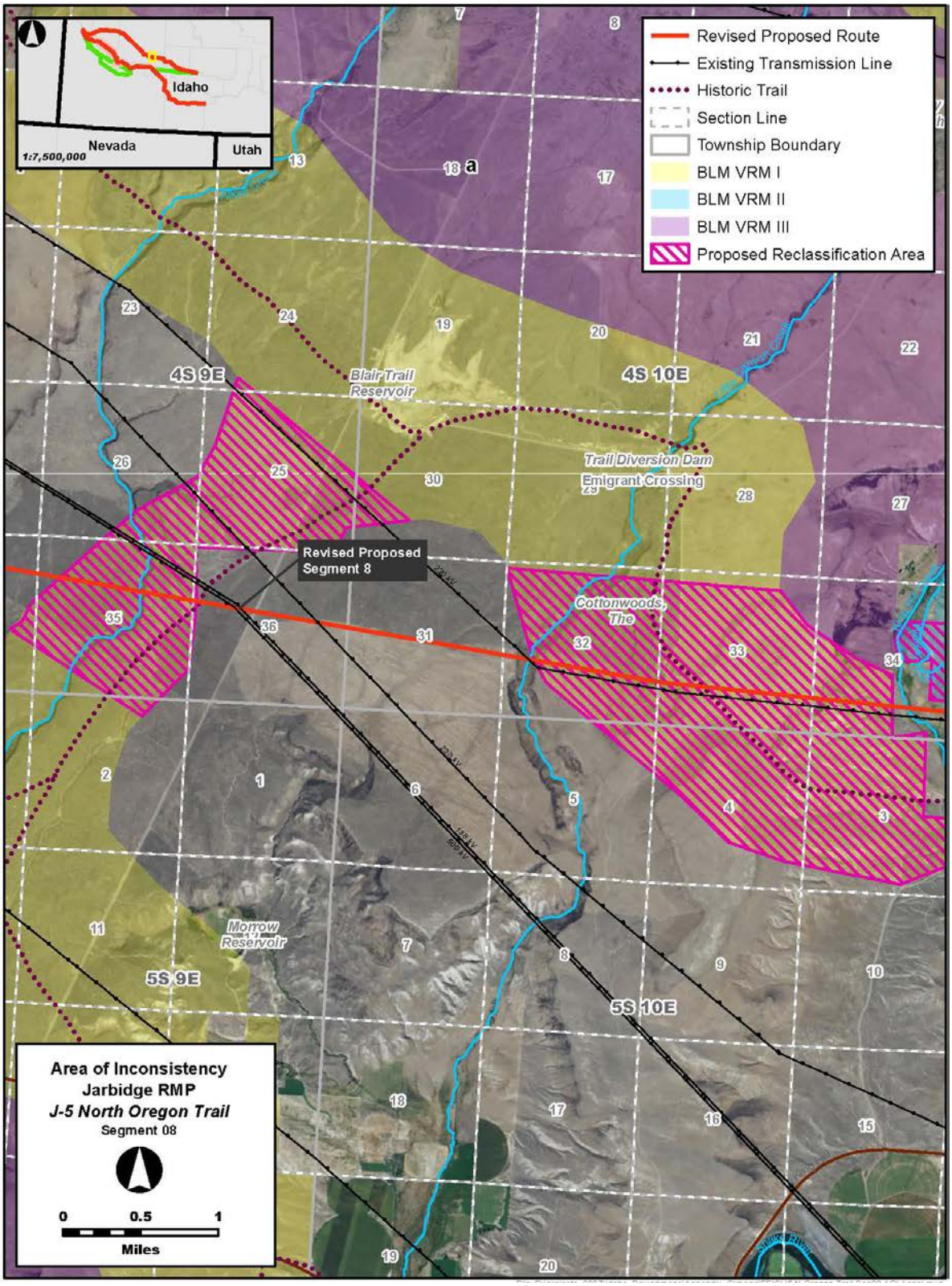


Figure 5.2-5. AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-5 within the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area

5.3 SRBOP RMP

The SRBOP RMP (BLM 2008a) provides guidance for the public lands and resources within the SRBOP that are managed as a part of the BLM Four Rivers Field Office. The SRBOP contains approximately 483,700 acres of Public Land extending 81 miles along the Snake River in the Idaho counties of Ada, Canyon, Elmore, and Owyhee (see Figure 5.3-1). The SRBOP includes the 138,000-acre Orchard Combat Training Center,[3] used by the Idaho Army National Guard for military training since 1953. The RMP provides for protection of the Oregon NHT as a VRM Class II management area. The RMP further provides direction to "manage the areas along the Oregon Trail and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II, the Army National Guard Orchard Training Area (OTA) as VRM Class IV, and remaining areas as Class III. This RMP will provide reasonable protection of the Oregon Trail and flexibility in managing the remainder of the NCA."

Portions of all routes for all Alternatives would cross the SRBOP RMP management area; however, only the alignment for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H would cross AOIs in this area. The 2013 FEIS routes included analysis of Segment 8 and alternate routing to Segment 9 and assessed varying routing regarding constraints such as the Orchard Combat Training Center, the Halverson Bar non-motorized area, National Historic Districts, NHTs, the Snake River, and commercial and residential areas as well as additional recreation sites, such as Centennial Park. Following existing transmission lines and minimizing new road construction were key considerations in developing the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route8H for the SEIS.

Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1): The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross three AOIs in the SRBOP concerning VRM Class II managed land. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route is a 165.3-mile-long 500-kV single-circuit line that would connect the proposed Cedar Hill Substation with the Hemingway Substation. Primary siting considerations in the eastern portion of this segment were avoidance of irrigated farmland, dairy operations, and scattered residential development; avoidance of interference with the Jarbidge Military Operating Area; making use of the WWE corridor; and minimizing impacts to visual resources. In the western portion of Segment 9, the area near to and within the SRBOP, following existing transmission lines was a primary objective. Other concerns included minimizing impact to Bruneau Dunes State Park and scenic qualities associated with the Bruneau River, avoiding conflicts with the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Military Operating Area, the Cove non-motorized area, the Oregon Trail and SRMA, the C.J. Strike SRMA, the Snake River SRMA, additional historic sites, sage-grouse leks, and crossing the SRBOP. For the entire line segment, placement of the transmission line on public land versus private land was an important issue with local stakeholders. Route 8H follows the same alignment as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route through the SRBOP. Eight other routes were considered in the 2013 FEIS.

Other Routes: Route 8H would follow the same alignment as the Revised Proposed Route in this area and would therefore cross the same AOI (BOP-1). Routes 9K, FEIS

[3] Formerly named the Orchard Training Area.

Proposed 9, and 8G would not cross any AOIs in this RMP area. Neither Co-Preferred Alternative (Alternatives 2 and 5) would include the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route or Route 8H; therefore, no amendments are proposed. The visual analyses for amendments that would be needed if one of these routes were selected (under Alternatives 1, 6, or 7) are presented below.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed. Therefore, Project objectives would not be met, but no Project-related plan amendments would be required.

Three VRM Class II management areas are crossed by the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H: one near the C.J. Strike Reservoir, one near Sinker Butte, and another at the South Alternative Oregon Trail. The presence of a transmission line in these landscapes would not meet VRM Class II management objectives. To construct the proposed transmission line following the alignment for the Revised Proposed Route/8H, BLM action would be necessary to either modify visual classifications or allow the Project without changing the VRM class in order for the Project to be in conformance with the RMP. However, it was determined during the 2013 FEIS process that allowing the Project in the SRBOP would not meet the intent of the enabling statute of the SRBOP. The Proponents prepared an MEP, and additional recommendations were made by BLM resource managers in an effort to provide sufficient mitigation and enhancement opportunities to balance the effects of an additional transmission line. These included other habitat and resource improvements such that the Project could potentially be built without being in conflict with the enabling statute. These mitigation actions and additional measures are discussed in the SEIS.

The AOIs are described below in Sections 5.3.1 through 5.3.3.

5.3.1 AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail (Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H)

The South Oregon Trail AOI is located north and south of the Snake River, beginning at the C.J. Strike Reservoir dam. This AOI overlaps both the SRBOP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route leaves the FEIS Proposed 9 near Bruneau, Idaho, heading northwest for about 6 miles before intercepting the C.J. Strike Reservoir, at the junction of the Bruneau River and the Snake River. Land surrounding the reservoir has been designated as VRM Class II due to its scenic qualities and close proximity to the Oregon NHT. The route turns west, paralleling the Oregon NHT, and crossing the western end of the Narrows portion of the Bruneau Arm of C.J. Strike Reservoir, again as a double-circuit design. The route then continues in a general westerly direction on the south side of the reservoir, crossing back to the north side of the Snake River approximately 0.5 mile downstream from the C.J. Strike Reservoir dam. Except for minor detours to avoid agricultural land, the route continues west from the dam then turns to the northwest, crossing the SRBOP before re-joining the Proposed Route east of Hemingway Substation. Although not located within a WWE corridor, this route generally follows existing transmission lines. The portion of the AOI within the SRBOP RMP crosses a 330-acre parcel for 0.4 mile, a 587-acre parcel for 0.6 mile, a 195-acre parcel for 0.7 mile, a 142-acre parcel for 0.4 mile, and the western portion of a 3,859-acre parcel for 3 miles of land managed for VRM Class II objectives. A small parcel of VRM Class II just north of this area would also be crossed

for 0.3 mile. Figure 5.3-2 shows the viewshed of the South Oregon Trail AOI, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H, and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.3-3 shows the AOI and amendment management recommendations.

5.3.1.1 Other Routes Considered

The 2013 FEIS analyzed the Proposed Route and eight alternative routes in the western portion of Segment 9 as a means of connecting the Cedar Hill and Hemingway Substations. The 2013 FEIS Proposed Route is largely within the WWE corridor but crosses more private land than some other routes. The 2013 FEIS Routes 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H are variations on an alignment identified by the Owyhee County Task Force and recommended by Owyhee County as its preferred route to avoid private land and maximize the use of public land. This alignment and substantially deviates from the designated WWE corridor and would cross the SRBOP. Route adjustments were made to avoid sage-grouse leks and non-motorized areas as well as other resources such as reducing impacts to the Oregon NHT. Routes 9K, 8G, and FEIS Proposed 9 avoid this area, as does FEIS Route 9E.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.3.1.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the South Oregon Trail AOI. The river crosses the middle of the area from west to east and leaves the study area in the vicinity of Indian Cove. C.J. Strike Reservoir is located at the northern end of the Bruneau Valley in the center of the area. The topography is generally flat to rolling with numerous drainages. Although much of the area is undeveloped, there are large areas of farms and farmland along the Snake River, south of Mountain Home, and the Bruneau Valley and Twentymile Flat. SR 78 is the major road and generally follows the Snake River east to west. SR 51 extends north to south though the area. Communities, such as Grandview and Bruneau, are located along local highways and the Snake River. Mountain Home Air Force Base is located in the northeast portion of the study area. Numerous transmission lines cross this area. Potential viewing areas include highways, communities, historic sites and trails, and recreation areas such as Bruneau Dunes State Park. In the eastern portion of the AOI, a double-circuit structure would replace the existing structures. The surrounding landscape here is flat with buttes in the background. The existing structures are highly visible in the landscape.

Appendix E, Figure E.2-10a shows the existing landscape from KOP 1155 (also referred to as KOP C1155). This view represents the view of recreational users of the BLM's Cove Recreation Site at the C.J. Strike Reservoir and of the Oregon NHT. The KOP is located at the intersection of Route 78 and a graded gravel/dirt road. The views of the relatively flat to undulating terrain with plateau silhouettes in the background exhibit diversity in form line and texture. Existing human-made features include roads, agricultural field, and a wood-pole H-frame in the middleground and background. The trail swales are also visible in the view to the left.

Appendix E, Figure E.2-11a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1156. The area consists of rolling terrain that slopes toward the reservoir. An existing wood pole H-frame transmission line is evident in the view. More distant views toward the north are characterized by water and bluffs.

Appendix E, Figure E.1-3a shows the existing landscape from KOP C137, located on a portion of the Oregon Trail. The resource at this location consists of a deep swale 15 to 17 feet wide, as well as a shallow swale approximately 10 feet wide running parallel, and is marked with Carsonite posts (see Appendix J of this SEIS). Multiple existing power lines are highly visible from this location.

5.3.1.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.3-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Scenic views of the C.J. Strike Reservoir and the surrounding Snake River Plain are available to sensitive recreational viewers at nearby locations including KOPs 1154 and 1156 and visitors to the Oregon NHT (KOP 1155). The views of the undulating to rocky terrain from these viewpoints exhibit diversity in form, line, and texture. Developments, such as high-voltage transmission lines and a dam, are in view as well. From these KOPs, it is apparent that the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would be visible in the foreground and middleground, sometimes skylined and at other times backdropped. In this location, the existing wood pole H-frame line would be replaced with a double-circuit 138/500-kV line.

Appendix E, Figure E.2-10b simulates the view from KOP 1155. High-sensitivity recreational viewers at KOP 1155 would have a high level of Project visibility (less than 0.5 mile from the Revised Proposed Route). The viewer would have an expansive view toward the alignment, which would not parallel any existing alignments or linear features and has the potential to skyline the view due to background terrain being too small of a scale to adequately absorb structures. The Project's design shares some similarities with existing structures in the area but would introduce new elements that are of different form and color. Due to the existing structures in the south, the distance of KOP 1155 from the Revised Proposed Route, and the cumulative effect of adding new structures in an area with numerous vertical human-made elements, the contrast for this KOP is assessed as moderate. The Project's elements would draw the attention of the casual observer but would not dominate the setting. Potential visual impacts on recreational viewers and drivers from this KOP and in the general vicinity are expected to be moderate to high due to the Project creating a new highly visible linear feature of high contrast in a landscape with moderate to high scenic quality.

Appendix E, Figure E.2-11b simulates the landscape conditions, showing the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1156. High-sensitivity recreational viewers at KOP 1156 would have a moderate level of Project visibility (approximately 0.4 mile from the Revised Proposed Route). The viewer would have a partially screened view toward the alignment, which would parallel an existing alignment. Contrast levels are anticipated to be low to moderate. Potential visual impacts on recreational viewers from this KOP and in the general vicinity are expected to be moderate due to existing disturbance, partial screening, and Class B scenic quality.

Screening and other mitigation efforts would be only moderately successful at lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The undulating and rugged terrain with mottled and diverse vegetation and the expansive waters of the reservoir would be moderately contrasted by an additional set of structures.

Appendix E, Figure 1-3b simulates the view from KOP C137. This view represents those of visitors to the Oregon NHT. The location is not in the more heavily used recreational locations but does represent a historic resource. The simulated view includes replacement of the existing H-pole structure with the double circuit structures. These would be larger than the existing structures and be highly visible from the KOP, with the nearest tower one-tenth of a mile away. These structures would be highly visible to the casual observer and create contrast with the existing landscape; however, due to existing cultural modifications, they would not reduce the overall Scenic Quality Rating for the cultural Analysis Unit (see Appendix J of the SEIS). These modifications, however, would not conform to the VRM Class II designation.

These additions would draw the attention of the casual observer and represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture of the surrounding landscape; and therefore would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It would appear that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor and adjacent landscapes.

5.3.1.4 Plan Amendment for Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H

The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H include a 500-kV transmission line, as well as moving a 138-kV line into a double-circuit configuration through part of the AOI. Neither of these configurations would be compatible with VRM Class II objectives; therefore, the VRM Class II areas associated with the Oregon NHT and Snake River Canyon scenic areas that would be crossed by the transmission line, where the line would not conform to VRM Class II objectives, would be reclassified to be managed with VRM Class III objectives (see Figure 5.3-3).

5.3.2 AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte (Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H)

The Sinker Butte AOI is located about 20 miles south of Kuna, Idaho, on the western portion of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1) and Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7). This route is a variation of the routes developed through the SRBOP for the 2013 FEIS. FEIS Routes 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H were developed to address recommendations from Owyhee County Taskforce and Owyhee County and providing options to avoid the Cove non-motorized area and other cultural resource considerations. The primary County siting criteria were avoidance of private land and maximizing the use of public land. In the vicinity of Sinker Butte, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route crosses Swan Falls Reservoir about 2 miles south of Swan Falls Dam. In this section of the Sinker Butte AOI, the route crosses one 16,759-acre parcel for a distance of approximately 3.6 miles on land managed by the BLM for VRM Class II objectives to protect scenic views of the Snake River and the area around the Oregon NHT. The RMP designates visual resource management for both the Oregon NHT and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II. Figure 5.3-4 shows the location of the Sinker Butte AOI, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route, and the associated VRM Class II

lands. Figure 5.3-5 shows the location of the AOI area, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H, and the associated VRM Class II lands.

5.3.2.1 Other Routes Considered

Siting considerations for the part of the AOI crossed by the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H are the same as for the South Oregon Trail AOI described in Section 5.3.1 above. In addition, the BLM, Owyhee Task Force, and Proponents focused on the specific crossing of the Snake River north of the Swan Falls Dam and closer to an existing transmission line crossing. The selected alignment results in crossing land managed for VRM Class II objectives that could not be avoided. The 2013 FEIS Proposed Routes for Segment 8 and 9 and Routes 8B and 9E would avoid the VRM Class II lands surrounding Sinker Butte AOI. In addition, Routes 8G, 9K, and the 2013 FEIS Segment 9 Preferred Route would avoid this area as they, like FEIS Route 9E, would avoid crossing the SRBOP in this area.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.3.2.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The 15-mile-radius area surrounding the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H crossing of Sinker Butte AOI is bisected from northwest to southeast by the Snake River and its many buttes (see Figure 5.3-4). North and east of the river, the topography is mostly flat, while to the south and west, it is more rolling and rises up to the Owyhee Mountains. After crossing the Snake River, the route travels through the SRBOP where the landscape is flat to undulating, interrupted by buttes and rock features. The route would parallel the Oregon NHT for much of its length within the AOI. Most of the area is undeveloped; however, there are large irrigated agricultural areas with many farms in the area where Ada, Canyon, and Owyhee Counties come together near Murphy and at other scattered locations. SR 78 passes northwest to southeast on the west side of the Snake River. SR 45, located on the east side of the river, intersects SR 78 at Walters Ferry. There are a number of small communities such as Murphy and Melba and much of the area on both sides of the river is part of the SRBOP. Sensitive viewers include motorists, local residents, and visitors to the SRBOP, historic trails, and historic sites. Scenic views along the Snake River adjacent to Sinker Butte, such as those represented by KOPs 1115 and 1352, are important to sensitive residential viewers. Visitors to the Oregon Trail would be less than half a mile from the Project at KOP C91, and approximately 1.12 miles away at KOP C1527. Views from KOP 1597 represent the views of residential viewers on Warrick Road, looking north toward Sinker Butte. Open, panoramic views of the rocky terrain of buttes adjacent to the Snake River canyon, with little human-made development, are considered to have moderate to high scenic quality. Aesthetic landscape elements in the middleground views have variations of form, line, color, and texture, which increase the scenic quality. Few visible human-made alterations are visible within the landscape, which enhances the scenic quality.

Appendix J, Attachment D, Figure D-12a represents the view of visitors to the Oregon NHT. The resource includes at least two swales at this location (8 feet wide and up to 10 inches deep) marked with Carsonite posts. A two-track road is within the swale.

The landscape at this location is flat to gently rolling in the foreground and middle-ground with a mesa visible in the distant background. The vegetation is dominated by sagebrush with no high vertical elements.

Appendix E, Figure E.2-14a represents those views from KOP 1337 of recreational viewers at a scenic lookout adjacent to Swan Falls Dam looking southeast toward Sinker Butte across the Snake River. Open panoramic views of the rugged canyon terrain and meandering water feature are considered to have high scenic quality due to the variety in form, line, color, and texture as well as the scarcity of such views in the surrounding region.

Attachment B, Figure B-8 shows the existing conditions as viewed from KOP 1115.

5.3.2.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.3-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency of the proposed transmission line with the existing VRM Class II land crossed for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route. Appendix J, Attachment D, Figure D-12b simulates the view of visitors to the NHT or users of the two-track road that is aligned with the trail at this location. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H would be visible in the middleground as a new vertical element in the landscape. There would be little to no screening from landscape elements at this location. Appendix E, Figure E.14-2b simulates the view for high-sensitivity recreational viewers visiting the overlook above Swan Falls Dam at KOP 1337 who would have a moderate level of Project visibility from approximately 1.3 miles away, looking southwest toward the Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H, which represents a foreground view. The presence of the existing transmission lines and Sinker Butte in the view toward Segment 9 would result in co-dominant Project elements and partial screening, resulting in contrast levels that would be moderate. Visual impacts on recreational viewers would be moderate due to distance and contrast levels.

As viewed from KOPs 1115, 1352, C1514, and C1527, the landscape around AOI BOP-2 exhibits little diversity in form, line, color, and texture. Views of the Snake River are not apparent from this area. Residential viewers at KOP 1115 would have low-moderate impact to their views due to distance and partial screening. The proposed structures and access roads would result in low to moderate contrast with the undulating to flat terrain with blocky mesas and uniform vegetation and would not draw the attention of the casual observer from locations such as KOP 1352 over a mile away from the line. In this particular area, the distance of the Project from the viewer is an important factor impacting contrast levels but would still not meet VRM Class II objectives. Visual impacts to cultural resources on the Oregon NHT would occur and are represented by KOP C91; viewers on the trail would be less than half a mile from the Project. In addition, residential viewers on Warrick Road (KOP 1597) would have a high level of Project visibility, and visual contrast levels would be high due to the few human-made alterations and distance of the Project alignment. The rolling topography in the vicinity as well as distant mountainous silhouettes may offer opportunities for backdropping, which could absorb the lattice structures and lower contrast levels but not likely from this close distance. Visual impacts on viewers would be high.

If the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H is selected, structures should be microsited to minimize the visibility from the VRM Class II area. A 500-kV powerline would not be compatible with VRM Class II objectives. If this route is selected, it is recommended that the VRM Class II areas associated with the Snake River Canyon and Sinker Butte scenic areas that would be crossed by the route be reclassified to be managed with VRM Class III objectives.

5.3.2.4 Plan Amendment for Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H

Due to the proximity of the Oregon NHT, there is a potential for a fairly high visual impact from this route and therefore it would not conform to the VRM Class II objectives. An amendment would be needed for this routing under Alternatives 1, 6, and 7. If this route is selected, it is recommended that an area 250 feet from the centerline of the transmission line be reclassified to VRM Class III. This corridor would maintain a distance of at least 0.5 mile around the NHT, except where it crosses the trail. Micrositing should be used to lessen visual impacts as much as possible.

5.3.3 AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte (Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H)

The Guffey Butte AOI is located about 10 miles east of Hemingway Substation where several proposed and additional routes for Segments 8 and 9 of the 2013 FEIS come together. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1)/Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7) crosses the Guffey Butte AOI. This AOI is where the route crosses an 11,517-acre parcel of VRM Class II lands for 5.6 miles. This alignment is south of the area crossed by the 2013 FEIS Proposed Route for Segment 8 (which crossed the parcel for 4.2 miles), just south of FEIS Route 9D (which crossed the parcel for 3.7 miles) and similar to, but just north of, FEIS Route 9G (which crossed the parcel for 5.3 miles).

Figure 5.3-6 shows the viewshed for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H. Figure 5.3-7 shows the location of the Guffey Butte AOI, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H, and the VRM Class II lands with amendment management recommendations.

5.3.3.1 Other Routes Considered

The 2013 FEIS discussed the rationale for the alignments for routes crossing the SRBOP. Constraints considered in the development of those routes included avoiding areas of increasing development north of the Snake River, Centennial Park, and visual impacts to the Snake River and provide alternate routing if FEIS Route 8E was selected. Other concerns involved avoiding non-motorized areas and maximizing use of public land. Crossing of land managed for VRM objectives would be avoided by selecting Route 9K (Co-Preferred Alternative 5, and Alternative 3) or FEIS Proposed 9 (Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 4), which avoid crossing the SRBOP in this area.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.3.3.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The 15-mile-radius area surrounding the Guffey Butte AOI is bisected from northwest to southeast by the Snake River. North and east of the river, the topography is mostly flat, while to the south and west it is more rolling and rises up to the Owyhee Mountains. Most of the area is undeveloped; however, there are large irrigated agricultural areas with many farms in the area where Ada, Canyon, and Owyhee Counties come together near Murphy and at other scattered locations. SR 78 passes northwest-southeast through the area on the west side of the Snake River. SR 45, which is located in the northwestern part of the study area, intersects SR 78 at Walters Ferry. There are a number of small communities such as Murphy and Melba, and much of the area on both sides of the river is part of the SRBOP.

This route would cross undulating terrain containing buttes and other rock features. The alignment would cross north of the town of Murphy as well as land near Murphy Rim. KOP C132 is looking northwest towards the alignment for Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route. The foreground and middleground are flat with buttes and undulating landforms in the background.

Appendix E, Figure E.1-1a illustrates the existing landscape as viewed from KOP C132 with flat terrain in the foreground and middleground and buttes and undulating landforms in the background. There is minimal evidence of human disturbance.

Appendix E, Figure E.1-2a illustrates the existing landscape as viewed from KOP C133. This KOP is located on the eastern branch of a segment of the Oregon NHT – South Alternate route within the SRBOP, approximately one mile north of where it forks, following Rabbit Creek to the northeast. This portion of the trail continues north following Rabbit Creek. The KOP is approximately 0.2 mile south of the nearest tower for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route.

Appendix J, Attachment D, Figure D-7a represents the view from the NHT where the line would cross. The resource includes a subtle swale, measuring 3 inches deep and 6 feet wide, with some braiding (see Appendix J). The foreground is flat to subtle rolling topography with scattered shrubs and low grasses while the middle and distance are dominated by the mesa topography with low vegetation. No strong vertical features are present in the landscape.

Attachment B, Figure B-9 shows another view from KOP C90 emphasizing the Oregon Trail ruts.

5.3.3.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.3-6 shows the viewsheds, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency of the proposed transmission line with the existing VRM Class II land crossed. Appendix E, Figures E.1-1b and E.1-2b simulate the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H in the existing landscape as viewed from KOPs C132 and C133, respectively. Due to the Project's proximity to these KOPs and the introduction of new elements to the resource's viewshed to the north, the VCR for this KOP is assessed as strong. The proposed Project elements from this alignment may dominate the setting or may draw the attention of the casual observer; therefore, there would be an adverse impact to the resource from the

Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H at this location. Appendix J, Attachment D, Figure D-7b simulates the view from faint swales where it crosses the NHT at KOP C1415. The line would be highly visible at this location, with the nearest tower approximately 400 feet away. The towers and conductors would attract the attention of the casual observer and would contrast with the existing elements. One tower would be in the near middleground while another would be skylined along the ridge of a nearby mesa.

Scenic views in the Striker Basin of Guffey Butte and the surrounding mountainous terrain are important to sensitive viewers such as hikers at the BLM trailhead (KOP 561) and the adjacent residences. From this vantage point, views of the Project would be partially screened, however, the Revised Proposed Route would still not conform to VRM Class II objectives due to some skylining structures that would be apparent in the middleground of the view. It would also contrast with the undulating silhouette lines and mottled vegetation. The alignment would cross north of the town of Murphy and could be visible along Murphy Rim. Additionally, the alignment would parallel NHTs and cross VRM Class II lands near historic sites (see Figure 5.3-7). The structures for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would contrast with the pyramidal forms as well as the flat to rolling expanse of the existing landscape. Contrast with form and texture as well as proximity to historic sites would draw the attention of the casual observer, thus not conforming to VRM Class II objectives.

5.3.3.4 Plan Amendments for Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H

If the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1)/Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7) is selected, an amendment would be needed for the Project to comply with the SRBOP RMP. A 500-kV powerline would not be compatible with VRM Class II objectives; therefore, a corridor 250 feet from the centerline of the proposed powerline would be established with a Class III VRM. This corridor would maintain a distance of at least 0.5 mile from the NHT, except where it crosses the trail. Micrositing may be needed to ensure a proper buffer distance from the NHTs. If the route is selected, it is recommended that the Proponents be required to microsite structures to minimize the visibility.

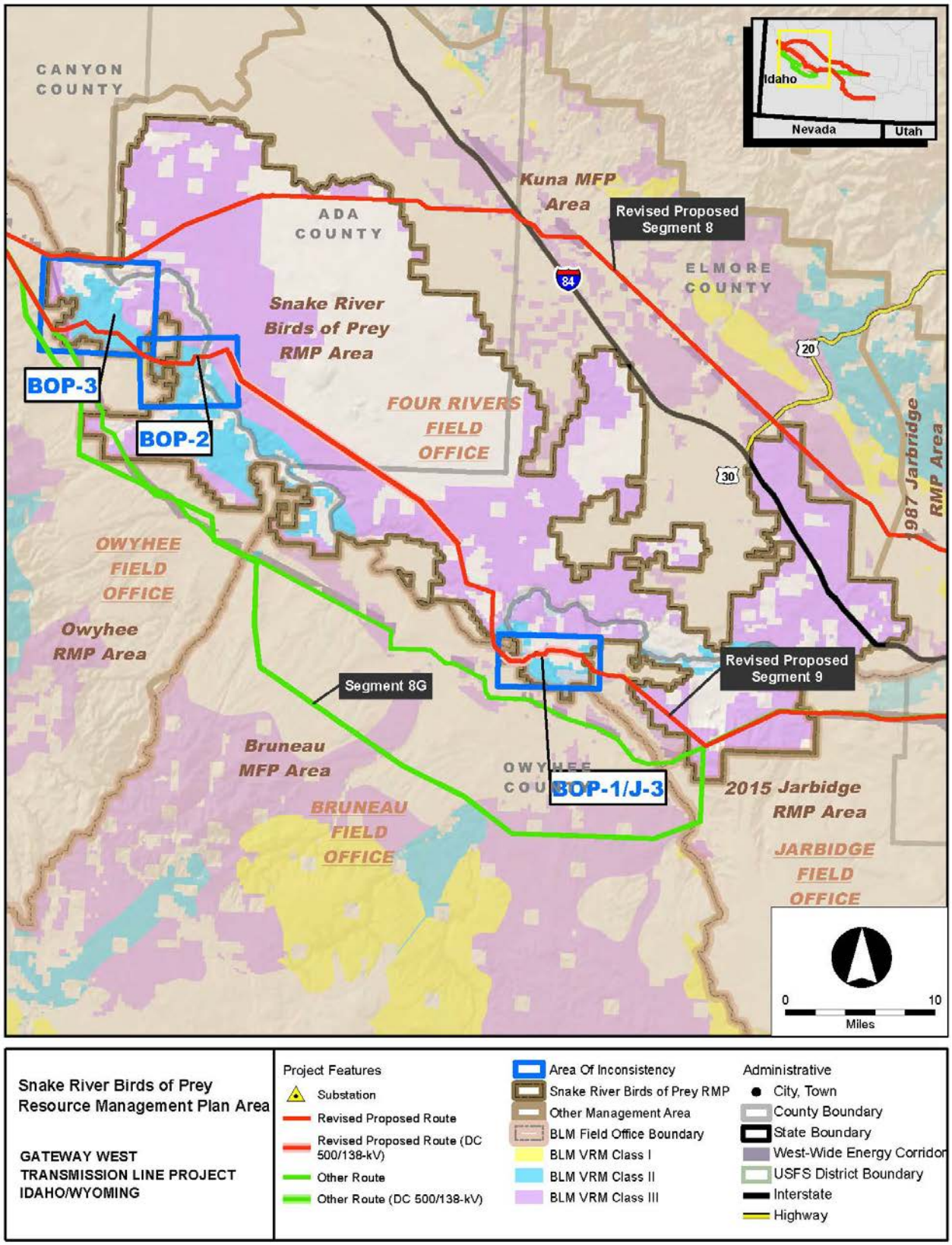


Figure 5.3-1. SRBOP RMP Boundary Map

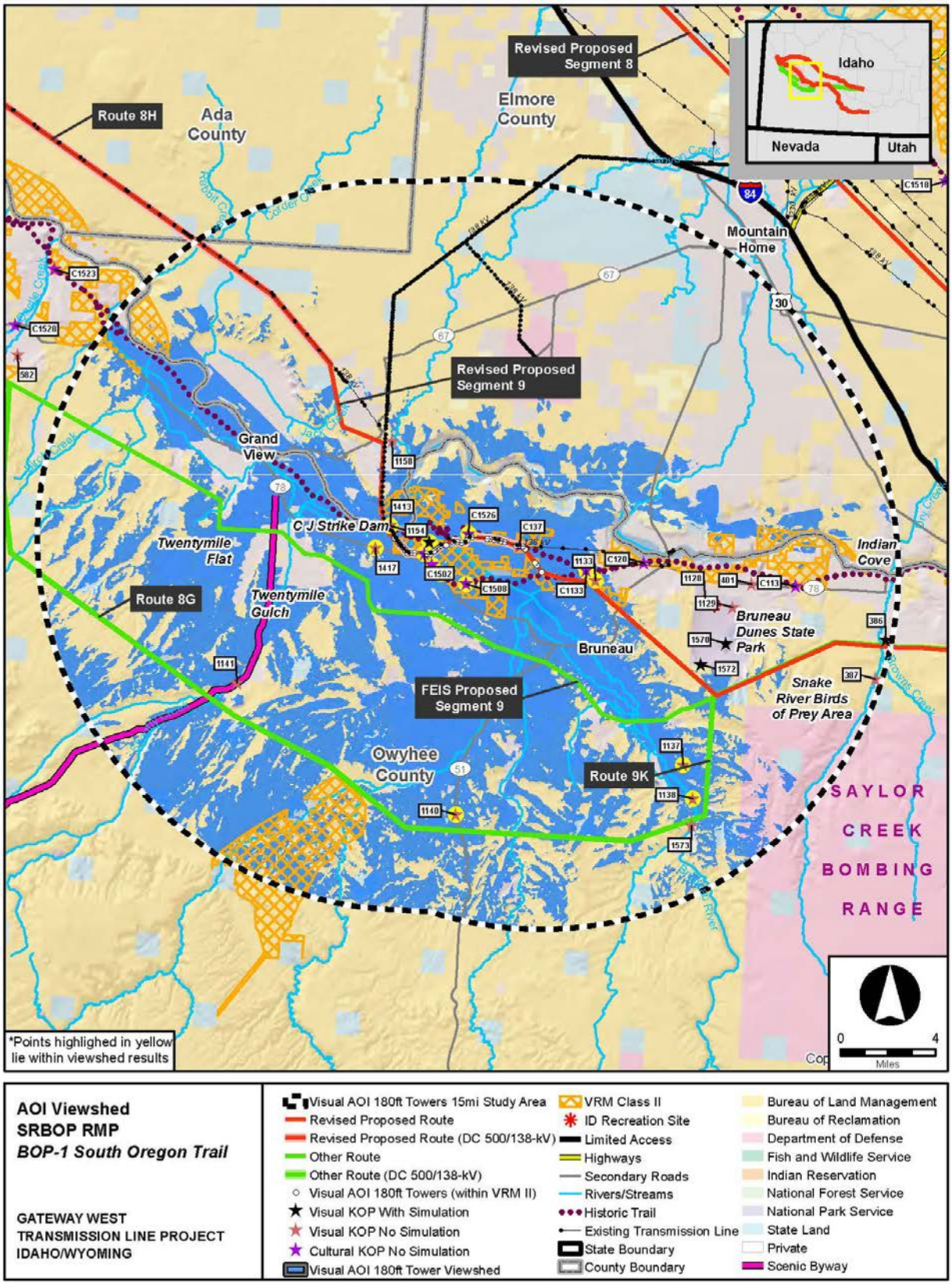


Figure 5.3-2. AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail Visual Analysis for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H

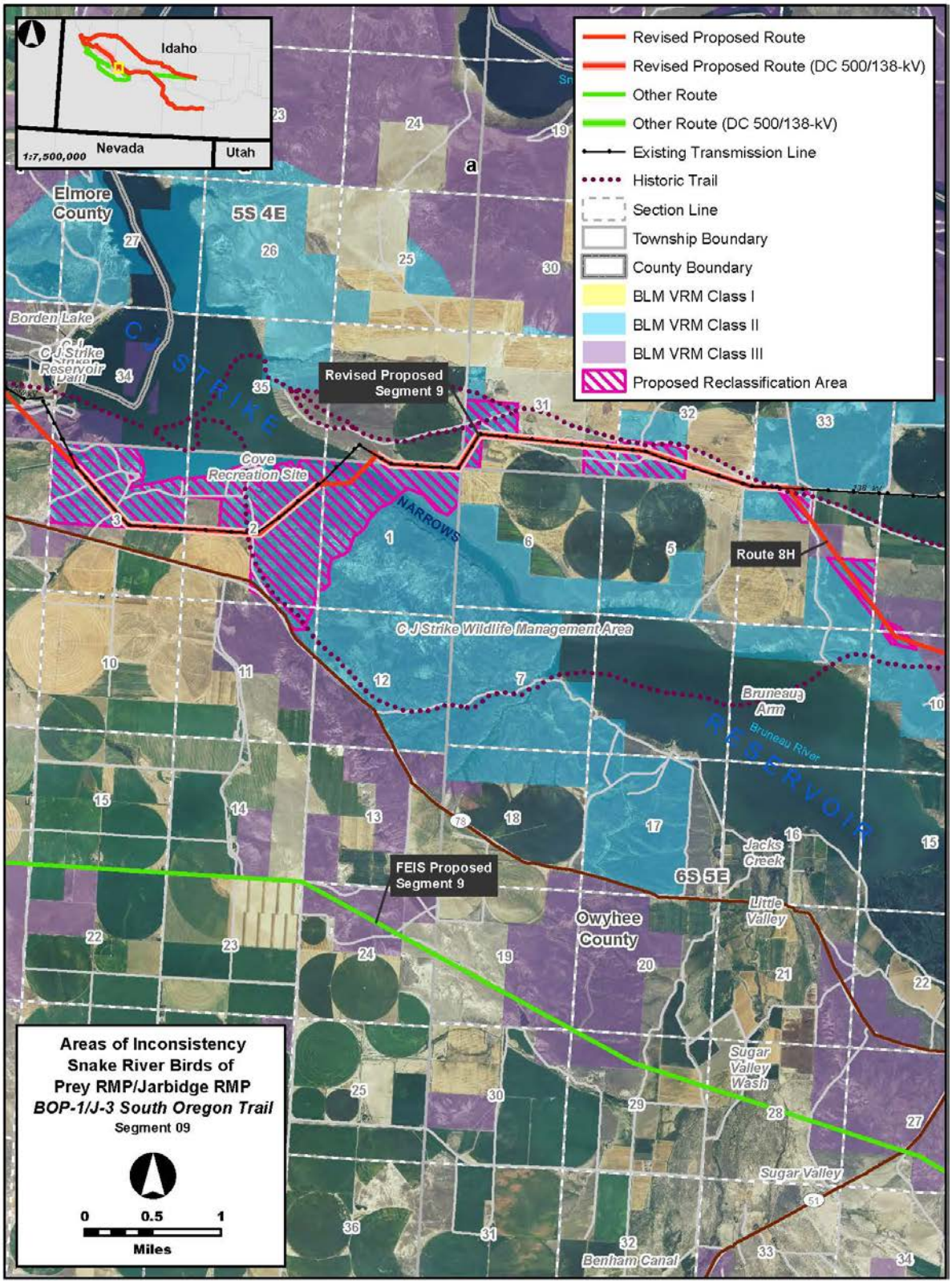


Figure 5.3-3. AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-18 within the SRBOP RMP Planning Area

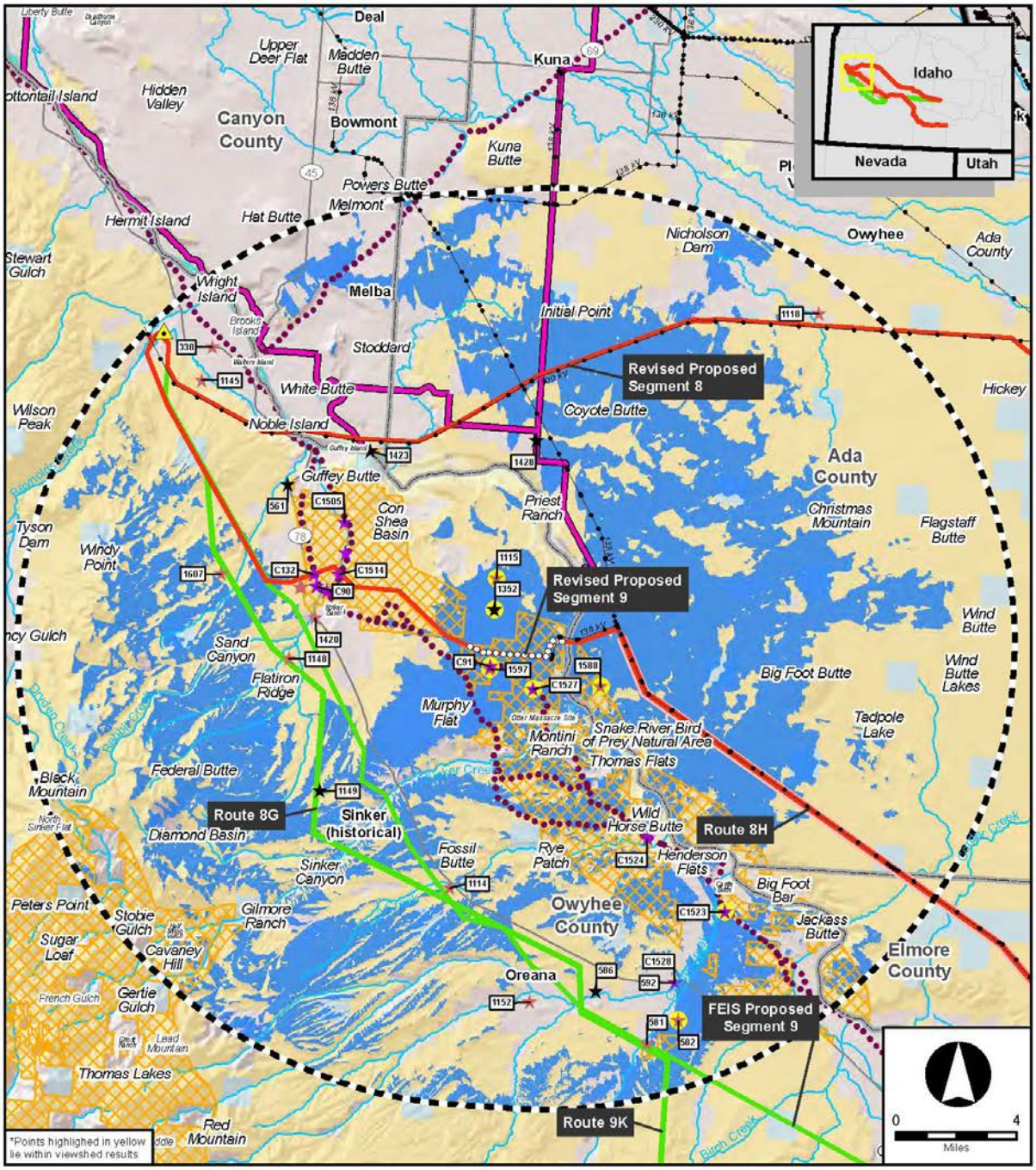


Figure 5.3-4. AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte Visual Analysis for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H

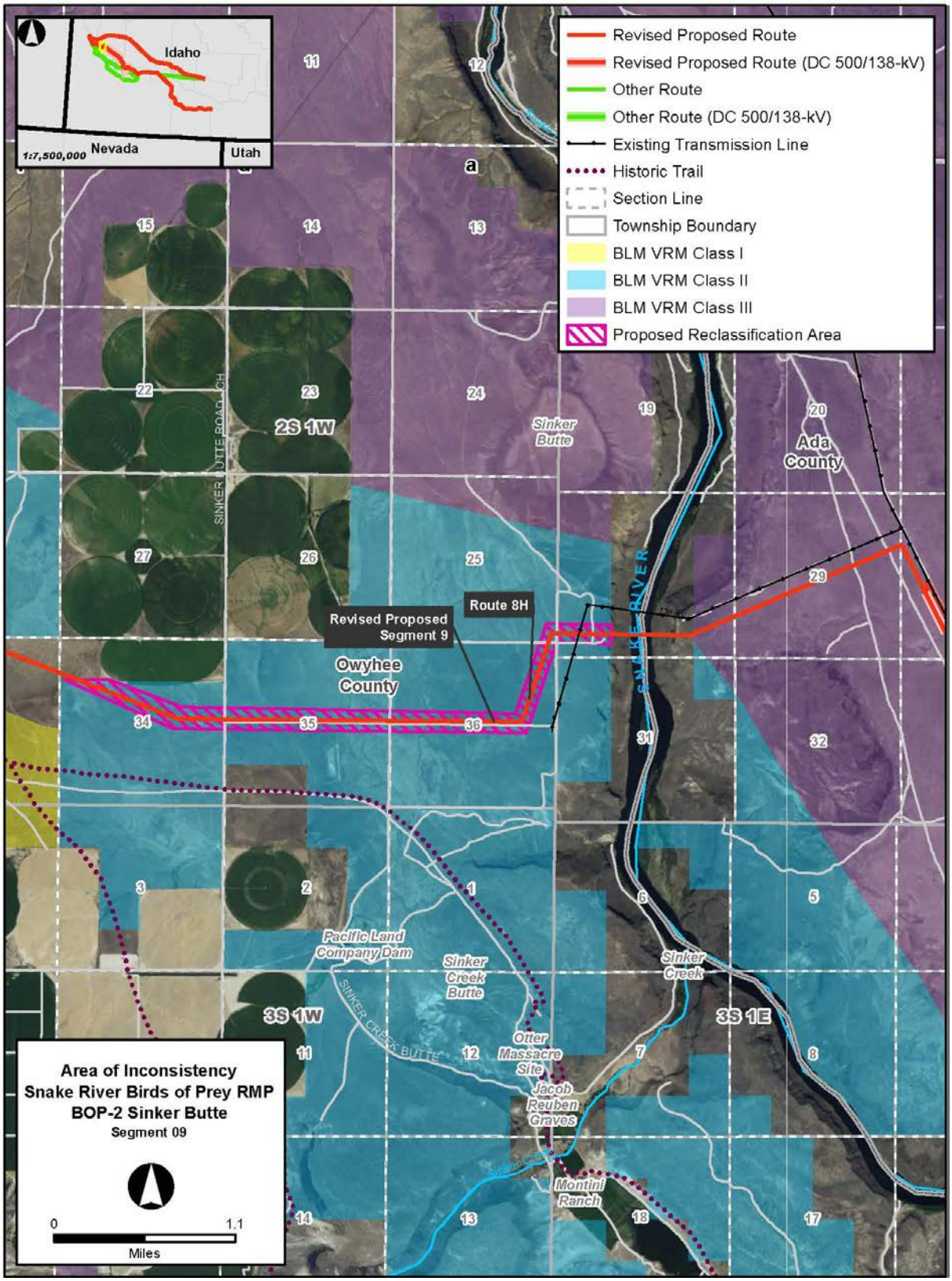


Figure 5.3-5. AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-15 within the SRBOP RMP Planning Area

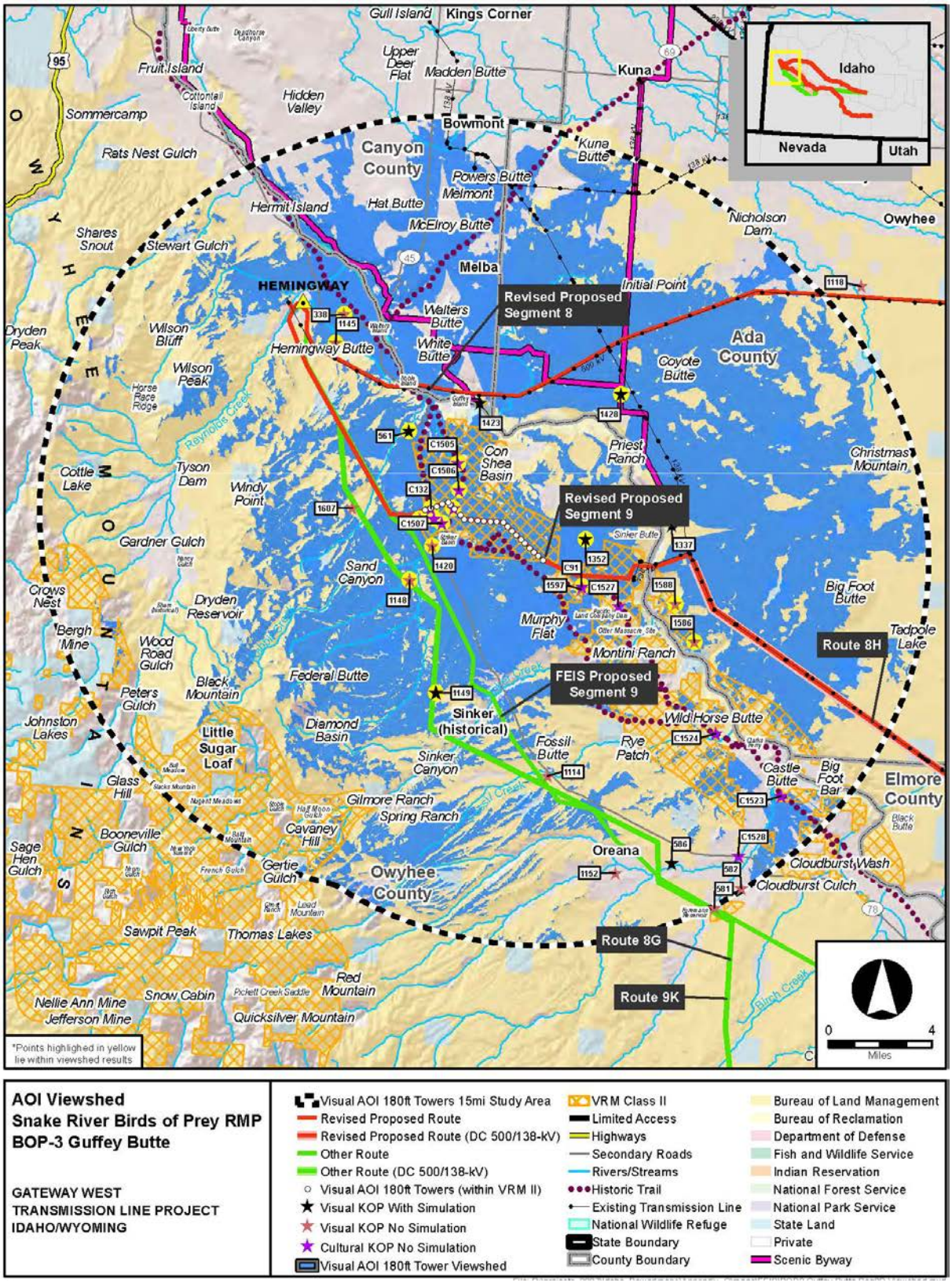


Figure 5.3-6. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte Visual Analysis for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H

Figure 5.3-7. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-15 within the SRBOP RMP Planning Area

5.4 Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP (BLM 1980) provides direction for management of Public Land within its boundaries under the jurisdiction of the Shoshone Field Office in south-central Idaho. The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Planning Area consists of approximately 892,000 acres in Blaine, Camas, Elmore, Gooding, and Lincoln Counties (see Figure 5.4-1). The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP includes objectives and recommendations for the following activities: lands, minerals, recreation, wildlife, range management, and watershed management.

The MFP includes Recreation Objective R-4, with a stated goal to "Manage the visual resources within the Planning Area in conformance with the guidance in BLM Manual 63l0.l8 B-E." BLM Manual 6310.18 states that the cited guidance is to be used as tentative minimum management objectives. If these objectives can be met, no further or more detailed objectives are considered necessary. The following classifications appear in the MFP, which are equivalent to the BLM visual classes presented in Section 1.0 of this appendix.

> "R-4.1 VRM Class II As a guideline, no management activity should be allowed to cause any evident changes in the form, line, color, or texture that is characteristic of the landscape within Class II areas, utilizing concealment, repetition of elements, minimizing surface disturbance, etc. to meet the goal.
>
> R-4.2 VRM Class III As a goal, management activities may cause changes in the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) of the characteristic landscape, but the changes should remain subordinate to the existing visual character. Incorporate the methodology outlined in BLM Manual 6320 Visual Resource Contrast Rating.
>
> R-4.3 VRM Class IV Changes caused by management activities may subordinate the original character but should reflect what could be a natural occurrence within the characteristic landscape."

Approximately 15.7 miles of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would cross BLM-administered land managed under the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, 6.5 miles of which cross VRM Class II lands, which would not conform to the VRM objectives within the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge was identified as an AOI because the Project would not conform to VRM Class II objectives for this area. Typically, the level of change to the characteristic landscape in VRM Class II areas would not allow for the presence of a transmission line.

Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Co-Preferred Alternative 2, and Alternatives 1 and 3): An amendment is proposed for AOI BH-1 for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route to change the VRM classification from VRM Class II to Class III.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is a 129.7-mile route north of the Snake River that connects the Midpoint and Hemingway Substations. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would be constructed as single circuit 500-kV line. A key issue in Segment 8 is balancing between disturbing private agricultural land and publicly managed land with more resource constraints. Constraints on publicly managed land include historic trails, wetlands, steep slopes, and raptor nests. An important siting factor was following existing transmission line corridors. Of the several existing east-

west transmission lines, the Revised Proposed Route follows the existing transmission line with the least overall impact.

Additional Routes: None of the other routes analyzed in the SEIS cross this Field Office.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed. Therefore, Project objectives would not be met, but no Project-related plan amendments would be required.

5.4.1 AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge (Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route)

The Burnt Ridge AOI is in the vicinity of King Hill, Idaho. It is located approximately 30 miles northwest of Midpoint Substation and approximately 3 miles north of Interstate 84. Much of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route in this area was located parallel to existing 230-kV transmission lines. This section of the route, however, also follows portions of the Oregon NHT. The Burnt Ridge AOI passes through four separate parcels of BLM-administered land managed for VRM Class II, ranging in size from 27 acres to 8,249 acres. The Project would cross a total of 6.5 miles of VRM Class II-managed land within the AOI. Figure 5.4-2 shows the location of the Burnt Creek AOI, the location of the Proposed Route, and the VRM management classification.

5.4.1.1 Other Routes Considered

Segment 8 was analyzed in the FEIS with the Proposed Route and five additional feasible routes. The Proponents attempted to avoid residential and agricultural land and to follow the WWE corridor or existing transmission lines when determining the route for Segment 8. The 2013 FEIS Route 8A followed a WWE corridor and would not cross the area managed under the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. The SEIS Routes 8G and 8H would proceed due west, into the Jarbidge RMP Planning Area, and would not cross the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Planning Area. SEIS Route 8H follows the 8G alignment in this area and would therefore also not cross the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Planning Area, but would cross VRM Class II land managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP and SRBOP RMP. In making a balanced routing decision that led to the selection of the proposed and other routes, crossing VRM Class II areas was unavoidable without causing greater overall effects. This AOI occurs for the Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternatives 1 and 3 because all three alternatives include the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.4.1.2 Existing Landscape Conditions

The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the Burnt River AOI. It crosses the southern half of the area from west to southeast, leaving the Study Area in the vicinity of the Hagerman Wildlife Management Area. The flat to rolling topography on both sides of the river is cut by numerous drainages, some with steep, canyon-like walls. The northern part of the area is occupied by the steep terrain of the Mount Bennett Hills. Much of the area in the north is undeveloped. There are large areas of farmland along the Snake River in the southeast as well as Deadman

Flat, Black Mesa, and Pasadena Valley. Interstate 84, the major road in the area, passes east and then southeast through the Study Area. US 26 crosses the study area from east to west; and US 30 crosses north to south. Along these highways and the rivers there are a number of communities including Glenns Ferry, Bliss, and Hagerman. A number of historic trails cross the lower southwest half of the Analysis Area. A swale with shallow ruts is visible as part of the North Alternate Oregon Trail from KOP C85. Wooden H-frame towers are present within 0.25 mile south of KOP C85 and a single wood-pole transmission line is located 2.5 to 3 miles to the north. Numerous transmission lines run southeast to northwest through this area. In addition to the highways and communities, potential viewing areas include recreation areas such as Three Island Crossing State Park.

Attachment A, Figure BH-1a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP C84, which is located on a segment of the North Alternate Oregon Trail and is 0.8 mile southwest of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. In this area, the trail is a two-track road that has been deepened by modern use. The setting contains a wooden, H-frame transmission line and ranching structures within 0.5 mile from the KOP. The topography along the western portion of AOI BH-1 along Segment 8 ranges from essentially flat to severe and canyon-like along King Hill Creek.

Attachment A, Figure BH-1c shows the existing wood pole H-frame transmission line that would be paralleled, as viewed from KOP C85. This KOP is located along the North Alternate Oregon Trail and would be approximately 900 feet northeast of the Revised Proposed Route of Segment 8. South of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route, and moving east, there is a substantial amount of irrigated agriculture and development, whereas north of the segment there is more undeveloped land.

5.4.1.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.4-3 shows the viewshed, KOPs and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to determine the degree of consistency with the existing VRM classification. KOPs C8 and C85 were selected because they are located on the Oregon NHT where VRM Class II objectives were assigned to protect from visual intrusion. Thus, conformance between the Project and visual management goals may be directly assessed.

Attachment A, Figure BH-1b simulates landscape conditions showing the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route as viewed from KOP C84. The Project's design shares some similarities with existing structures in the area but would introduce new elements that are of different form, material, and texture. Due to these factors, the KOP's proximity to the route, and the potential for the elements to blend into the backdrop, the VCR for this KOP is assessed as weak to moderate. The proposed Project elements may draw the attention of the casual observer; therefore, there would be an adverse impact to the resource at this location.

Attachment A, Figure BH-1d shows the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route in relation to an existing H-frame transmission line from KOP C85. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would be located just to the north and parallel to the existing wooden, H-frame transmission line. The Project's design shares some similarities with existing structures in the area, but would introduce new elements that are of different form,

material, and texture. Due to these factors and the KOP's proximity to the route, the VCR for this KOP is assessed as moderate. The proposed Project elements would draw the attention of the casual observer; therefore, there would be an adverse impact to the resource at this location.

Scenic views of Kings Crown and the surrounding area north of King Hill are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers such as sensitive viewers along the Oregon NHT at KOPs C84 and C85. Many of the views in this area, including these particular KOPs, are interrupted by development and human-made features such as high voltage transmission lines and wind towers. Human development has changed the surrounding form, line, and texture of the adjacent views, representing a deviation from the natural setting. From these KOPs it is apparent that there will be some skylining and that screening and other mitigation efforts would not substantially lower the impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The sweeping terrain, undulating forms, strong horizon line, and mottled vegetation are interrupted by existing human development. Impacts to cultural views are considered to be moderate. However, from views in the foreground and middleground, the Proposed Project structures and access roads would draw the attention of the casual observer, and thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

5.4.1.4 Plan Amendment for Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Due to the number of transmission lines and other development in the vicinity, an amendment is proposed for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (in Co-Preferred Alternative 2) to reclassify the area within 3,000 feet north of the existing transmission line ROW from VRM Class II to VRM Class III (including the existing ROW). This VRM designation will better reflect the visual resource conditions of the area and allow the Project to conform to the MFP visual objectives. This amendment would also apply if Alternative 1 or Alternative 3 were selected.

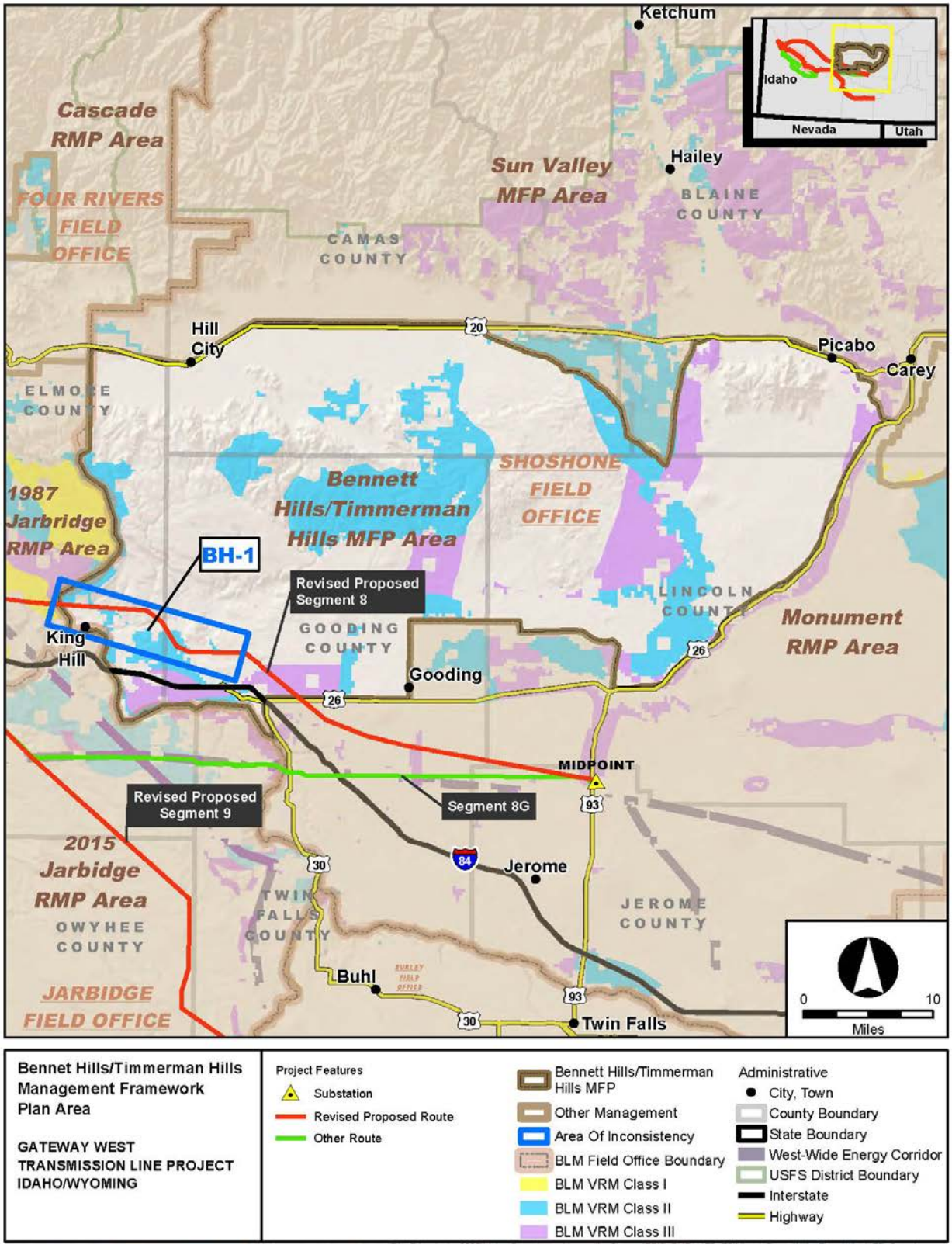


Figure 5.4-1. Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills RMP Boundary Map

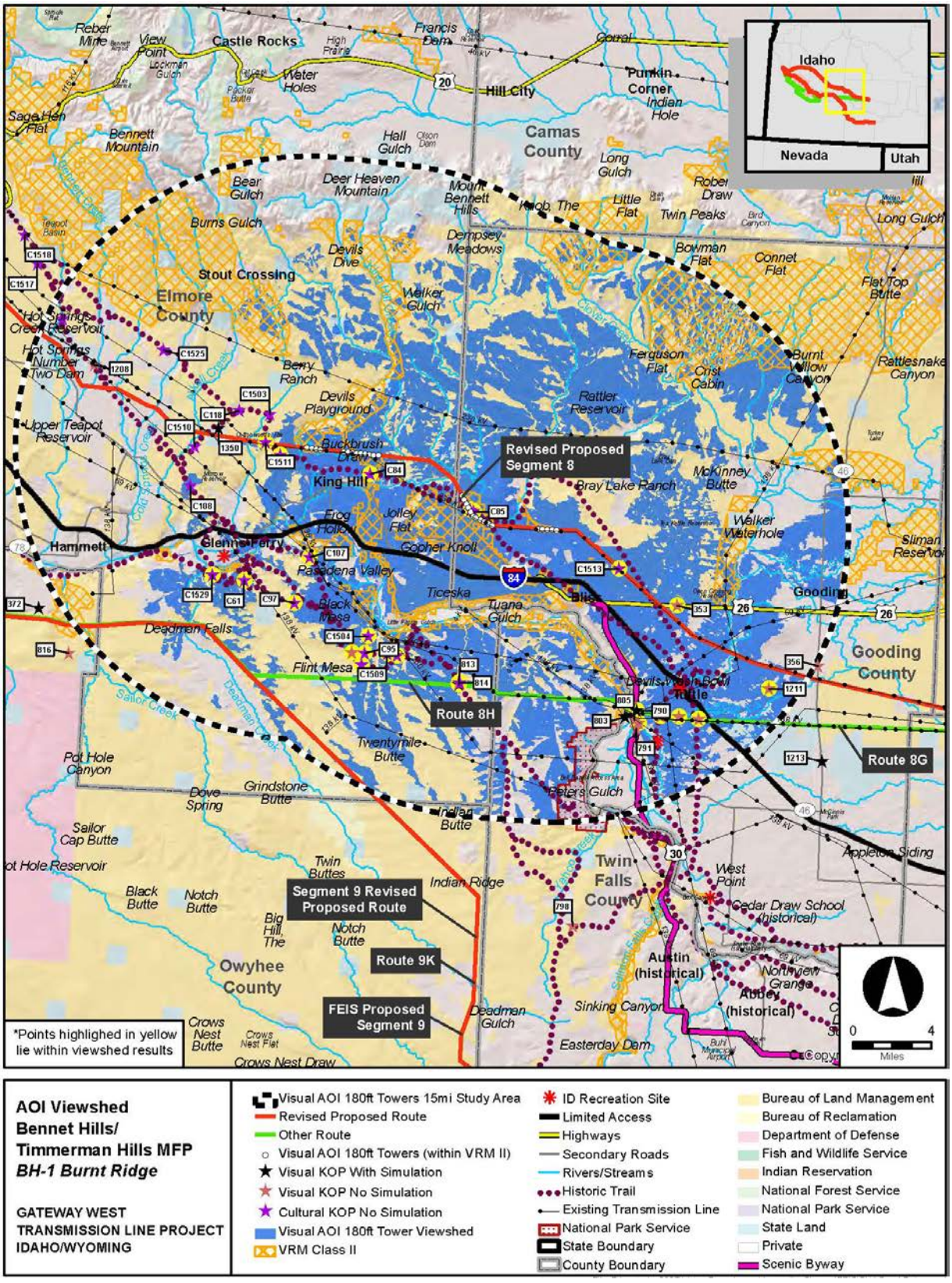


Figure 5.4-2. AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge Visual Analysis for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

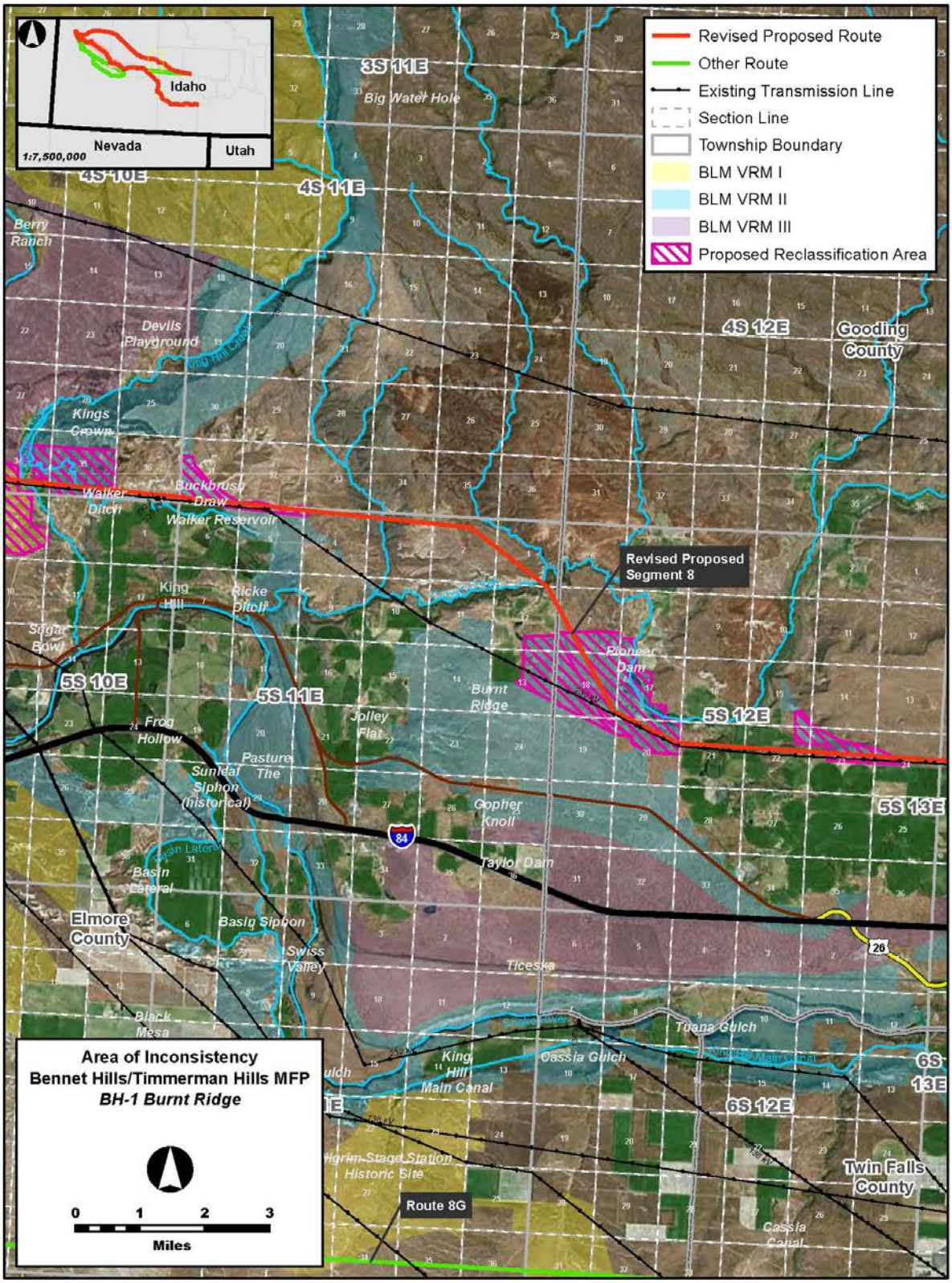


Figure 5.4-3. AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-9 within the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Planning Area

5.5 Bruneau MFP

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Bruneau Field Office, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, are guided by decisions recorded in the Bruneau MFP (BLM 1983b). The Bruneau MFP currently restricts impacts to visual resources. Thus, the proposed Project does not conform to the Bruneau MFP as currently written:

> "Manage all public lands in a manner which will protect and maintain the existing visual qualities, provide for enhancement where consistent with management policies, and provide for rehabilitation of land which presently do not meet the visual quality standards of surrounding lands. Use VRM contrast rating and project application design process for all management activities without unduly reducing commodity production or limiting program effectiveness."

Both of the Co-Preferred Alternatives would cross land managed under the Bruneau MFP. For Co-Preferred Alternative 2, FEIS Proposed 9 crosses an area of VRM Class II land within a Section 368 corridor but would still require an amendment for visual resources. For Co-Preferred Alternative 5, both Routes 8G and 9K would cross the VRM Class II parcel outside of the corridor and an amendment would be required for visual resources.

Revised Proposed Route: The Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes do not cross the Bruneau Field Office, and therefore AOI analysis for the Bruneau MFP is not applicable.

Other Routes: Routes 8G and 9K cross a parcel of VRM Class II land near Castle Creek, just south of the WWE corridor. In general, Routes 8G and 9K follow the WWE corridor on BLM-managed lands but frequently change direction on private segments to avoid rural residences, the small communities of Murphy and Oreana and, as much as possible, cultivated lands. Approximately 0.3 mile of Route 8G would cross VRM Class II land while approximately 0.4 mile of Route 9K would cross the parcel. An amendment would be needed for AOI B-1 to reclassify the VRM designation if they are selected.

FEIS Proposed 9 crosses the same parcel of land as Routes 8G and 9K; however, this alignment crosses the VRM Class II area within the WWE corridor. Approximately 33 miles of FEIS Proposed 9 would cross the area in the Bruneau Field Office within the WWE corridor, 17.6 miles of which are on BLM-managed land and 0.17 mile of which crosses the AOI. This route would also require an amendment associated with AOI B-1 to reclassify the VRM designation if it is selected.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed. Therefore, Project objectives would not be met, but no Project-related plan amendments would be required.

5.5.1 AOI B-1 Castle Creek (Segments 8 and 9 – Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9)

The Bruneau AOI is located on Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 to the east of Castle Creek, approximately 2 miles south of the SRBOP management boundary. Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 would cross a 282-acre VRM Class II parcel for approximately 0.3 mile and 0.4 mile, respectively. This AOI is a relatively isolated

parcel of VRM Class II management within a larger landscape of extensive agriculture, including pivot-irrigation. Figure 5.5-2 shows the viewshed for the Castle Creek AOI; Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9; and the VRM classifications lands.

The VRI lists the area crossed by Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 in this AOI as Scenic Quality Unit 004 – Birch Creek Wash, which has a Scenic Quality Rating of C with low viewer sensitivity. Approximately 9.2 miles of the route would cross this unit, 0.2 mile of which would be in the AOI of VRM Class II. The unit is approximately 125 square miles, 34 square miles of which would be within 5 miles of the route crossing of the AOI. The majority of the land that is within the VRI unit, managed under the Bruneau MFP and within 5 miles of the AOI, is VRM Class IV with some Class III and the Class II of the AOI.

5.5.1.1 Other Routes Considered

The Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes and most of the other 2013 FEIS routes would avoid this AOI; however, the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross substantially more VRM Class II areas within the SRBOP. In the 2013 FEIS, Routes 9D through 9H would avoid this AOI. However, similar to the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9, FEIS Routes 9D and 9F–9H would cross VRM sensitive lands within the SRBOP management area. FEIS Route 9E is south of this AOI and would not cross VRM Class I or II designated lands; however, very little of the route would be within the WWE corridor.

While no amendments would be needed for the No Action Alternative, not constructing the route would not meet the Project objectives.

5.5.1.2 Existing Conditions

The topography in the 15-mile-radius analysis area for AOI B-1 is defined by undulating to dominant ridges and buttes such as Sinker Creek Butte dissected by broad, open valleys and meandering water bodies such as Castle Creek and the Snake River. The central and northern portions of the area have a series of drainages and ridges running north and south into the Snake River. The areas to the southwest of the Snake River Valley are more rugged with severe slopes such as near Red Mountain and Hayden Peak. The majority of the area is extensively farmed with pivot irrigation. Murphy, the most significant community in the area, is located in the north quadrant on the west side of the Snake River. Highway 45, which generally parallels the Snake River, crosses the area from northwest to southeast. An existing transmission lines crosses north to south through the area. Sensitive viewing areas include the Oregon NHT, the Snake River, Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway, Western Heritage Historic Byway, Owyhee Uplands Back Country Byway, Celebration Park, Swan Falls, and residences in Murphy and in the adjacent agricultural areas along the Snake River Plain.

Attachment B, Figure B-10 shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 581. The landscape in the foreground is flat to gently sloping and covered with grasses and riparian vegetation adjacent to Castle Creek. Rolling to rugged hills, such as Red Mountain, are seen in the background. There are visible water elements and a few human-made modifications in view, including Castle Creek Road and farm outbuildings immediately adjacent to the viewer. KOP 581 would be approximately 300 feet

northeast of FEIS Proposed 9 and about 550 and 800 feet northeast of 8G and 9K, respectively. Attachment B, Figure B-11 shows existing landscape conditions looking through the AOI toward the route from KOP 582, approximately 1.3 miles northeast of Routes 8G and 9K, and 1.2 miles northeast of FEIS Proposed 9. The view shows the flat topography in the foreground and middleground with mountains and buttes in the distance.

This AOI is located in the Scenic Quality Rating Unit 004 – Birch Creek Wash of the Bruneau Field Office VRI. The area has a long history of motorcycle racing and past use by the military as a missile base. Sand washes drain to the northeast from higher elevation ranges towards the Snake River throughout. The area has some erosive land features created by sand wash erosion of the sediments left from ancient Lake Idaho deposition. Because of these sediments and soils, rare plants and habitat are common throughout the rating unit although they would not be apparent to the average visitor traveling through the unit. As viewed from the KOPs, the visual resources are generally of a stark and sparsely vegetated landscape. While there are unique, albeit subtle, biologic resources and landforms in this area, the abundance of past disturbances including abandoned military installations and livestock management structures (trough/pipelines and fencing) detract from the visual resources of this unit. In addition, the lack of precipitation (5 to 7 inches in this zone) to provide for a more lush appearing vegetation community and lack of rugged topographic features, in combination with the abundance of non-native plants or weeds, as viewed by the average visitor to the area, result in a Class C rating.

5.5.1.3 Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.5-2 shows the viewshed from AOI B-1, VRM Class II managed lands, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to assess the whether the proposed project conforms the existing VRM class. Scenic views of the various buttes throughout the Snake River Plain as well as distant mountain ranges are important to sensitive residential viewers or recreational users visiting portions of the Oregon NHT adjacent to KOP 581. KOP 581 is located on a segment of the Oregon NHT approximately 300 feet northeast of FEIS Proposed 9 and about 550 and 800 feet northeast of 8G and 9K, respectively, as they follow the Snake River in a southeast to northwest direction. The view from KOP 581 provided in Attachment B, Figure B-10 is not facing the AOI, but is viewing adjacent lands, directly south of the KOP. The views of the flat to undulating terrain, background mountain silhouettes with mottled to clumped vegetation, and meandering waterbody exhibits diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few human-made features. The setting at this KOP is relatively undisturbed in all directions, except for roadway and a few adjacent wooden structures. From this KOP, the proposed Project would be partially screened by the ridge but would still skyline the mountainous views. The close distance of the Project from KOP 581 results in the features dominating the landscape with such prominence that the visual contrast would be strong. The view from KOP 582 (Attachment B, Figure B-11) represents views from residences and Castle Creek/Oreana Loop Road, approximately 1.3 miles north-northeast of the alignment within the AOI, where drivers and residences would have a partially obstructed view of the Project.

Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 6 would result in a single 500-kV line (along the FEIS Proposed 9 alignment) crossing the VRM Class II designated land near Castle Creek within the WWE corridor. This would introduce new dominant structural elements into the view to the north that would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture; therefore, it would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. Visual impacts of these Alternatives are likely to be similar to those for Alternatives 3 and 7, but less than those from Co-Preferred Alternative 5 or Alternative 4.

Co-Preferred Alternative 5 would result in two parallel 500-kV lines (Routes 8G and 9K), 250 feet apart, crossing VRM Class II designated land near Castle Creek just south of the WWE corridor. This would introduce new dominant structural elements into the view to the north that would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture; therefore, it would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. Visual impacts of this Alternative are likely to be similar to those of Alternative 4, but greater than those from Alternatives 2, 6, 3, or 7.

Alternatives 3 and 7 would result in a single 500-kV line (Route 9K) across VRM Class II designated land near Castle Creek just south of the WWE corridor. This would introduce new dominant structural elements into the view to the north that would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture; therefore, it would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. Visual impacts of these alternatives are likely to be similar to those for Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 6, but less than those from Co-Preferred Alternative 5 or Alternative 4.

Alternative 4 would result in two parallel 500-kV lines (FEIS Proposed 9 and Route 8G), approximately 800 feet apart, crossing VRM Class II designated land near Castle Creek. FEIS Proposed 9 would be within the WWE corridor, while 8G would be just south of the corridor. This would introduce new dominant structural elements into the view to the north that would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture; therefore, it would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. Visual impacts of this Alternative are likely to be similar to those for Co-Preferred Alternative 5, but greater than those from Alternatives 2, 6, 3, or 7.

Visual effects of Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternatives 6, 3, and 7 would be a result of a single 500-kV line crossing the AOI, while Co-Preferred Alternative 5 and Alternative 4 would both have two parallel 500-kV lines crossing the AOI. Appendix E, Figure E.2-9a shows the existing conditions at KOP 1149, which, while quite a ways west of the AOI, allows us to compare visual effects of different line configurations. Appendix E, Figure E.2-9b shows the simulated conditions of a single transmission line from KOP 1149. Figure E.2-9c shows the simulated conditions of two parallel transmission lines from KOP 1149. While this KOP is not in the AOI, it shows a general effect of the Project from a distance similar to the routes as KOP 581. It is assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area in order to protect the Oregon NHT corridor as well as adjacent scenic resources.

5.5.1.4 Plan Amendment for FEIS Proposed 9, Route 8G, and Route 9K

If FEIS Proposed 9 (Co-Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternatives 4 and 6), Route 8G (Co-Preferred Alternative 5 and Alternative 4), or Route 9K (Co-Preferred Alternative 5 and Alternatives 3 and 7) is selected, an amendment to reclassify the entire 282-acre parcel (the VRM Class II area adjacent to Castle Creek) from VRM Class II to Class III (Figure 5.5-3) would be needed. The WWE corridor crosses this area, and converting the area to VRM Class III would be consistent with the use of the land for a high-voltage transmission line ROW.

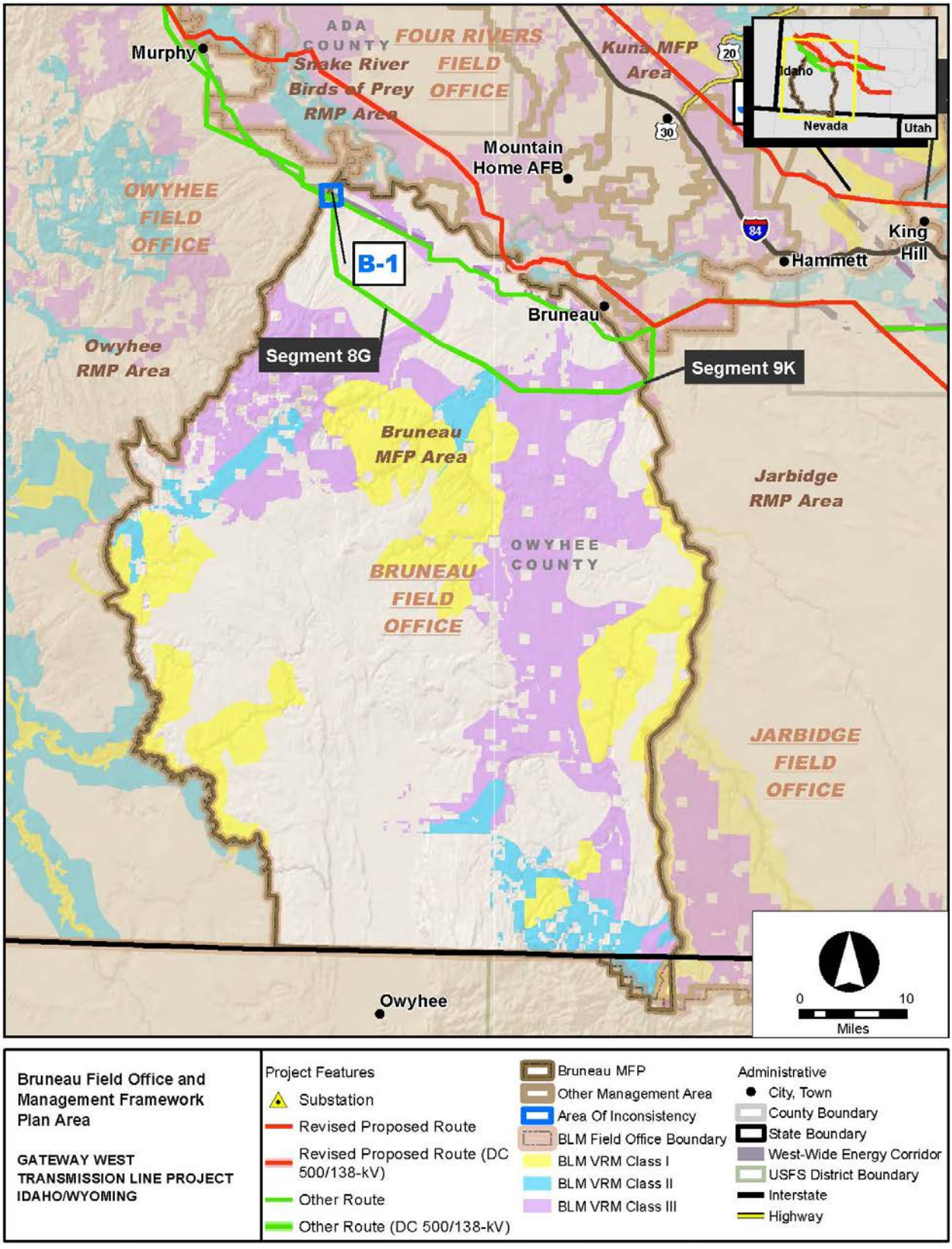


Figure 5.5-1. Bruneau MFP Boundary Map

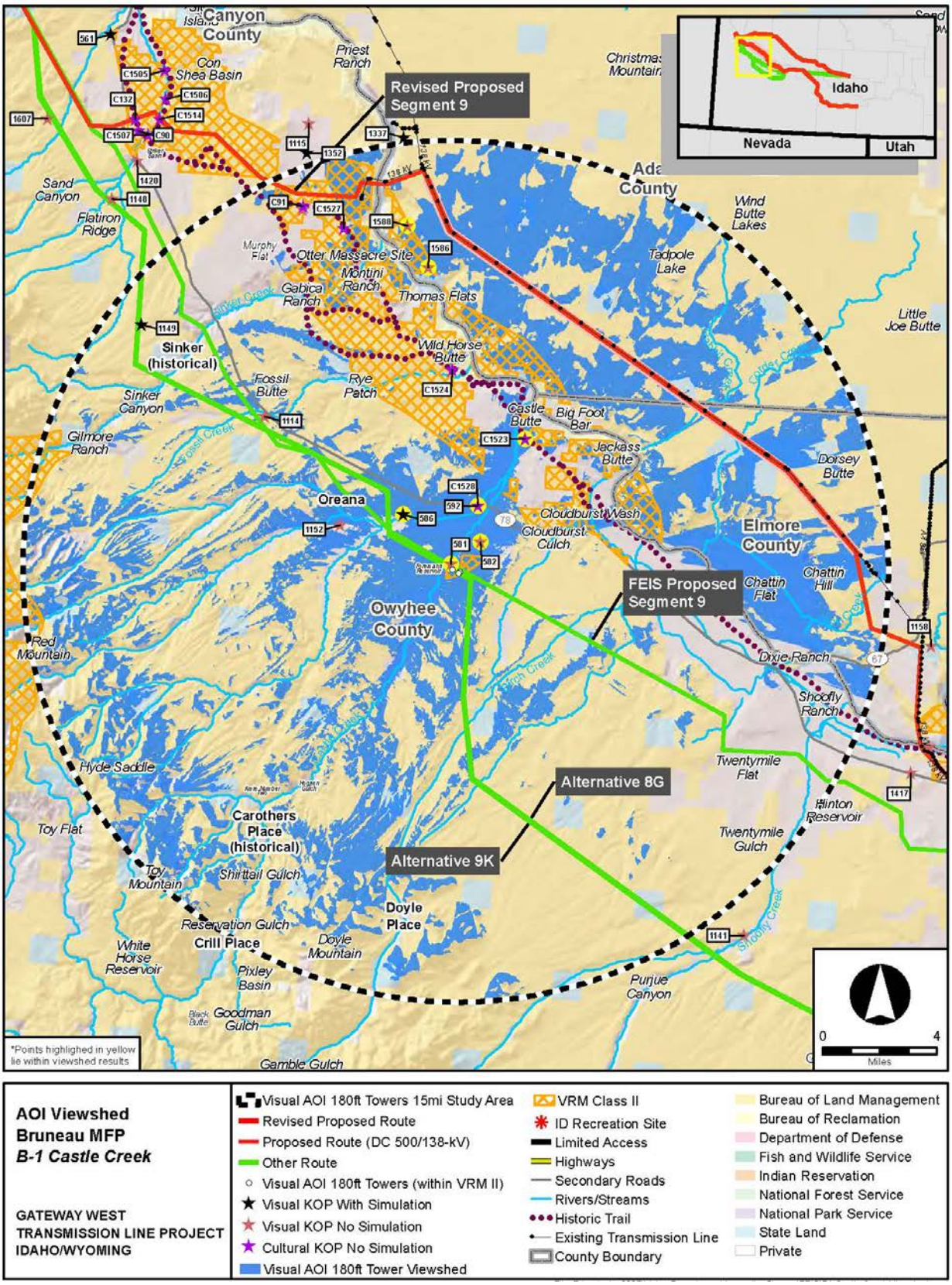


Figure 5.5-2. AOI B-1 Castle Creek Visual Analysis for Routes 8G and 9K

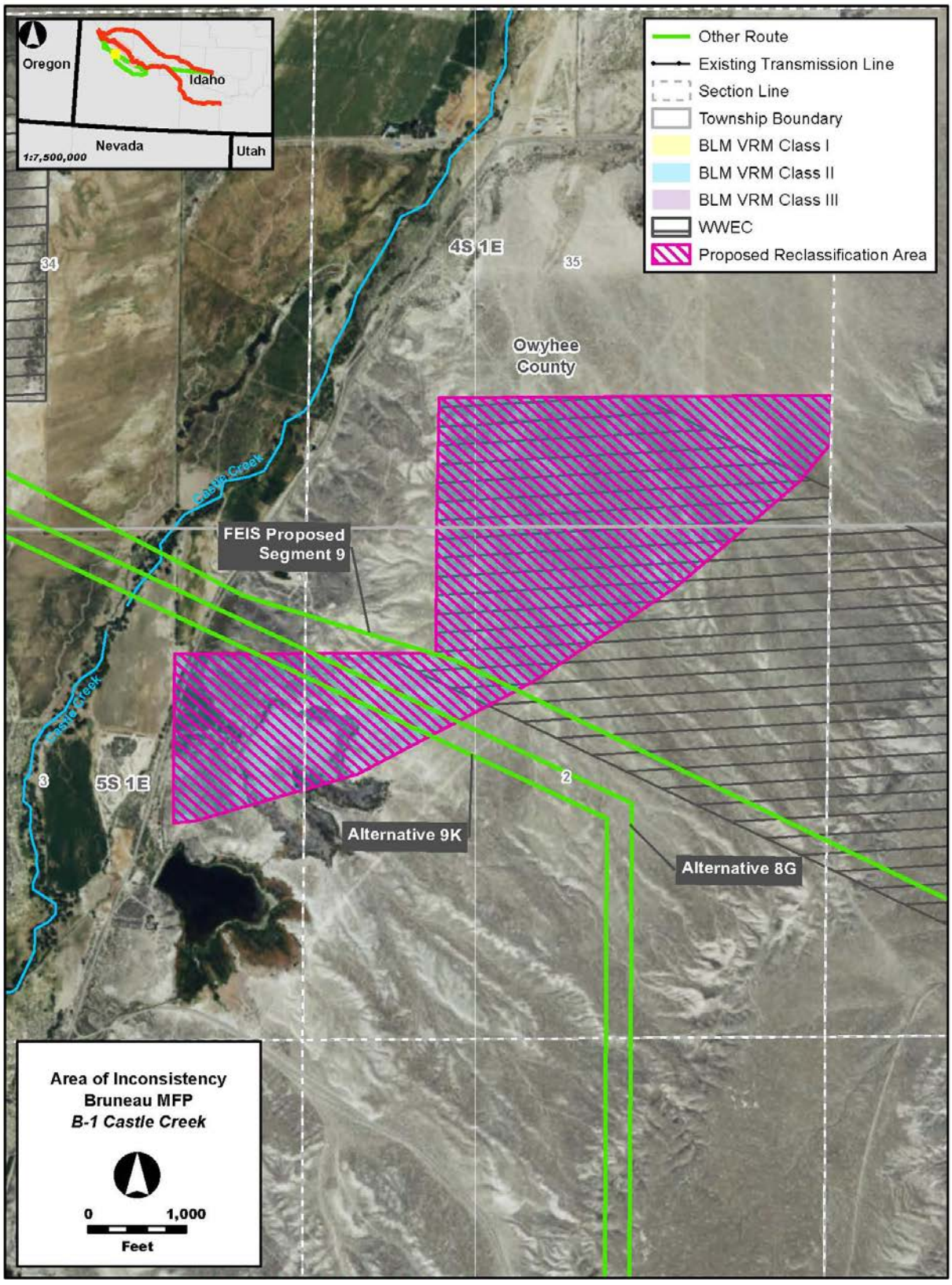


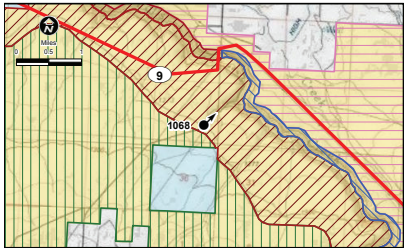
Figure 5.5-3. AOI B-1 Castle Creek Detailed Map Showing the Proposed VRM Action for Amendment SEIS-12 within the Bruneau MFP Planning Area

Attachment A

Existing Conditions and Photographic Simulations

List of Simulations by Appendix G Sections

Section	AOI/ Figure No.	KOP Number	Figure Title
5.1	TF-1a	KOP 1068	Existing Conditions, Revised Proposed Route Segment 9/Route 9K
	TF-1b	KOP 1068	Photographic Simulation, Revised Proposed Route Segment 9/Route 9K
	TF-1c	KOP 1065	Existing Conditions, Revised Proposed Route Segment 9/Route 9K
	TF-1d	KOP 1065	Photographic Simulation, Revised Proposed Route Segment 9/Route 9K
5.2	J-5a	KOP 1350	Existing Conditions, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
	J-5b	KOP 1350	Photographic Simulation, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
	J-5c	KOP C83	Existing Conditions, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
	J-5d	KOP C83	Photographic Simulation, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
5.4	BH-1a	KOP C84	Existing Conditions, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
	BH-1b	KOP C84	Photographic Simulation, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
	BH-1c	KOP C85	Existing Conditions, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8
	BH-1d	KOP C85	Photographic Simulation, Revised Proposed Route Segment 8



Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

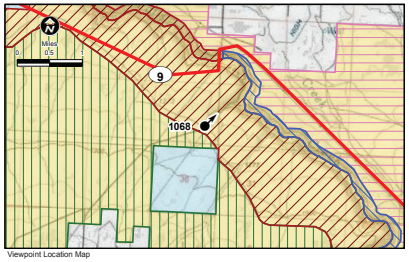
Time of photograph:	11:56 AM
Date of photograph:	9-14-09
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	Northeast
Latitude:	42°26'17.30"N
Longitude:	114°52'22.00"W
Distance:	0.8 Mile

Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Existing Conditions
from Key Observation Point 1068
Segment 9 Revised
Proposed Route/Route 9K

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure TF-1a



Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

Time of photograph:	11:56 AM
Date of photograph:	9-14-09
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	Northeast
Latitude:	42°26'17.30"N
Longitude:	114°52'22.00"W
Distance:	0.8 Mile

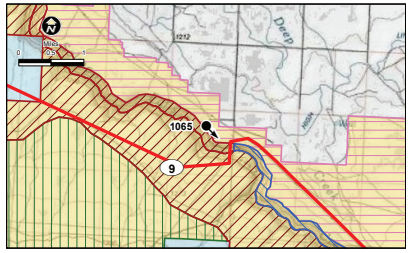
Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Photographic Simulation
from Key Observation Point 1068
Segment 9 Revised
Proposed Route/Route 9K

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure TF-1b

Above photograph is intended to be viewed 18 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.



Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Photograph Information

Time of photograph: 12:08 PM

Date of photograph: 9-14-09

Weather condition: Cloudy

Viewing direction: Southeast

Latitude: 42°27'30.816"N

Longitude: 114°52'36.79"W

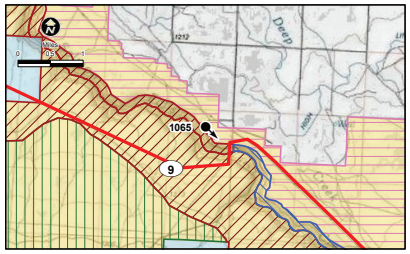
Distance: 0.5 mile

Existing Conditions
from Key Observation Point 1065
Segment 9 Revised
Proposed Route/Route 9K

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure TF-1c

Above photograph is intended to be viewed 18 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.



Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Photograph Information

Time of photograph: 12:08 PM

Date of photograph: 9-14-09

Weather condition: Cloudy

Viewing direction: Southeast

Latitude: 42°27'30.816"N

Longitude: 114°52'36.79"W

Nearest tower in view: 0.45 Miles

Photographic Simulation
from Key Observation Point 1065
Segment 9 Revised
Proposed Route/Route 9K

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure TF-1d

Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes
- Proposed
- Route

Visual Resource Management
- Class I
- Class II
- Class III
- Class IV

Surface Ownership
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Department of Defense
- State
- Private
- State Boundary
- County Boundary

Photograph Information

Time of photograph:	10:06 AM
Date of photograph:	8-21-10
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	South
Latitude:	43°2'8.80"N
Longitude:	115°20'1.74"W
Distance:	0.1 Mile

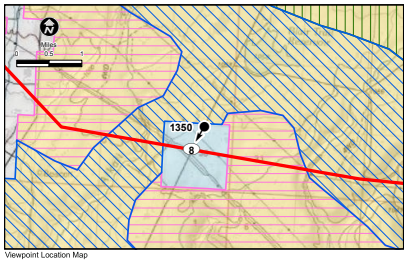
Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Existing Conditions
from Key Observation Point 1350
Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure J-5a

P:\ENV\PLANNING\Idaho\Power\t22240030_Gateway_West\sims\layouts\kop-1350.indd Export Date 07/18/11



Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes
- Proposed
- Route

Visual Resource Management
- Class I
- Class II
- Class III
- Class IV

Surface Ownership
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Department of Defense
- State
- Private
- State Boundary
- County Boundary

Photograph Information

Time of photograph:	10:06 AM
Date of photograph:	8-21-10
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	South
Latitude:	43°2'8.80"N
Longitude:	115°20'1.74"W
Distance:	0.1 Mile

Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Photographic Simulation from Key Observation Point 1350 Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West 500kV Transmission Project

Figure J-5b

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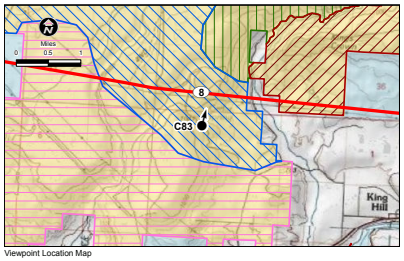


Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

Time of photograph:	9:00 AM
Date of photograph:	12-8-09
Weather condition:	Party Cloudy
Viewing direction:	North
Latitude:	42°48'41.47"N
Longitude:	105°49'41.72"W
Distance:	0.5 Mile

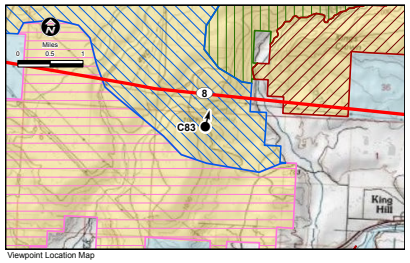
Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Existing Conditions
from Key Observation Point C83
Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure J-5c

Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.



Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

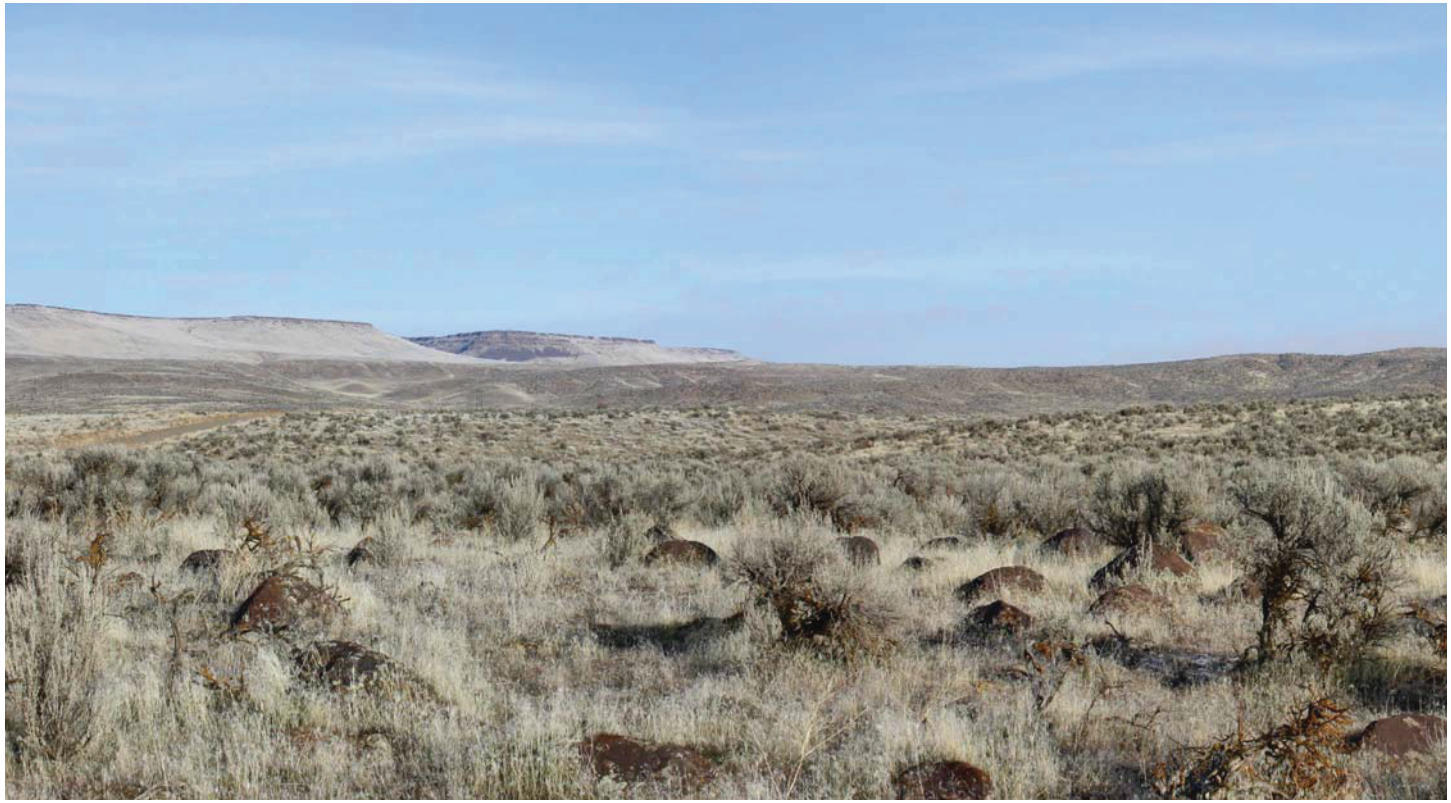
Photograph Information

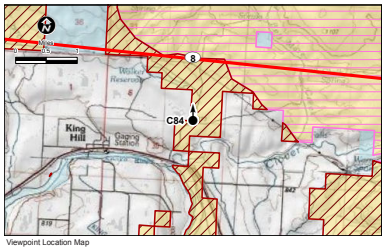
Time of photograph:	9:00 AM
Date of photograph:	12-8-09
Weather condition:	Party Cloudy
Viewing direction:	North
Latitude:	42°48'41.47"N
Longitude:	105°49'41.72"W
Distance:	0.5 Mile

Photographic Simulation
from Key Observation Point C83
Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure J-5d





Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

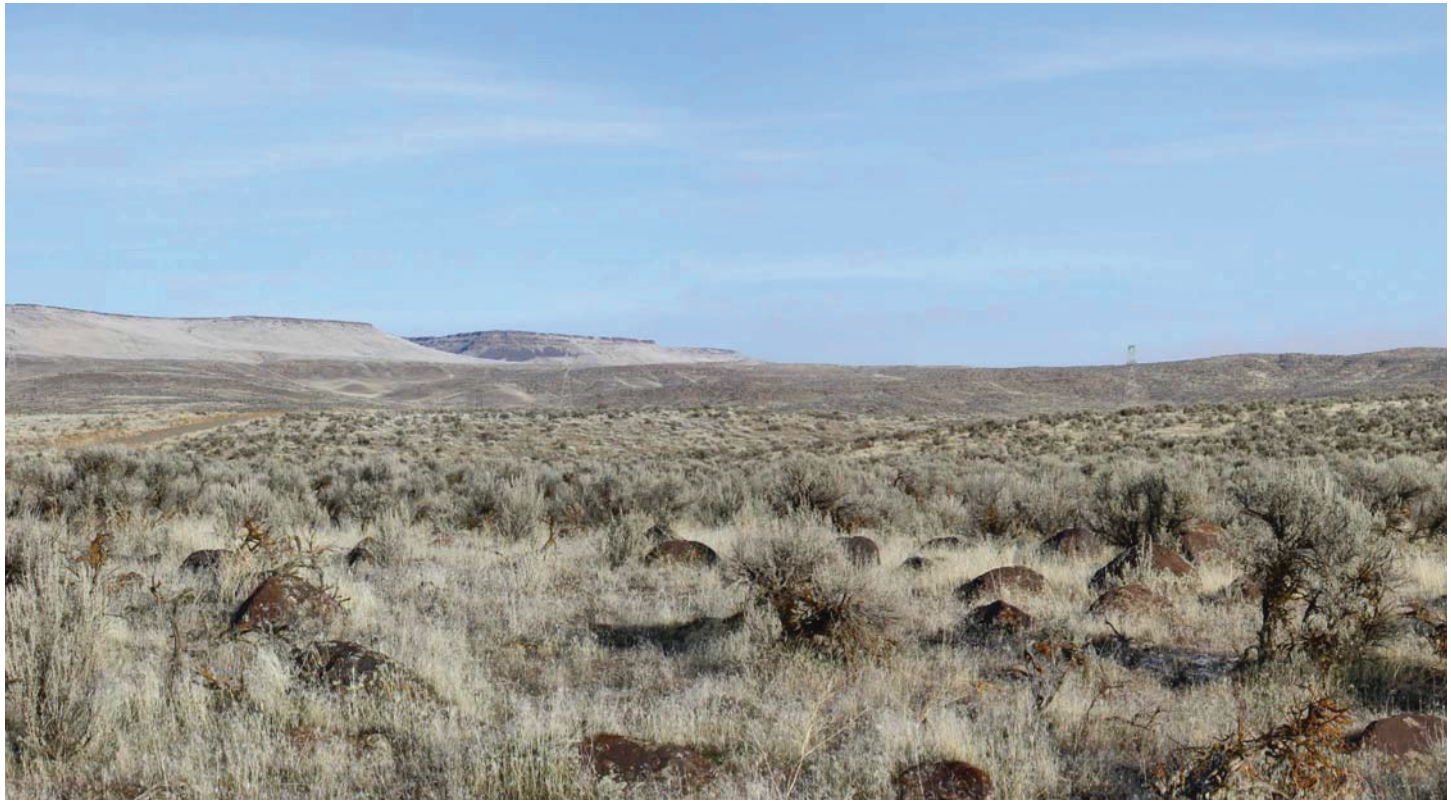
Time of photograph:	10:38 AM
Date of photograph:	11-8-09
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	North
Latitude:	43°0'37.67"N
Longitude:	115°10'29.43"W
Distance:	1 Mile

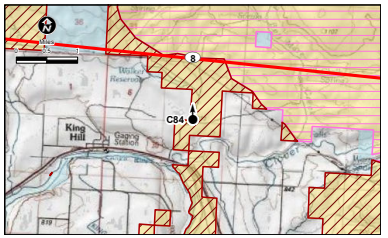
Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Existing Conditions
from Key Observation Point C84
Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure BH-1a





Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

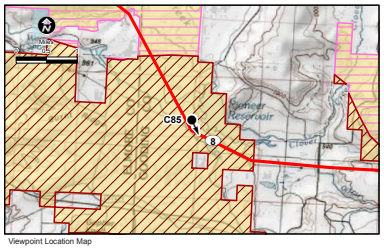
Time of photograph:	10:38 AM
Date of photograph:	11-8-09
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	North
Latitude:	43°0'37.67"N
Longitude:	115°10'29.43"W
Distance:	1 Mile

Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Photographic Simulation from Key Observation Point C84 Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure BH-1b



Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

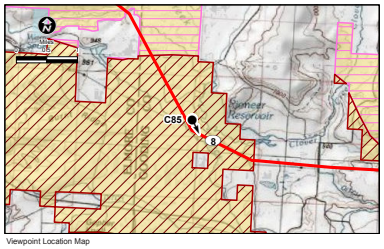
Time of photograph:	11:46 AM
Date of photograph:	8-6-08
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	Southeast
Latitude:	42°59'9.61"N
Longitude:	115° 4'5.51"W
Distance:	0.1 Mile

Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Existing Conditions
from Key Observation Point C85
Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure BH-1c



Viewpoint Location Map

Legend

Key Observation Point

Transmission Line Routes

Proposed

Route

Visual Resource Management

Class I

Class II

Class III

Class IV

Surface Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Forest Service

National Park Service

Bureau of Reclamation

Department of Defense

State

Private

State Boundary

County Boundary

Photograph Information

Time of photograph:	11:46 AM
Date of photograph:	8-6-08
Weather condition:	Partly Cloudy
Viewing direction:	Southeast
Latitude:	42°59'9.61"N
Longitude:	115° 4'5.51"W
Distance:	0.1 Mile

Photograph is intended to be viewed 12 inches from viewer's eyes when printed on 11x17 paper. The photograph below has been cropped top and bottom to show a wide angle of view with the above photograph's area shown in yellow.

Photographic Simulation from Key Observation Point C85 Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route

Gateway West
500kV Transmission Project

Figure BH-1d

Attachment B

Key Observation Point Views

Table of Contents

Figure B-1. Existing Conditions from KOP 1067 in the General Area of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 9K (TF-1 AOI).....B-1
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Figure B-3. Existing Conditions from KOP 1156 toward the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (BOP-1 AOI).....B-3
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Figure B-11. Existing Conditions from KOP 582 toward Routes 9K and 8G (B-1 AOI).....B-11

Figure B-1. Existing Conditions from KOP 1067 in the General Area of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 9K (TF-1 AOI)

Figure B-2. Existing Conditions from KOP C117 looking south toward the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (J-3 AOI)

Figure B-3. Existing Conditions from KOP 1156 toward the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (BOP-1 AOI)

Figure B-4. Existing Conditions from KOP 1155 toward the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (BOP-1 AOI)

Figure B-5. Existing Conditions from KOP C108 toward the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (J-5 AOI)

Figure B-6. Existing Conditions from KOP 1209 toward the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (J-5 AOI)

Figure B-7. Existing Conditions from KOP 1210 toward the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (J-5 AOI)

Figure B-8. Existing Conditions from KOP 1115 toward the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (BOP-2 AOI)

Figure B-9. Existing Conditions from KOP C90 toward the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (BOP-2 AOI)

Figure B-10. Existing Conditions from KOP 581 toward Routes 9K and 8G near B-1 AOI

Figure B-11. Existing Conditions from KOP 582 toward Routes 9K and 8G (B-1 AOI)