

**Appendix F**  
**Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CA	Conservation Agreement
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPM	environmental protection measure
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
Gateway West	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
kV	kilovolt
MEP	Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio
MFP	Management Framework Plan
MP	milepost
NCA	National Conservation Area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHT	National Historic Trail
NOI	Notice of Intent
Project	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROW	right-of-way
SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
SRBOP	Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
TES	threatened, endangered, and sensitive
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council
WSR	Wild and Scenic River
WWE	West-wide Energy

## 1 Introduction

In April 2013, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project), starting in Wyoming at the Windstar Substation and ending at the Hemingway Substation. In the Record of Decision, published in November 2013, the BLM deferred offering a Right-of-Way (ROW) Grant for Segments 8 and 9 to allow additional time for federal, state, and local permitting agencies to examine additional routing options and mitigation and enhancement measures for these segments (see Chapter 1 of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement [SEIS]).

The Proponents submitted a revised Project application for Segments 8 and 9 in August 2014 (Figure 1-1). The Proponents have also submitted a draft Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio (MEP) to the BLM, which contains proposed mitigation, including compensatory mitigation, and other measures intended to enhance resources and values found in the SRBOP. The Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes as currently proposed by the Proponents would require the amendment of BLM land use plans (i.e., resource management plans [RMPs] or management framework plans [MFPs]). The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would require one or more amendments to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, the 1987 Jarbidge RMP,<sup>1</sup> the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP) RMP, and the Kuna MFP. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would require amendments to the Twin Falls MFP, the 1987 Jarbidge RMP, and the SRBOP RMP. The BLM developed two Route Variations to the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route to avoid the Toana Freight Wagon Road, a National Register Historic site. Toana Road Variation 1 and Toana Road Variation 1-A would both cross the Jarbidge Planning area managed under the 2015 Jarbidge RMP. No amendment would be needed for these variations.

Additional routing options, 8G and 9K, were developed by the BLM to avoid the SRBOP (Figure 1-1) to the extent feasible. These alignments closely follow Segment 8 and 9 routes that were analyzed in the FEIS, although in slightly different locations. The BLM also developed a combination route (8H) that includes the eastern portion of 8G (through the Monument and Jarbidge Field Offices) and the western portion of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 (through the SRBOP). This route was developed for Alternatives 6 and 7, which use the FEIS Proposed Route and Route 9K, respectively, for the Segment 9 routing. There are a few areas where the routes follow new routing and, for some Alternatives, the alignments of Segment 8 routes (8G or 8H) and Segment 9 Routes (9K, FEIS Proposed 9) parallel each other with a 250-foot separation from just south of Glens Ferry (Route 8G MP 44 and Route 9K MP 72.7) to the Hemingway Substation. This parallel routing crosses the SRBOP for approximately 8.8 miles on BLM-managed land just northwest of the Saylor Creek Range; the

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<sup>1</sup> A new RMP for the Jarbidge Field Office was signed in September 2015. This RMP covers land within the current Field Office boundary, but not those areas that were covered in the 1987 RMP but are now in the Boise and Four Rivers Field Offices. No amendments are needed where the Project crosses the current Jarbidge Field Office boundaries.

remainder of the parallel alignment avoids the SRBOP. Route 8G would require amendments to the SRBOP RMP and the Bruneau RMP. Route 9K would require amendments to the Twin Falls MFP, the Bruneau RMP, and the SRBOP RMP. FEIS Proposed 9 would require amendments to the Twin Falls MFP, SRBOP RMP, and Bruneau MFP. See Chapter 2 of the SEIS for full route descriptions of the Alternatives.

Two variations (Helicopter-Assisted Construction and West-wide Energy [WWE] Corridor Variations) have been proposed for Alternative 5, which includes Routes 8G and 9K. For the Helicopter-Assisted Construction Variation, the alignments are the same as Routes 8G and 9K and all required amendments would remain the same as for Alternative 5. For the WWE Corridor Variation, Routes 8G and 9K would switch to the alignment for FEIS Proposed 9. This would take them through the SRBOP within, and adjacent to, the WWE Corridor northwest of Oreana, Idaho. The result would be an additional crossing area that would need to be designated under Amendment SEIS-13, whereas the amendment would only affect the southeast portion of the SRBOP without the variation.

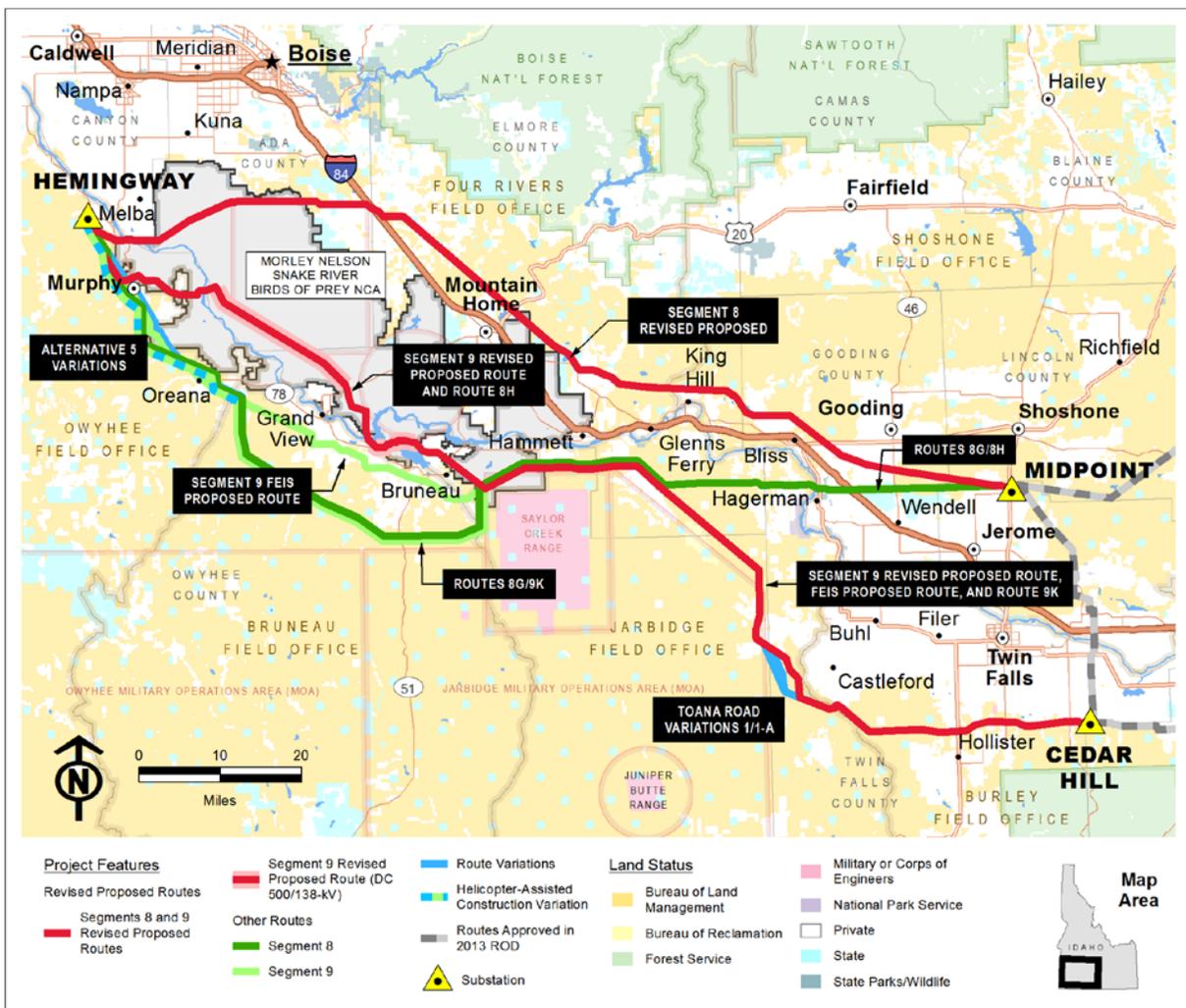


Figure F-1. Project Overview

Approval of a project-specific proposal that is not in conformance with the existing land use plan requires that a land use plan amendment be completed (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1<sup>2</sup>). Any decisions to amend a plan would be made concurrent with a decision on the Project. Amendments to the BLM RMPs and MFPs are summarized for each alternative in Table 2.3-1 of the SEIS (see Chapter 2 for more details). This document, Appendix F to the SEIS, includes a comparison of effects for each of the plan amendments required for all alternatives considered in detail in the SEIS.

## 2 Planning Process

The planning action is to consider amending six BLM land use plans as a part of the SEIS. This action is being considered under the BLM 1600 manual guidance (BLM Land Use Planning Handbook H-1601-1), and the planning regulations published as Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) (including 1610.5-5, Amendments). This process is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS. Some of the land use plans crossed by the Project were approved in the 1970s and 1980s. As land use management needs and conditions change, the amendment process allows the BLM to amend plans to meet current needs when such actions are warranted. The process requires analysis of effects of these amendments, which is provided here (Appendix F) and in Appendix G (for additional analysis of visual impacts).

Scoping meetings were held for this Project in the fall of 2014. The public, as well as state, local, and tribal governments and federal agencies, was invited to participate in the planning process. Public scoping was initiated with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an SEIS in the Federal Register on September 19, 2014 (79 *Federal Register* 56399). The NOI was followed by a series of four public meetings held in October 2014. The public has been given the opportunity to comment on and provide additional information regarding the Project, including the possibility of BLM Plan amendments, during these meetings. The BLM is reviewing the effects of Project implementation through seven route combinations, referred to as Alternatives. The BLM selected Alternative 5 as the Preferred Alternative. Alternative 5 includes Route 8G and Route 9K, with Toana Road Variation 1 as a modification. Proposed Amendments are those needed for the Preferred Alternative. The amendments considered for the Revised Proposed Routes and other routes were developed over the course of the SEIS process and consider planning requirements for the routes incorporated within each Alternative.

During the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process, a report (Land Use Plan Consistency Analysis, 2010) was compiled to document compliance with the 20 federal land use plans that provide direction for federal lands crossed by the Proposed Action or Action Alternatives for the Gateway West Project. This report was included as Appendix F in the Administrative Draft EIS submitted to the BLM and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service for review on March 15, 2010. From that analysis, needs for potential amendments were identified and analyzed based on planning issues and criteria. Amendments were proposed for the BLM-Preferred Route in the FEIS. The

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<sup>2</sup> BLM. 2005. Land Use Planning Handbook. BLM Handbook H-1601-1. U.S. Department of Interior. March 11.

proposed amendments, and amendments that would be needed for other alternatives, were developed and presented in the FEIS and Appendices (see FEIS Appendices F-1 and F-2 for amendment language and analysis for the BLM-Preferred and Alternative Routes). These amendments were reviewed for the SEIS to determine which, if any, still applied and if additional amendments would be needed for the Revised Proposed Routes. The following sections address identified amendments that would be needed for the Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes and additional Routes 8G, 8H, FEIS Proposed 9, and 9K.

## **2.1 Planning Issues and Criteria**

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

### **2.1.1 Planning Issues**

The following issues were brought up by the public during the DEIS public scoping (Tetra Tech 2009) and comment period, were raised by federal and state agencies during scoping and agency discussions, or must be considered as stipulated by law or regulation:

- objection to location on private lands (“If the project is for the general public good, it should be on public lands”);
- reliability and proposed separation distances of transmission lines;
- avoiding sensitive areas such as National Monuments and Wildlife Refuges, military operating areas, National Conservation Areas (NCAs), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR), and State Parks;
- effects to Native American traditional cultural properties and respected places;
- effects to paleontological resources;
- effects on wildlife habitat, plants, and animals including threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species;
- effects to visual resources and existing viewsheds;
- effects to National Historic Trails (NHTs) and their viewsheds;
- effects to recreation resources;
- land use conflicts and consistency with land use plans;
- effects to soils and water from surface-disturbing activities;
- effects to agriculture lands;
- effect on local and regional socioeconomic conditions; and
- management of invasive plant species and effective reclamation.

We reviewed the scoping comments received for this SEIS and determined that planning issues considered in the FEIS have not changed.

### 2.1.2 Planning Criteria

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

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

## 3 Amendments

The BLM has identified Alternative 5, with the inclusion of the Toana Road Variation 1, as the Preferred Alternative. This alternative includes Route 8G and Route 9K, with the Toana Road Variation 1 included as a modification in Segment 9. Proposed amendments to the BLM's management plans would be needed to bring Alternative 5 into compliance with the applicable RMPs and MFPs for BLM-managed lands crossed by the Project. In addition, amendments that would be needed for other Alternatives are discussed below. Instances where the Project may not be in conformance with applicable RMPs and MFPs include:

- developing a new ROW outside of approved corridors,
- crossing NHTs,
- crossing ACECs,
- allowing construction within 0.5 mile of sensitive plant habitat,
- changing management in Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA), and
- changing Visual Resource Management (VRM) classifications.

Effects on visual resources were determined through the use of computer modeling, field visits, and site-specific knowledge by local BLM staff. The analysis and effects determinations on visual resources are documented in Appendix G. The land use plan amendments reference the analysis, maps of the locations (referred to as areas of inconsistency), photographs, and simulations included in Appendix E and Appendix G. The visual analysis pertains only to the public lands, as the BLM does not establish visual management objectives for lands it does not manage.

### 3.1 Twin Falls MFP Land Use Plan Amendments

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Burley Field Office within the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and VRM Class management, are guided by decisions recorded in the Twin Falls MFP approved in 1982, and in the 1989 Salmon Falls Creek ACEC designation amendment. The MFP<sup>3</sup> does not permit powerlines to the east or west of the two established corridors and designates land that would be crossed by the 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line as VRM Classes I and II. The 1989 amendment restricts activities within the designated Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. The ACEC also includes a portion of Salmon Falls Creek that has been determined to be eligible for WSR status.

Although scenery is one of the river's outstanding remarkable values, the crossing point currently includes an existing single-phase, low-voltage distribution line and a paved road and bridge—the Lilly Grade Road. The towers would be located outside the WSR corridor (generally 0.25 mile wide). Only the transmission lines would cross the WSR eligible segment.

Section 2(b) of the WSR Act specifies the following:

*Recreational River Areas: Recreational river areas are those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along the shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.*

Therefore, a transmission line crossing this portion of this eligible WSR segment would not affect the river's suitability as a Recreation River.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route, FEIS Proposed 9, and Route 9K would cross through areas managed by the Twin Falls MFP in the same alignment as the 2013 FEIS Preferred Route. The alignment was selected to comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These include, but are not limited to, TES species, sensitive lands, cultural resources, and visual resources. The Project would not conform to the Twin Falls MFP; therefore, land use plan amendments would be needed. The alignment for Segment 9 is identical through the Twin Falls Planning Area for all routes/alternatives (FEIS Proposed 9, Route 9K, Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route). Table F-1 lists the proposed amendments for the Twin Falls MFP. Other Alternatives, and their associated routes, that would require the same amendment are also included in the table. The Preferred Alternative and routes associated with it are presented in bold. Since the Segment 9 routes for all Alternatives follow the same alignment in this area, there are no additional amendments needed for other Alternatives.

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<sup>3</sup> BLM. 1982. Twin Falls Management Framework Plan. BLM Burley Field Office, U.S. Department of Interior.

**Table F-1.** Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments for the Twin Falls MFP

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing MFP Direction	Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment
<p><b>Preferred Alternative 5</b>                      Alternative 1                      Alternative 2                      Alternative 3                      Alternative 4                      Alternative 6                      Alternative 7</p>	SEIS-1	9K/ Revised Proposed 9/ FEIS Proposed 9	L-4.1 Allow future major power transmission lines (line of at least 46-138 kV which originate and terminate outside of the MFP area) to be constructed within the recommended corridors. Also allow construction of transmission lines between the corridors. Do not permit power lines to the west or the east of the two corridors. Exempt service lines from restriction.	Allow a 500-kV transmission line ROW outside of existing corridors.
<p><b>Preferred Alternative 5</b>                      Alternative 1                      Alternative 2                      Alternative 3                      Alternative 4                      Alternative 6                      Alternative 7</p>	SEIS-2	9K/ Revised Proposed 9/ FEIS Proposed 9	VRM I – 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. 2. The ACEC is subject to the following resource restrictions....(2) avoid utility rights-of-way....management of the Salmon Falls ACEC in the Twin Falls Resource Area will be the same as in the Jarbidge Resource Area	<p>The Class I and II areas adjacent to the Roseworth Corridor (established by the 2015 Jarbidge RMP) will be reclassified to match the VRM classes in the Jarbidge RMP.</p> <p>Allow a 500-kV transmission line to cross Salmon Falls canyon through the ACEC, consistent with the corridor established in the Jarbidge 2015 RMP.</p>

The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan. Explanations and evaluations of the effects of selecting the route through areas managed by the Twin Falls MFP are provided in Appendix F-1 of the FEIS, Section 3.7. An abbreviated version is provided below.

**3.1.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Twin Falls MFP**

The Twin Falls MFP restricts future major power transmission lines to the corridors designated in the MFP. Connecting lines between these corridors are permitted, however major powerlines to the east and west are not. Routing for Segment 9 in all Alternatives for the Gateway West Project would not be within the designated corridors and would cross the MFP from east to west.

Routing for Segment 9 in all Alternatives for the Gateway West Project would cross the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC. The Twin Falls MFP contains direction for managing visual resources that would restrict powerline construction, including direction to manage the Salmon Falls Canyon as VRM Class I between Salmon Falls Dam and Lilly Grade, and VRM Class II between Lilly Grade and Balanced Rock. The Twin Falls MFP

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

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

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

The purpose of the land use plan amendments is to modify the MFP visual resource management designations and ACEC restrictions such that the Project would be in conformance with the revised Twin Falls MFP.

### **3.1.2 Project Alternatives and Associated Routing**

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route, Route 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 follow the same alignment through areas managed under the Twin Falls MFP. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Twin Falls MFP.

**Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route:** Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route (*Alternative 1*) enters lands managed by the Twin Falls MFP west of Cedar Hill. The route proceeds in a westerly direction and then turns north, paralleling Salmon Falls Creek, which the route would cross as it leaves the Twin Falls Planning Area. Segment 9 would cross the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC where the creek is designated a Recreation segment of the eligible WSR.

#### **Additional Routes:**

*Route 9K (Preferred Alternative 5 and Alternatives 3 and 7)* follows the same alignment through the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and would therefore cross the same areas as described for the Revised Proposed Route.

*FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternatives 2, 4, and 6)* follows the same alignment through the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and would therefore cross the same areas as described for the Revised Proposed Route.

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative analyzed in the SEIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed; therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required.

The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in SEIS Section 1.4, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

### **3.1.3 Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the Twin Falls MFP Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1), FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternatives 2, 4, and 6), and Route 9K (Preferred Alternative 5; Alternatives 3 and 7) would all require a plan amendment to the Twin Falls MFP for granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed by the Burley Field Office. Amendments are proposed for Route 9K for Preferred Alternative 5 (Figure F-2). The Twin Falls MFP allows new utilities to be constructed within and between existing corridors and protects visual resources adjacent to Salmon Falls Creek. These MFP decisions would be rewritten to allow development of this Project.

**Proposed Amendment SEIS-1** for Route 9K of the Preferred Alternative would rewrite the “Land 4.1” decision to allow the development of this Project (changes in italics):

“Allow future major power transmission lines (line of at least 46-138 kV which originate and terminate outside of the MFP area) to be constructed within the recommended corridors. Also allow construction of transmission lines between the corridors. Do not permit power lines to the west or the east of the two corridors. *Allow a 500-kV transmission line ROW outside existing corridors. Exempt service lines from restriction.*”

Route 9K would require an amendment to the Twin Falls MFP VRM classification and Amendment (1989) regarding the establishment of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC.

**Proposed Amendment SEIS-2** for Route 9K of the Preferred Alternative would amend the VRM direction:

*“The Class I and II areas adjacent to the Roseworth Corridor (established by the 2015 Jarbidge RMP) will be reclassified to match the VRM classes in the Jarbidge RMP.”*

Amendment SEIS-2 would also amend the Twin Falls MFP and 1989 Plan Amendment regarding the management of the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC:

*“Allow a 500-kV Transmission Line Project to cross Salmon Falls canyon through the ACEC, consistent with the corridor established in the 2015 Jarbidge RMP.”*

### **3.1.4 Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Routes Not Included in the Preferred Alternative**

There are no additional amendments for routes that are not included in the Preferred Alternatives. All routing that does not conform to the Twin Falls MFP follows the same alignment for all Alternatives. Therefore, amendment needs for the other Alternatives are the same as for the Preferred Alternative.

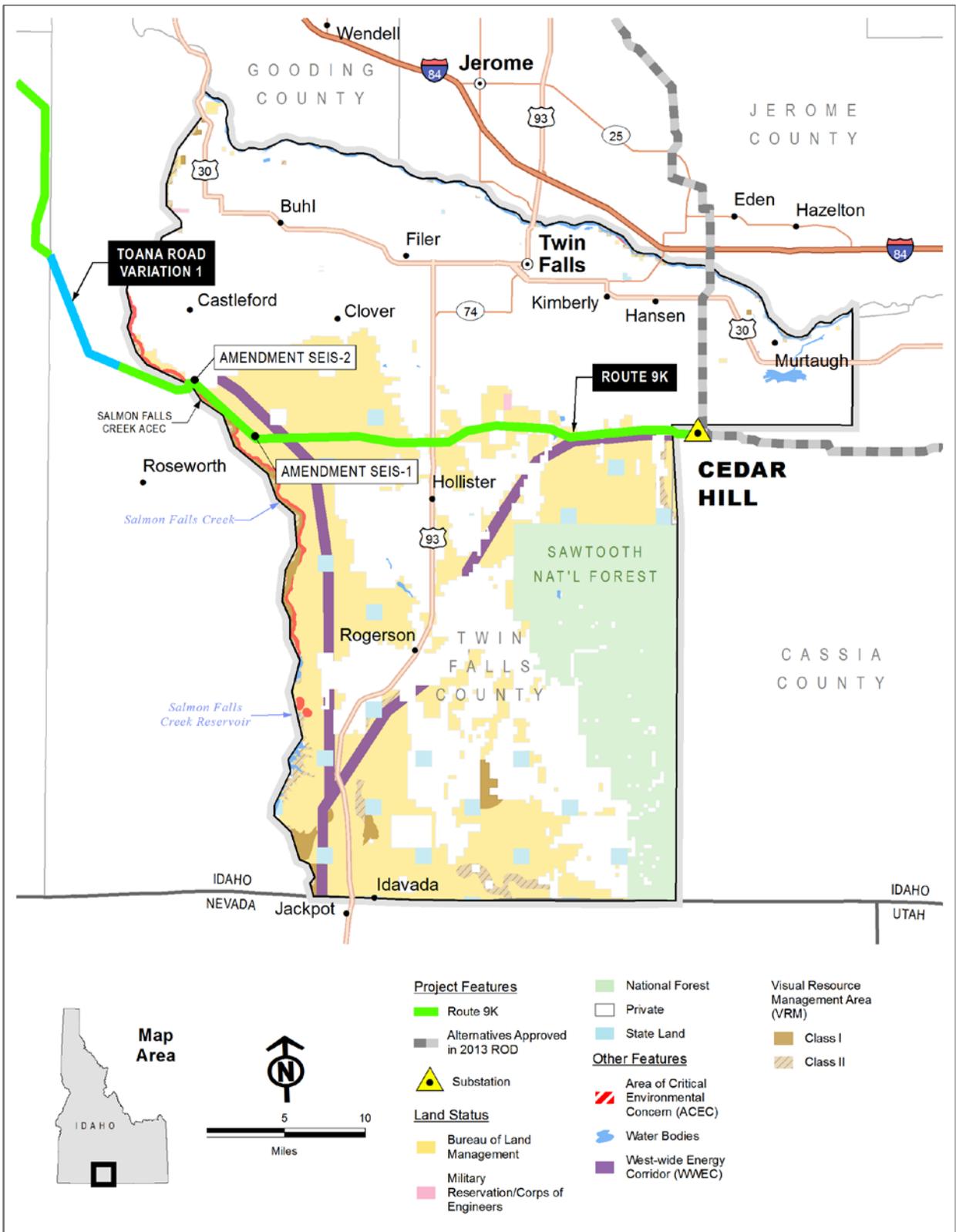


Figure F-2. Location of Twin Falls MFP Amendments for Preferred Alternative 5

### **3.1.5 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The affected environment is discussed in Chapter 3 for each resource: Section 3.2.1 for visual resources, Section 3.3.1 for cultural resources, Section 3.6.1 for vegetation resources, Section 3.10.1 for wildlife resources, Section 3.11.1 for special status species, and Section 3.17.1 for recreation and land use.

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

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

Changing the VRM classification adjacent to Salmon Falls Creek and allowing a major powerline to cross the ACEC where the Roseworth corridor exists on the west side of the canyon (within the Jarbidge Field Office) would be consistent to the intent of the 1989 amendment to manage both sides of the ACEC in a similar fashion; however, it would not be consistent with the direction in the 1989 amendment restricting overhead structure crossings and directing the management to be consistent with the Jarbidge RMP that was then in effect. This amendment would lower the protection within the area similar to the area covered by the Roseworth Corridor west of Salmon Falls Creek and, in addition to Amendment SEIS-1, could make it more likely that a similar corridor could be established in the Twin Falls RMP Planning Area under future management actions.

While the proposed crossing of Salmon Falls Creek would occur on a WSR-eligible segment, the crossing would be in the Recreational segment and would not detract from its WSR eligibility status. See the discussion under the Twin Falls MFP.

#### **3.1.5.1 Effects of Amendments for Routes Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The FEIS Proposed Route for Segment 9 crosses the Twin Falls MFP Planning Area in an east-west direction. The east-west route crosses mule deer range and near raptor nests. The transmission line construction and operation would impact vegetation and soils as well as wildlife. Impacts include soil compaction and erosion, potential weed spread and introduction, removal of native vegetation, disturbance to wildlife due to habitat fragmentation, behavioral avoidance of structures and roads, and dust and noise disturbance disrupting breeding and rearing. Best management practices (BMPs) and

EPMs such as WILD-2 (which restricts vehicular speeds and locations on project roads), VEG-1 (minimizing native plant disturbance), as well as SOIL and WQA EPMs will reduce impacts to these resources.

Changing the VRM Class II designated land north of Lilly Grade would result in a disruption of the view of the adjacent landscape. Views from the canyon and approaching the canyon where the transmission line would cross would be interrupted by towers and cables (see Appendix G for visual analysis). EPMs such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-8 and VIS-11) will be used to reduce visual impacts.

An amendment allowing the crossing of the ACEC would retain the restrictions for future utility crossings of the Salmon Falls Creek canyon. Surface disturbance EPMs, such as SOIL-4, vegetation EPMs such as VEG-1 and VEG-4, and wildlife EPMs such as WILD-3, will aim to minimize impacts to the resources in the area. While these EPMs would reduce impacts, crossing Salmon Falls Creek within the ACEC would not meet the MFP direction of protecting the area from utilities and road development. Co-locating the transmission line crossing with the existing smaller transmission line and where a road already crosses the canyon would reduce the impact of a new disturbance to the area; however, it would also place these large structures along a commonly used travel path where they would be easily observed by visitors to the area, increasing their visual impact.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Appendix M of the SEIS.

### **3.1.5.2 Effects of Amendments for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Segment 9 routes for all Alternatives follow the same alignment as used for the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, effects for all Alternatives would be the same as described for the Preferred Alternative.

## **3.2 1987 Jarbidge RMP Land Use Plan Amendments**

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Jarbidge Field Office are guided by decisions recorded in the Jarbidge RMP, approved in 2015. Actions occurring on portions of lands managed under the Four Rivers Field Office, including the granting of ROW under Title V of FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Jarbidge RMP approved on March 23, 1987.<sup>4</sup> The RMP designates utility avoidance/restricted areas for cultural features, designates VRM classes, and protects cultural resources. The proposed Project would not conform to requirements in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP.

In the 2013 FEIS, amendments were proposed for the Segment 9 Proposed Route, which is unchanged in the SEIS through the majority of the Jarbidge Field Office.

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<sup>4</sup> BLM. 1987. Jarbidge Resource Management Plan. BLM Jarbidge Field Office, U.S. Department of Interior.

Additionally, amendments were proposed for Alternatives 8A and 9B which are in similar locations for Route 8G. Amendments for these routes included allowing the project to cross the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC, changing VRM Class II areas to Class IV, and allowing the project to cross historic trails. The 2015 RMP designates a utility corridor through the ACEC, reclassifies the VRM, and provides language permitting crossing historic trails and their viewsheds, provided proper procedures are followed. This resulted in these amendments no longer being necessary.

The Preferred Alternative 5 does not cross this area; therefore, no amendments are proposed. Other Alternatives, however, contain routes that would cross this area, and amendments that would be associated with these routes are discussed in this section. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8, which is used in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, would cross area that is not covered by the 2015 Jarbidge RMP and still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The Project would not be in conformance with management direction of this RMP in some areas and amendments would be needed (see Table F-2). Other Alternatives, and their associated routes, that would require the same amendment are also included in the table. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H follow the same alignment through the western portion of the Jarbidge area and cross land currently still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP just east of the SRBOP. A small portion of VRM Class II land is crossed and an amendment would be needed if an action alternative containing one of these routes (Alternative 1, 6, or 7) is selected (see Table F-2).

**Table F-2.** Land Use Plan Amendments for the 1987 Jarbidge RMP for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing RMP Direction	Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3	SEIS-3	Revised Proposed 8	MUA-3 Utility avoidance/restricted area – three paleontological areas (Sugar Bowl, Glenn’s Ferry, & McGinnis Ranch) and Oregon Trail ruts (7,200 acres/22.5 miles) to overhead and surface disturbance and underground utilities.	The current Lands decision is amended to reclassify the area identified as restricted in Section 35, T. 04 S., R. 09 E. to allow the overhead lines of a 500-kV powerline right of way while protecting the Oregon Trail ruts.
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3	SEIS-4	Revised Proposed 8	Cultural Resources – The existing ruts of the main route, north and south alternate routes of the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road will be protected by not allowing incompatible uses to occur within ½ mile corridor through which these routes pass.	The existing ruts of the main route, north and south alternate routes of the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road will be protected by not allowing incompatible uses to occur within ½ mile corridor of ruts except where visual impacts are already compromised. Protect existing trail ruts from surface disturbance.

**Table F-2.** Land Use Plan Amendments for the 1987 Jarbidge RMP for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative (continued)

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing MFP Direction	Land Use Plan Amendment
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3	SEIS-5	Revised Proposed 8	Visual Resource Management – The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400. VRM Classes will be managed as shown on Map 9.	The VRM decisions and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. These VRM boundaries are modified according to the new manual to reclassify the VRM Class I area associated with Oregon Trail and the Proposed 500-kV line as VRM Class IV.
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-14	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H	Visual Resource Management – The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400. VRM Classes will be managed as shown on Map 9.	The VRM decisions and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. The VRM Classification is amended to change the VRM Class to VRM Class III, adjacent to the proposed line, where the towers would be visible and dominate the landscape.

### 3.2.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the 1987 Jarbidge RMP

The Revised Proposed Routes for Segments 8 and 9, Routes 8G and 9K, FEIS Proposed 9, and the Toana Road Variations would cross through the Jarbidge Planning Area, which is managed under the 2015 Jarbidge RMP. The Project is in conformance with the 2015 Jarbidge RMP where it crosses the Jarbidge Planning area. However, parts of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 would cross land managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP within the Four Rivers Field Office, where they are not in conformance with the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The 1987 Jarbidge RMP includes management objectives for many resources including lands, minerals, range management, watershed, wildlife, visual, cultural, recreation, and transportation support. The RMP decisions that need to be amended relate to cultural and visual resources.

The route locations for the Project were developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. The Revised

Proposed Route for Segment 8 is the same route as the BLM-Preferred Route in the FEIS. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 is the same as the BLM-Preferred Route in the FEIS east of milepost (MP) 95.6, where it switches to the Alternative 9D/G alignment analyzed in the FEIS, with some modifications near C.J. Strike Reservoir.

The Project is not in conformance with the direction provided in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP; therefore, amendments to this land use plan would be needed. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 (Alternatives 1 through 3) would cross MUA-3 where utilities are restricted. The following section is a requirement in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP for any activities conducted and/or authorized by the BLM in MUA-3:

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

The Segments 8 (Alternatives 1 through 3) and 9 (Alternative 1) Revised Proposed Routes and Route 8H (Alternative 6 and 7) would cross areas managed for VRM Class I and Class II objectives. The following VRM direction under General Management Guidelines in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP applies:

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

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Alternatives 1 through 3) would cross VRM Class I areas designated around the NHTs, for approximately 3.2 miles, and would not conform to the VRM objectives in this area (see Appendix G, Section 5.2.3, for the visual analysis). Amendment SEIS-8 addresses this nonconformance.

The 1987 Jarbidge RMP discusses requirements for areas listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would be within 0.5 mile of these resources. The route would cross the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road in three locations; however, only one location would be on BLM-managed land. A second crossing would be within 0.5 mile of BLM-managed land, but this management restriction for land near trails only applies where trail crossings occur on BLM-managed land. The following section is a requirement in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP for any activities conducted and/or authorized by the BLM:

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

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

The purpose of the land use plan amendments associated with Alternatives 1 through 3 would be to modify 1987 Jarbidge RMP decisions regarding visual resource, utility avoidance areas, special designations, and cultural resources such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would be in conformance with the Jarbidge RMP.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross VRM Class II land for 0.27 mile, just east of the SRBOP boundary. An amendment would be needed under Alternatives 1, 6, and 7 for routing in 8H or the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route to conform to the VRM designations in the 1987 RMP.

### **3.2.2 Project Alternatives and Associated Routing**

The Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes, FEIS Proposed 9, Route 8H, Route 8G, Route 9K, and the Toana Road Variations would cross through lands managed under the 2015 Jarbidge RMP; however, only the Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes and Route 8H would cross land still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Jarbidge RMP. The Revised Proposed Routes, Routes/Alternatives, and Variations are described in Chapter 2 of the SEIS, along with the FEIS routes and additional routes not considered in detail, and reasons for considering or not considering these routes.

**Revised Proposed Routes:** The Revised Proposed Routes through the 1987 Jarbidge Planning Area follow the FEIS Proposed Routes for Segments 8 and 9 for the majority of the lengths through the Planning Area.

*Segment 8:* The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) is the same as the Proposed Route analyzed in the FEIS. It enters the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area (in the Four Rivers Field Office) west of King Hill and continues in a westerly direction where it leaves the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area east of the Hot Springs Reservoir. Segment 8 is within the Planning Area for approximately 12 miles, 6.4 of which are located on BLM-managed land.

*Segment 9:* The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1) is same as the FEIS Preferred Route. It enters the 2015 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area (within the Jarbidge Field Office) in the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC at Lilly Grade and continues for approximately 40 miles to the north-northwest inside the eastern boundary of the Planning Area and then continues west for approximately 12 miles before exiting the 2015 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area. The route then crosses the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area for approximately 3 miles before entering the SRBOP.

**Additional Routes:** While all remaining routes cross the land managed under the 2015 Jarbidge RMP, Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7) is the only one that crosses land still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. Routes 8G (Alternatives 4 and 5), FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternatives 2, 4, and 6), and 9K (Alternatives 5 and 7) would cross lands managed under the 2015 Jarbidge RMP. Route 9K follows the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route for much of its length in this area, and Route 8G enters the Planning Area from the east before paralleling 9K through the rest of the Planning Area.

*FEIS Proposed 9* follows the same alignment as the Revised Proposed Route through the majority of the Jarbidge RMP Planning Area. At the western end, this route follows

the WWE corridor through the eastern section of the SRBOP, and then follows the WWE corridor south of the SRBOP for the majority of the rest of the route.

*Route 9K* follows the same alignment as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route through the 2015 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area until after it leaves the Planning Area (and thus the Jarbidge Field Office) and enters the SRBOP Planning Area. Unlike the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route, however, 9K re-enters the Jarbidge Field Office at approximately MP 98 and continues generally south for approximately 3 miles before turning west and exiting the planning area near MP 101.

*Route 8G* enters the Jarbidge RMP Planning Area near MP 24.4 just after crossing the Snake River, north of the existing 500-kV line, Lower Salmon Falls Dam, and multiple lower voltage transmission lines, and approximately 1.0 to 1.25 miles north of Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument. From there it continues west, remaining 250 feet north of and parallel to the existing 500-kV line, within the WWE corridor on public land. Route 8G crosses areas of extensive wind energy development to the Twin Falls/Elmore County line. At MP 26.6, approximately 1.9 miles of the existing 500-kV transmission line would be rebuilt 250 feet to the south to avoid existing agricultural and windfarm infrastructure on private land, and Route 8G would follow the current alignment for the existing 500-kV line for approximately 5 miles before leaving the existing 500-kV line and continuing west, still within the WWE corridor, and roughly following the southern leg of the FEIS Route 8A and northern leg of the FEIS Route 9B. At MP 44, it meets up with 9K and parallels the line, approximately 250 feet to the north and east through the rest of the 2015 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area.

**Toana Road Variations:** These variations, just west of Devil Creek, were developed by the BLM to avoid paralleling the Toana Freight Wagon Road, a National Register Historic Site. After the 2013 FEIS, BLM archaeologists determined that the Proposed Route paralleled within 0.25 mile of the Toana Road between MP 38.2 and 40.6, and paralleled within 1 mile of the road through Blue Gulch between MP 40.6 and 43.5.

*Toana Road Variation 1 (included in the Preferred Alternative):* Toana Road Variation 1 to the Proposed Route is approximately 9 miles in length. It deviates from the Proposed Route at MP 38.2, crossing the Toana Freight Wagon Road at MP 0.3, and continuing in a westerly direction an additional 1.7 miles. The variation then turns north along the base of Castleford Butte and continues an additional 7 miles before rejoining the Proposed Route at MP 46.8, near Balanced Rock Road. Approximately 0.3 mile of the route crosses State land, with the remainder of the route on land managed by the BLM.

*Toana Road Variation 1-A:* The Toana Road Variation 1-A to the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route was also recommended by BLM to minimize visual impacts to the Toana Freight Wagon Road, but also to utilize existing roads and to minimize new road construction in the area. Variation 1-A also deviates from the Proposed Route at MP 38.2 and follows the same alignment as Variation 1 for the first 2 miles before turning north. At MP 3.6, the variation crosses, and then closely parallels Kinyon Road an additional 3.4 miles. At MP 7, the alignment turns to the northwest for 1.8 miles, rejoining the Proposed Route at MP 46.8, near Balanced Rock Road. Approximately 1 mile of the route crosses state land, with the remainder of the route variation on land managed by the BLM.

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in SEIS Section 1.4, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

### **3.2.3 Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative 5 does not cross this area and therefore no land-use plan amendments are proposed. Routes associated with other Alternatives do cross this area and amendments that would be associated with these routes are discussed in Section 3.2.4.

### **3.2.4 Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Routes Not Included in the Preferred Alternative**

Alternatives 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7 contain routing that would require an amendment to the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. Portions of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3), as well as the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H (Alternative 1 and Alternatives 6 and 7, respectively) cross areas managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. All Alternatives cross the Jarbidge Field Office; however, approval of the 2015 Jarbidge RMP resulted in no amendments being required for those portions of the routes occurring within the current boundaries of the Jarbidge Field Office. Routes 9K and FEIS Proposed 9 cross the current boundaries of the Jarbidge Field Office and do not cross land still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP; therefore, no additional amendments are associated with these routes. Amendments would be needed for routes not associated with the Preferred Alternative and would apply to the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route, and Route 8H where they cross land in the Four Rivers Field Office that is still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. These areas are north of the current Jarbidge Field Office boundary (Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8) and between two sections of the SRBOP (Route 8H). While the impacts from these amendments were analyzed in the 2013 FEIS, the analysis is provided here for continuity. In addition, amendments have been renumbered to conform to the structure of the SEIS.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would need an amendment where it crosses a utility avoidance/restricted area designated in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP.

**Amendment SEIS-3** for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would amend the Lands decision and would read:

*“The current Lands decision is amended to reclassify the area identified as restricted in Section 35, T. 04 S., R. 09 E. to allow the overhead lines of a 500-kV powerline right of way while protecting the Oregon Trail ruts.”*

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would require a plan amendment to the 1987 Jarbidge RMP if it was selected to address cultural resources.

**Amendment SEIS-4** for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would amend the Cultural Resources direction in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The amendment would read (revisions in italics):

*“The existing ruts of the main route, north and south alternate routes of the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road will be protected by not allowing incompatible uses to occur within 1/2 mile corridor of ruts except where visual impacts are already compromised. Protect the existing trail ruts from disturbance.”*

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

**Amendment SEIS-5** for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would amend the VRM management and would read:

*“The VRM decision and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. The VRM are modified according to the new manual to reclassify the VRM Class I area associated with the Oregon Trail and the proposed 500-kV line as VRM Class IV.”*

Alternative 1 includes Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route. Route 8H, which is included in Alternatives 6 and 7, follows the same routing as Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route through the Jarbidge area. This alignment crosses land in the Four Rivers Field Office that is still managed under the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. A small parcel of VRM Class II managed land is crossed in this area, just before the route enters the SRBOP for the second time. Segments of the Oregon Trail are present to the north of the alignment. A transmission line would not be consistent with the VRM Class II designation and an amendment would be needed.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route, if selected, would require a plan amendment to the Jarbidge RMP where the route crosses VRM Class II land just east of the SRBOP.

**Amendment SEIS-14** for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H would amend the VRM management and would read:

*“The VRM decision and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. The VRM Classification is amended to change the VRM Class to VRM Class III, adjacent to the proposed line, where the towers would be visible and dominate the landscape.”*

### **3.2.5 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The affected environment is discussed in Chapter 3 for each resource: Section 3.2.1 for visual resources, Section 3.3.1 for cultural resources, Section 3.6.1 for vegetation resources, Section 3.10.1 for wildlife resources, Section 3.11.1 for special status species, and Section 3.17.1 for recreation and land use.

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the SEIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Section 3.2 and Appendix G for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Section 3.3 for effects on cultural

resources; Sections 3.6 vegetation; Section 3.10 effects on wildlife; Section 3.11 for effects on special status species; and Section 3.17 for effects on land use and recreation.

Changing Utility/Avoidance area classifications and modifying protection language around cultural resources could result in reduced management actions geared towards protection of archaeological resources. In areas where the VRM class is changed from Class I or II to Class III or IV, an amendment would result in the area being managed at a lower protection level.

### **3.2.5.1 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The BLM Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5 with inclusion of the Toana Road Variation 1) does not cross the 1987 Jarbidge RMP Planning area in the Four Rivers Field Office. Therefore, there are no proposed plan amendments for this Alternative. Effects of plan amendments that would be associated with other Alternatives are discussed in Section 3.2.5.2.

### **3.2.5.2 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Route Alternatives and Variations**

Changing the restricted/avoidance area to allow a 500-kV ROW would result in reduced protection for the values of the trail for which the restricted area was partially established. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 would cross the North Alternate Study Trail within the restricted/avoidance area. A 220-kV line already crosses the trail near this location. This amendment allowing an additional line, while restricting surface disturbance activities, will further impact the historical landscape within these locations, however, it will still maintain the physical integrity of the trail at the crossing and adjacent locations. The RMP states that “rights-of-way, under Title V of FLPMA, will be considered in the Jarbidge Resource Area except where specifically identified in the RMP for avoidance.” The RMP also protects nine sites (including the Oregon Trail Area) with “areas of significant public values” through this special designation. Changing the designation in this area to allow the Project, while protecting trail ruts, would not protect the area from visual intrusion and would only protect the physical presence of the trail. The BLM Manual 6280 Study conducted for this Project (see Appendix J in the SEIS) rated the area as having a Scenic Quality Rating of C and concluded that the Project, while creating a strong visual contrast at a local KOP (C1511), would create a moderate adverse visual impact and would not affect the Scenic Quality Rating, due to the existing cultural modifications within the area.

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

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

Changing the VRM from Class I to Class IV near the Oregon Trail would remove some protections aimed at protecting the visual landscape surrounding the North Alternate Study Trail. This section of the Oregon Trail is currently under review to determine if it should be included as a National Historic Trail. The trails analysis in the BLM Manual 6280 Study (see Appendix J in the SEIS) stated that the Visual Resource Inventory (VRI) rates this area as Class C, which indicates scenery without much diversity in terms of landscape features and is the lowest rating from an aesthetic perspective. As stated above, this analysis also concluded that the presence of a new 500-kV line would not lower the Visual Quality Rating of the area due to existing cultural modifications. The management guidance for the 1987 Jarbidge RMP states that:

“Visual Resource Management – The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400.”

The 1984 BLM Manual 8400 states that the “visual management objectives (classes) are developed through the RMP process for all Bureau lands. The approved VRM objectives shall result from, and conform with, the resource allocation decisions made in RMP’s [sic].”<sup>5</sup> The manual discusses visual design considerations and gives an overview of the Visual Resource Management System and refers the reader to BLM Manual Sections 8410 and 8431 for Visual Resource Inventory and Contrast Rating methods, respectively. The guidance in these two manuals indicates that the area considered in the amendment may no longer qualify as VRM Class I using the VRI directions in Manual Section 8410. Amending the VRM Class I area around the NHT to VRM Class IV would be in keeping with the management direction under the new guidance for visual resource protection. The viewsheds for the trail in this area are already highly compromised, with multiple existing transmission lines running north of the proposed route. In addition, a WWE corridor is designated directly south of the proposed alignment. However, as stated in BLM Manual 8400, the RMP determines the VRM Classification of an area. Therefore, an amendment is still required.

In areas where the VRM class is changed from Class I or II to Class III or IV, an amendment would result in the area being managed at a lower protection level. Amending the VRM Class I area around the NHT to VRM Class IV would be in keeping with the management direction under the new guidance for visual resource protection. The viewsheds for the trail in this area are already highly compromised, with multiple

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<sup>5</sup> BLM. 1984. BLM Manual 8400-Visual Resource Management. Available online at: [http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information\\_Resources\\_Management/policy/blm\\_manual.Par.34032.File.dat/8400.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/blm_manual.Par.34032.File.dat/8400.pdf)

existing transmission lines running north of the proposed route. In addition, a WWE corridor is designated directly south of the proposed alignment.

EPMs such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-7 and VIS-11) will be used to reduce visual impacts. Amending the RMP to lower the VRM classification may encourage additional development in these areas, which would further impact the visual resources, beyond the Project actions.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Appendix M of the Final SEIS.

Changing the VRM Class II area near the C.J. Strike Reservoir to VRM Class III would reduce the visual protection within the Snake River area. The presence of a tower in this location could impact the visual experience of recreational users along the rim of the canyon. This parcel of VRM Class II area is relatively small, and the proposed project would sit back from the rim, which may reduce the impact of recreational users within the canyon and reservoir. Changing the VRM class could potentially allow for future project to be constructed closer to the canyon rim, which would have increased visibility. The proposed area for reclassification is relatively small, however, and additional plan modification might be required for new projects.

### **3.3 SRBOP RMP Land Use Plan Amendments**

The SRBOP encompasses approximately 483,700 public land acres, extending 81 miles along the Snake River. The SRBOP includes the 138,000-acre Orchard Training Area used by the Idaho Army National Guard for military training since 1953. The enabling statute for the NCA, Public Law (P.L.) 103-64, established the SRBOP in 1993 for the "...conservation, protection and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats and the natural and environmental resources and values associated therewith, and of the scientific, cultural, and educational resources and values." Public activities and uses that existed when the legislation was enacted are allowed to continue to the extent that they are compatible with the purposes for which the NCA was established – i.e., to provide for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of raptor (birds of prey) populations and habitats and environmental resources and values associated therewith, and of the scientific, cultural, and educational resources and values of the public lands in the conservation area. The SRBOP contains the greatest concentration of nesting raptors in North America.

Manual 6220 provides guidance on managing BLM-managed public lands that are components of the National Landscape Conservation System and that have been designated by Congress or the President as National Monuments, NCAs, and similar designations. This designation includes the SRBOP. National program policies that are generally applicable to BLM-managed public lands apply to National Landscape Conservation System components to the extent that they are consistent with the designating proclamation or legislation, other applicable law, and BLM policy.

The BLM's objectives in implementing this policy are to:

- comply with designating Acts of Congress and presidential proclamations by conserving, protecting, and restoring the objects and values for which Monuments and NCAs were designated for the benefit of present and future generations;
- effectively manage valid existing rights and compatible uses within Monuments and NCAs;
- manage discretionary uses within Monuments and NCAs to ensure the protection of the objects and values for which the Monuments and NCAs were designated;
- utilize science, local knowledge, partnerships, and volunteers to effectively manage Monuments and NCAs; and
- provide appropriate recreational opportunities, education, interpretation, and visitor services to enhance the public's understanding and enjoyment of the Monuments and NCAs.

The SRBOP is managed by BLM under the concept of dominant use rather than multiple uses. This means that, prior to authorizing uses, the BLM must determine the compatibility of those uses with the purposes for which the SRBOP was established.

The BLM considered over 50 routes for Segments 8 and 9, 7 routes in detail for Segment 8, and 11 routes in detail for Segment 9. Routing options in and near the SRBOP include, among others, alignments to avoid to the greatest extent possible the SRBOP, non-motorized areas, crossings of the Snake River, sage-grouse habitat, historic trails, important archaeological areas, and populated areas. Routing also considered colocation within the WWE corridor. No feasible route was identified that would completely avoid the SRBOP. Any route south of the SRBOP in Idaho would have to cross designated wilderness and/or the Saylor Creek Air Force Range. Any route north and east of the SRBOP would cross several high-voltage transmission lines and/or the cities of Kuna or Boise. By closely following the existing 500-kV Summer Lake transmission line across the SRBOP, the Preferred Alternative would not be out of conformance with existing conditions. By generally following the WWE corridor in the pinch point between the Bruneau Dunes State Park and the Saylor Creek Range and the Bruneau-Jarbidge Wilderness, Route 9K was designed to generally conform to the previously approved use. Appendix K provides a robust analysis of the implementation of the mitigation hierarchy to avoid, minimize, rectify, or reduce impacts over time, to compensate for purposes of achieving enhancement.

The SRBOP RMP,<sup>6</sup> approved in September 2008, guides decisions made by the Four Rivers Field Office regarding actions that occur in the SRBOP Planning Area. These include decisions on the granting of ROWs under Title V of FLPMA. The RMP restricts major utility development to two existing corridors in the SRBOP Planning Area. The RMP also includes management direction for motorized vehicle use, protects visual

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<sup>6</sup> BLM. 2008. Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision. Boise District Office. September. Available online at: [https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/35553/41906/44406/Snake\\_River\\_Birds\\_of\\_Prey\\_RMP\\_RoD\\_2008\\_508.pdf](https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/lup/35553/41906/44406/Snake_River_Birds_of_Prey_RMP_RoD_2008_508.pdf)

resources, and prohibits surface disturbing activities near special status species. The Project does not conform to decisions in the SRBOP RMP. Plan amendments would be needed for the Revised Proposed Routes in Segments 8 and 9 regarding utility corridor restrictions, visual resources, and special status species.

An amendment would be needed if any Alternative is selected, since all route combinations cross the SRBOP. Amendments are proposed for the SRBOP RMP under the Preferred Alternative 5, which contains Route 8G and Route 9K (see Table F-3a). Other Alternatives, and their associated routes, that would require the same amendment are also included in the table. The Preferred Alternative and routes associated with it are presented in bold. Amendments for the SRBOP RMP that are only associated with routes for other Alternatives are presented in Table F-3b.

**Table F-3a.** Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments for the SRBOP RMP

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing RMP Direction	Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment
<b>Preferred Alternative 5</b>	SEIS-13	<b>8G/9K/Alt. 5</b> WWE Corridor Variation	Utility and Communication Corridors – Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3).	Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow additional major powerline ROWs as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated. Allow two additional 500 kV transmission line ROWs to leave the WWE corridor and exit the SRBOP due south of Bruneau Dunes State Park.
<b>Preferred Alternative 5</b> Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3 Alternative 4 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-8	<b>9K/8G/ Alt. 5</b> WWE Corridor and Helicopter- Assisted Construction Variations/ Revised Proposed 8/FEIS Proposed 9/ Revised Proposed 9	Sensitive Plant Habitat Include in all BLM authorizations permitting surface disturbing activities (non-grazing), requirements that (1) affected areas be reseeded with a perennial vegetative cover, and (2) surface disturbing activities be located at least 1/2 mile from occupied sensitive plant habitat.	Gateway West will be allowed within 0.5 mile of occupied, sensitive plant habitat, with appropriate mitigation to protect sensitive plants, including slickspot peppergrass <sup>1/</sup>

1/ The Gateway West Transmission Line Project would comply with all stipulations as provided within the Amendment discussion in the Final SEIS, Appendix F and Appendix M.

**Table F-3b.** Land Use Plan Amendments for the SRBOP RMP for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing MFP Direction	Land Use Plan Amendment
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3	SEIS-6	Revised Proposed 8	Utility and Communication Corridors – Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3).	Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.
Alternative 3	SEIS-21	9K	Utility and Communication Corridors – Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3).	Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.
Alternative 2 Alternative 4 Alternative 6	SEIS-7	FEIS Proposed 9	Utility and Communication Corridors – Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3).	Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-15	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ 8H	VRM II Protect the Oregon Trail and management areas along the Snake River Canyon as a Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II area, the Army National Guard Orchard Training Area (OTA) as Class IV and remaining areas as Class III. [Visual Resource Management (VRM Map)]	A corridor 250 feet from the centerline of the proposed powerline would be established with a VRM of Class III. This corridor would maintain a distance of at least 0.5 mile from the NHT, except where it crosses the trail.
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-16	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ 8H	This SRMA consists of 22,300 acres in the Snake River Canyon downstream from Grandview, Idaho that is managed for the protection of cultural and scenic values. (2.14 Recreation 2-20).	This SRMA consists of 22,300 acres in the Snake River Canyon downstream from Grandview, Idaho that is managed for the protection of cultural and scenic values. Allow a 500-kV transmission line to cross the SRMA while protecting cultural resources from surface disturbance.

**Table F-3b.** Land Use Plan Amendments for the SRBOP RMP for Routes not associated with the Preferred Alternative (continued)

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing MFP Direction	Land Use Plan Amendment
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-17	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ 8H	C.J. Strike SRMA: This SRMA consists of 20,000 acres surrounding C.J. Strike Reservoir along the Snake River. The purpose of the SRMA is to provide enhanced recreation management associated with the reservoir, and protection of the Oregon Trail adjacent to the reservoir (2.14 Recreation 2-20).	C.J. Strike SRMA: This SRMA consists of 20,000 acres surrounding C.J. Strike Reservoir along the Snake River. The purpose of the SRMA is to provide enhanced recreation management associated with the reservoir, and protection of the Oregon Trail adjacent to the reservoir. Allow a 500-kV transmission line to cross the SRMA while protecting the Oregon Trail from surface disturbance.
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-18	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ 8H	VRM II Protect the Oregon Trail and management areas along the Snake River Canyon as a Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II area, the Army National Guard Orchard Training Area (OTA) as Class IV and remaining areas as Class III. [Visual Resource Management (VRM Map)].	VRM Class II areas associated with the Oregon Trail and Snake River that are in view of the 500-kV transmission line that would not meet VRM Class II objectives of the C.J. Strike SRMA would be reclassified to VRM Class III.
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-19	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ 8H	2.16 Transportation – Close the following areas to motorized vehicles: ... Cove – 1,600 acres (Transportation Map A-145).	The area is closed to motorized vehicle use, subject to authorized use.
Alternative 1 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-20	Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/ 8H	Utility and Communication Corridors – Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3).	Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.
Alternative 4	SEIS-22	8G	Utility and Communication Corridors – Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3).	Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.

### 3.3.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the SRBOP RMP

All routes for all action alternatives cross the SRBOP Planning Area. Route locations were developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect significant resources to the greatest extent feasible. These include, but are not limited to, TES species, soil resources, cultural resources, and visual resources. The Project is not in conformance with the decisions in the SRBOP RMP and the plan would need to be amended. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Preferred Alternative would require amendments to the SRBOP RMP. This Alternative utilizes Route 8G and Route 9K (inclusive of the Toana Road Variation 1). Segment 8 of the Revised Proposed Route, FEIS Proposed 9, Route 8G, and Route 9K would require plan amendments for granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed under the RMP. All routes would require an amendment to the SRBOP RMP to allow surface disturbance from the Project within 0.5 mile of occupied sensitive plant habitat.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route follows the same alignment as the FEIS Proposed Route for the first 91.4 miles. It then deviates from the FEIS Proposed Route alignment and would be 250 feet north of the existing Midpoint to Hemingway (Summer Lake) 500-kV line rather than 1,500 feet south of the line from the eastern boundary of the SRBOP (MP 99.7) to the Hemingway Substation. It would also cross the Snake River north of Guffey Butte, instead of south for the area as in the 2013 FEIS. This means that portions of the route would cross the SRBOP outside of the two designated corridors.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route also crosses the SRBOP. This route is the same as the FEIS Proposed 9 for the first 95.6 miles, and then follows an alignment similar to the FEIS Route 9D/9G from MP 95.6 and 154.7, except that two portions of the route would be double-circuited with existing 138-kV lines within the SRBOP: the first, near C.J. Strike Reservoir and the Bruneau Arm (MP 106.2 to 109.3 and 109.9 to 112.1), and the other along Baja Road (MP 121 to 141.2). Several rebuilds totaling approximately 0.6 mile are also required to tie the existing 138-kV lines into the new double-circuit alignments.

The Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes, FEIS Proposed 9, and Routes 8G, 8H, and 9K would cross the SRBOP outside of designated corridors, and cross multiple SRMAs, VRM Class II areas, and cultural resource areas.

The SRBOP RMP restricts utility development to two corridors. Portions of all routes cross the SRBOP outside of these corridors. RMP direction for Lands, Realty, and Utility Corridors states:

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

The RMP provides management direction for sensitive plants. Portions of all routes would cross occupied habitat for sensitive plants, with the Revised Proposed Routes for Segments 8 and 9 and Route 8H crossing the SRBOP for the longest distance of the routing options. EPMs would be followed (see Appendix M in the SEIS) to avoid or

minimize negative impacts to these species or their habitat as required under Conservation Measure 3 – Ensure that new Federal actions support or do not preclude species conservation in slickspot peppergrass habitat (page 4 of the Conservation Agreement [CA]; A-67 of the SRBOP RMP):

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

As this is in keeping with the RMP, no amendment is needed. However, the RMP also states:

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

The purpose of the proposed amendments for Preferred Alternative 5 is to modify SRBOP RMP decisions for utility corridors and sensitive plant habitat such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would be in conformance with the RMP. The amendment for sensitive plants would also apply under all other Alternatives.

Under Alternatives 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7, routing for Segments 8 and 9 would cross outside of designated corridors and an amendment, similar to what would be proposed for the Preferred Alternative, would be needed.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and 8H would cross VRM Class II areas and would require an amendment to address this nonconformance. The existing Standard Operating Procedures under Section 2.17 (Utility and Communication Corridors) state:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and 8H would pass through the Snake River SRMA. This use is not in conformance with the SRMA designation based on “recreational, scenic or cultural values.” The RMP includes the following restriction:

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

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and 8H would pass through C.J. Strike SRMA. This use is not in conformance with the SRMA designation based on “recreational, scenic or cultural values.” The designation of the C.J. Strike SRMA is defined as:

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

The RMP includes decisions that close areas to motorized vehicles. The Management Objective currently reads: “Provide motorized vehicle access to the majority of the NCA while reducing the number of unnecessary routes and increasing the non-motorized opportunities.” Portions of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross the Cove Non-Motorized Area. The SRBOP RMP states:

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

Amendments would be needed to modify the utility corridor, visual resource, motorized vehicle, SRMA, and sensitive plant restrictions such that the Project would be in conformance with the SRBOP RMP if Alternative 1, 6, or 7 was selected. If Alternative 3 or 4 is selected, amendments would be needed to modify utility corridor and sensitive plant restrictions.

### **3.3.2 Project Alternatives and Associated Routing**

**Revised Proposed Routes:** The Revised Proposed Routes for Segments 8 and 9, and to a lesser extent Route 8G, Route 8H, FEIS Proposed 9, and Route 9K, would cross through the SRBOP Planning Area. These routes would follow similar alignments as the routes presented in the FEIS but with modifications to reduce impacts to important resources. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall as well as 500/138-kV double-circuit H-frame structures between 160 and 190 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the SRBOP RMP. Several additional routes were considered along Segments 8 and 9, which are discussed in Chapter 2 of the SEIS and in the 2013 FEIS. The Revised Proposed Routes and the other routes are described in Chapter 2 of the SEIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is similar to the original proposed route in the 2013 FEIS except that the line would be 250 feet north of the existing 500-kV line rather than 1,500 feet south of the line from the eastern boundary of the SRBOP (MP 99.7) to the Hemingway Substation. It would also cross the Snake River north of Guffey Butte,

instead of south as in the FEIS. The first 91.4 miles of the route is unchanged from the FEIS Proposed Route.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route includes a 139.8-mile single-circuit 500-kV transmission line and 25.5 miles of double-circuit 500/138-kV transmission line between the proposed Cedar Hill Substation near the county line between Cassia and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho and the Hemingway Substation. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route follows the same alignment as the FEIS Proposed 9 for 95.6 miles, and then follows an alignment similar to the FEIS Routes 9D/9G from MPs 95.6 and 154.7 (Route 8H would follow this part of the alignment as well), except that two portions of the route would be double-circuited with existing 138-kV lines within the SRBOP: the first, near C.J. Strike Reservoir and the Bruneau Arm (MPs 106.2 to 109.3 and 109.9 to 112.1), and the other along Baja Road (MPs 121 to 141.2). Several rebuilds totaling approximately 0.6 mile are also required to tie the existing 138-kV lines into the new double-circuit alignments. Except for minor variations, the route is unchanged from the FEIS Routes 9D/9G between MPs 141.2 and 154.7. The revised Segment 9 Proposed Route crosses the Snake River south of Sinker Butte, whereas the 2013 FEIS Proposed Route did not cross the Snake River. From MP 154.7 to the Hemingway Substation, the route is the same as the FEIS Proposed Route. Route 8H follows the same alignment as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route through the SRBOP Planning Area.

**Additional Routes:** Under Alternative 5, both Routes 8G and 9K would cross the SRBOP 250 feet apart and parallel to each other. Their alignment through the SRBOP is very similar to the alignment for Route 9E analyzed in the FEIS, and is the same as the alignment of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 through this easternmost portion of the SRBOP (east of MP 95.6). Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 have varying configurations for different Alternatives, but have some degree of parallel routing of Segment 8 and Segment 9 combinations under Alternatives 4, 5, 6, and 7. Routes 8G and 9K cross the SRBOP just south of the WWE corridor at the eastern edge of the SRBOP, while the FEIS Proposed 9 crosses the SRBOP within the WWE corridor except for a small area near the town of Murphy.

**Alternative 5 Helicopter-Assisted Construction Variation:** The Alternative 5 Helicopter-Assisted Construction Variation would be implemented between MP 141 of Route 9K/MP 112 of Route 8G and the Hemingway Substation. The beginning location is approximately 2 miles south of State Highway 78 and 5 miles southeast of Oreana (see Figure A-6). This variation would consist of 32.9 miles of 8G and 33.2 miles of 9K, each route built adjacent to each other but approximately 250 feet apart; therefore, the total length of the transmission lines would be 66.1 miles.

Helicopter-assisted construction is intended to reduce ground disturbance. This variation would utilize low-impact vehicles and ground equipment to support the construction of foundations and tower erection. Tower foundations would be constructed using equipment specifically selected to minimize ground disturbance to the extent practicable. Some lattice tower erection may be completed within the limitations of the lower impact construction equipment. All other construction would be supported by helicopters with sufficient lift capacity for the intended operation.

Helicopter-assisted construction would minimize vegetation clearing during construction because the disturbance would generally be completed with low-impact construction vehicles utilizing overland access. There would be no permanent roads built under this variation, all temporary roads in this area would be reclaimed at a level sufficient to meet underlying land management objectives (i.e., there would be no permanent roads along this variation). The road system proposed for this variation generally follows the design for the comparison portion of the alternative; however it has been modified to reduce impacts to sage-grouse habitat where practicable. It is likely that these modifications would also be incorporated into the road system for the comparison portion of the alternative if it is selected in the Record of Decision.

The Proponents estimate that up to 1,600 helicopter flights would be required, for a period of 2 to 3 months, in order to construct the Project under this variation. See Appendix B-2 for additional information on helicopter-assisted construction.

**Alternative 5 West-wide Energy Corridor Variation:** The Alternative 5 WWE Corridor Variation would also be implemented between MP 141 of Route 9K/MP 112 of Route 8G and the Hemingway Substation. The beginning location is approximately 2 miles south of State Highway 78 and 5 miles southeast of Oreana (see Figure A-6 in Appendix A). This variation would consist of 31.0 miles of 8G and 31.2 miles of 9K, each route built adjacent to each other but approximately 250 feet apart; therefore, the total length of the transmission lines would be 62.2 miles.

Under this variation, the 9K and 8G routes would follow FEIS Proposed 9 to the Hemingway Substation beginning approximately 2 miles south of State Highway 78 and 5 miles southeast of Oreana (see Figure A-6). The FEIS Proposed 9 route generally follows the WWE corridor, leaving it briefly near Murphy to avoid impacting a pivot irrigation system.

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative analyzed in the SEIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in SEIS Section 1.4, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

### **3.3.3 Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the SRBOP RMP Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative 5 would require amendments to the SRBOP RMP to be consistent with the land use plan. Amendments are proposed for Routes 8G and 9K (Figure F-3).

The SRBOP RMP limits new utilities to existing corridors. Both Routes 8G and 9K would require the same amendment for Utility Corridors under Alternative 5. These routes run parallel to each other through a small area of SRBOP RMP-managed lands just west of the Saylor Creek Range. The WWE variation for Alternative 5 and FEIS

Proposed 9 cross the SRBOP within the WWE corridor on the east side then again near the town of Murphy, where it is just outside the corridor. An amendment would be required for crossing the SRBOP outside of a designated corridor.

**Proposed Amendment SEIS-13** for Routes 8G and 9K (Alternative 5) would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project without designating an additional utility corridor in the NCA (changes in italics):

*“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow additional major powerline ROWs as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated. Allow two additional 500 kV transmission line ROWs to leave the designated WWE corridor and exit the SRBOP NCA due south of Bruneau Dunes State Park.”*

All routes would cross the SRBOP in areas where construction could affect slickspot peppergrass and its habitat in addition to other sensitive plant habitat. The RMP contains management direction restricting surface disturbance and project activity that would disturb this habitat. While potential impacts to slickspot peppergrass will be handled through the *Lepidium papilliferum* CA and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Project would still not meet the distance requirements for all occupied sensitive plant habitat and an amendment would still be required.

**Proposed Amendment SEIS-8** for routes in Preferred Alternative 5 (Route 8G and Route 9K, inclusive of Toana Road Variation 1) would amend the Sensitive Species decision and would read (changes in italics):

*“Sensitive Plant Habitat Include in all BLM authorizations permitting surface disturbing activities (non-grazing), requirements that (1) affected areas be reseeded with a perennial vegetative cover, and (2) surface disturbing activities be located at least 1/2 mile from occupied sensitive plant habitat. Gateway West will be allowed within 0.5 mile of occupied, sensitive plant habitat, with appropriate mitigation to protect sensitive plants, including slickspot peppergrass.*

This amendment would also apply to the remaining routes (Revised Proposed Route for Segments 8 and 9, FEIS 9, and Route 8H) and both Alternative 5 Variations.

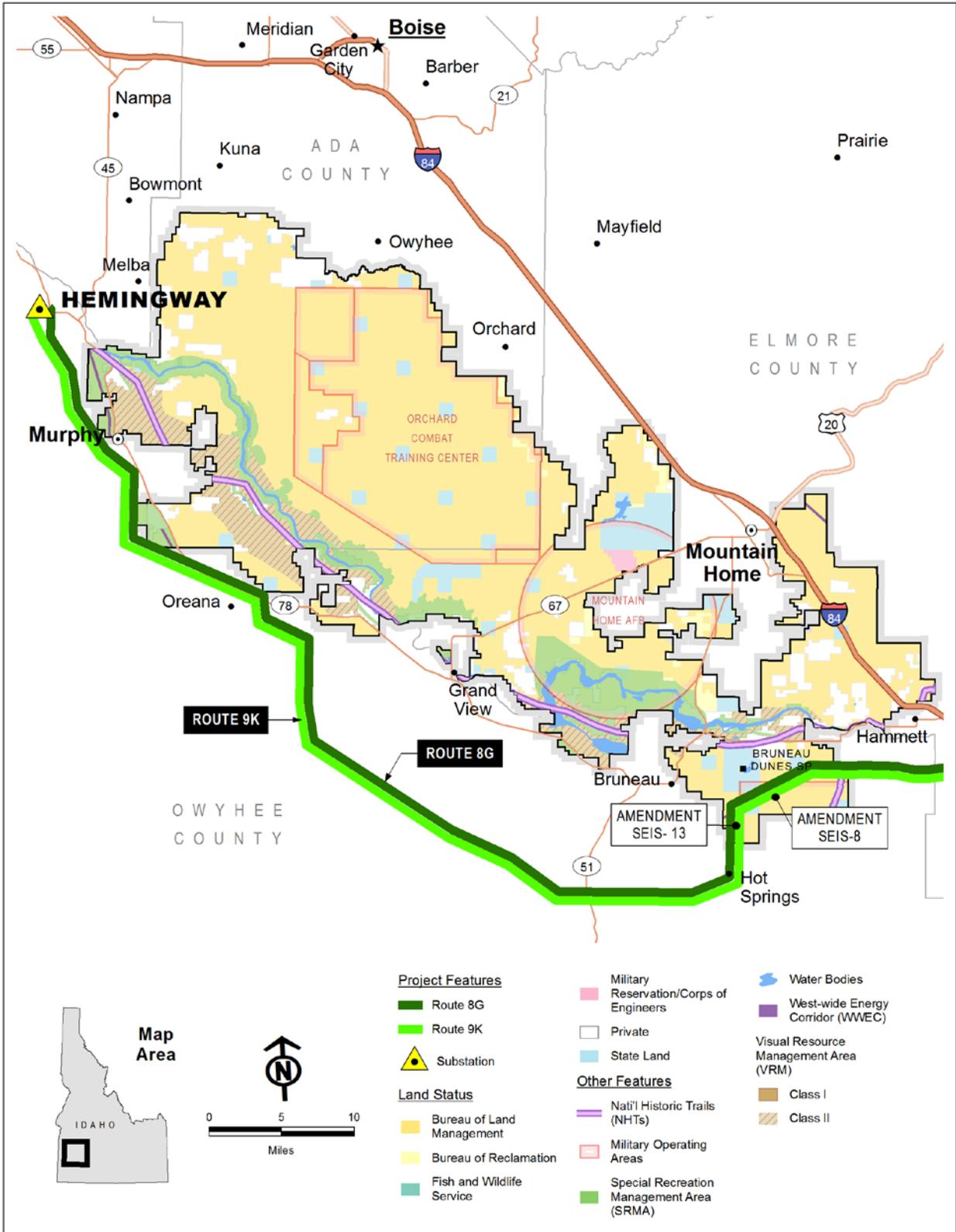


Figure F-3. Locations of SRBOP RMP Amendments for Preferred Alternative 5

### 3.3.4 Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Routes Not Included in the Preferred Alternative

The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) would cross the SRBOP near other transmission lines at the northern end of the Planning Area, as well as through the western portion of the SRBOP, paralleling the existing 500-kV line (approximately 250 feet north of the existing line). An amendment would be required to cross the SRBOP outside of a designated corridor (see Figure F-4).

**Amendment SEIS-6** for the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project without designating an additional utility corridor in the NCA (changes in italics):

*“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.”*

Routes 8G and 9K are included in Alternative 5, which uses both routes, creating parallel transmission lines through much of the routing. For other Alternatives, the routes are not parallel to each other and therefore different amendments are required. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H require additional amendments to those Proposed for the Preferred Alternative. Amendments would be needed for crossing VRM Class II areas associated with the Snake River and Oregon Trail, crossing SRMAs, non-motorized areas, outside of designated utility corridors, and within 0.5 mile of sensitive plant habitat. Amendment SEIS-8 (addressing sensitive plant habitat) is proposed for the Preferred Alternative and would also apply to all remaining Alternatives.

FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternatives 2, 4, and 6) would cross the SRBOP outside of a designated corridor near the town of Murphy. An amendment would be required to cross this small section of the SRBOP outside of a designated corridor.

**Amendment SEIS-7** for FEIS Proposed 9 would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project without designating an additional utility corridor in the NCA (changes in italics):

*“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.”*

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H would require an amendment to the SRBOP RMP to allow the Project to cross VRM Class II areas.

**Amendment SEIS-15** for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would amend the Visual Resources Management Action to allow the development of the Project (changes in italics):

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

*“A corridor 250 feet from the centerline of the proposed powerline would be established with a VRM of Class III. This corridor would maintain a distance of at least 0.5 mile from the NHT, except where it crosses the trail.”*

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H would require an amendment to the SRBOP RMP to allow the Project to cross the Snake River SRMA. This use is not in conformance with the SRMA designation based on “recreational, scenic or cultural values.”

**Amendment SEIS-16** would amend the Recreation Objectives and Management Actions to reduce the designated area of the SRMA such that the Project would be in conformance with the RMP (changes in italics).

*“Snake River Canyon SRMA – This SRMA consists of 22,300 acres in the Snake River Canyon downstream from Grandview, Idaho that is managed for the protection of cultural and scenic values.*

*Allow a 500-kV transmission line to cross the SRMA while protecting cultural resources from surface disturbance.”*

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H would require an amendment to pass through C.J. Strike SRMA. This use is not in conformance with the SRMA designation based on “recreational, scenic or cultural values.” An amendment to allow the project within the C.J. Strike SRMA would be needed for this alignment

**Amendment SEIS-17** would amend the Recreation Objectives and Management Actions to reduce the designated area of the SRMA such that the Project would be in conformance with the RMP (changes in italics):

*“C.J. Strike SRMA – This SRMA consists of 20,000 acres surrounding C.J. Strike Reservoir along the Snake River. The purpose of the SRMA is to provide enhanced recreation management associated with the reservoir, and protection of the Oregon Trail adjacent to the reservoir.*

*Allow a 500-kV transmission line to cross the SRMA while protecting the Oregon Trail from surface disturbance.”*

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H would require an amendment to the SRBOP RMP to construct the Project through VRM Class II managed areas.

**Amendment SEIS-18** would amend Visual Resource Management Actions of the SRBOP RMP (changes in italics):

*“VRM Class II areas associated with the Oregon Trail and Snake River that are in view of the 500-kV transmission line that would not meet VRM Class II objectives of the C. J. Strike SRMA would be reclassified to VRM Class III.”*

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and 8H would require an amendment to the SRBOP RMP to construct the Project through the Cove Non-motorized Area.

**Amendment SEIS-19** would amend Transportation Management Actions of the SRBOP RMP, which closes 1,600 acres near Cove to motorized vehicles (changes in italics):

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

*The area is closed to motorized vehicle use, subject to authorized use”*

Both Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H would require the same amendment for Utility Corridors. These routes have the same alignment through the SRBOP. An amendment would be required for crossing the SRBOP outside of a designated corridor.

**Amendment SEIS-20** for Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route and 8H would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project without designating an additional utility corridor in the NCA (changes in italics):

“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) *and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.*

Routes 9K (Alternatives 3 and 7) and 8G (Alternative 4) would cross the SRBOP outside of designated corridors, west of Saylor Creek training area, and not parallel with each other. An amendment would be required to cross the SRBOP outside of a designated corridor.

**Amendment SEIS-21** for Route 9K would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project without designating an additional utility corridor in the NCA (changes in italics):

“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) *and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.*”

**Amendment SEIS-22** for Route 8G would amend the Utility and Communications Corridors Management action to allow development of this Project without designating an additional utility corridor in the NCA (changes in italics):

“Restrict major utility developments to the two utility corridors identified (Lands Map 3) *and allow an additional major powerline ROW as applicable with laws and values for which the SRBOP NCA was designated.*”

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

The Segments 8 and 9 Revised Proposed Routes would pass through designated utility corridor and ROW Avoidance Area around a National Register Historic District. Multiple routing alternatives for passing through this area were evaluated in the FEIS. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 crosses the northwestern tip of this area for approximately 0.5 mile, parallel to an existing 500-kV line. The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route crosses through the middle of this area, heading west-northwest

through the avoidance area after crossing the Snake River near the Swan Falls Dam. While it was determined that no amendment was required for this routing, significant mitigation measures and specific route determination would be required to avoid areas of cultural resources and traditional properties.

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

### **3.3.5 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The affected environment is discussed in Chapter 3 for each resource: Section 3.2.1 for visual resources, Section 3.3.1 for cultural resources, Section 3.6.1 for vegetation resources, Section 3.10.1 for wildlife resources, Section 3.11.1 for special status species, and Section 3.17.1 for recreation and land use.

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

Approximately 25 miles of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross within the boundaries of the SRBOP, approximately 15 miles of which would cross the SRBOP on BLM-administered land. The area that would be crossed is predominantly undeveloped and characterized by numerous draws and gulches with sparse vegetation. However, Segment 8 follows existing lines for the length of its route through the SRBOP, and Segment 9 follows existing lines for approximately half of its length in the SRBOP. Route 8H follows the same alignment as the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route through the SRBOP. Much of the routes would be able to utilize existing road networks; however, some areas would require construction of new roads. Allowing the transmission line through this landscape would increase the human presence by occupation of infrastructure and creation of dedicated travel routes for construction and operations.

Routes 8G and 9K would cross the southeastern portion of the SRBOP within the Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor) for approximately 6.5 miles and then turn south, outside of the WWE corridor for 2.2 miles before re-entering the 2015 Jarbidge RMP Planning Area.

FEIS Proposed 9 would cross the southeastern portion of the SRBOP within the Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor) for approximately 7.7 miles. The alignment stays within the corridor for the majority of the remainder of the route. There is a small section near the town of Murphy that would be on BLM-managed land within the SRBOP and outside of a designated corridor for just under 1 mile (See Figure F-4a).

### **3.3.5.1 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Preferred Alternative 5 would include Routes 8G and 9K. These routes run parallel to each other, approximately 250 feet apart, through approximately 8.8 miles of BLM-managed land in the eastern portion of the SRBOP. Approximately 2.2 of those miles are outside of any designated corridor, while the remaining are within a Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor). An amendment (SEIS-13) is proposed to allow the project through this area. Under the Preferred Alternative, the Project would be within designated corridors for the majority of its crossing of the SRBOP. While placing both lines parallel to each other reduces the ground-surface disturbance footprint by reducing the amount of needed road construction across a larger area, the impacts of construction would be concentrated in a smaller area. Visibility of the routes would be higher in this area than a single route and twice as many towers would be constructed. This increases the ground disturbance over a single line in the area, but also means that the ground disturbance is only occurring in one general area.

In addition to needing amendments for crossing the NCA outside of designated utility corridors, the routes for Preferred Alternative 5 (Routes 8G and 9K, with Toana Road Variation 1) would also require an amendment for allowing surface disturbance within 0.5 mile of occupied sensitive plant habitat (SEIS-8). As discussed in the amendment, this action would require surveys and on-site review to ensure disturbance is minimized. The sensitive plant direction was initiated to prevent further impacts to the survival of sensitive species and species of concern. This amendment could result in a need for more active management of affected habitats to ensure the intent of the management actions in the RMP are upheld.

### **3.3.5.2 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Land-use effects vary by Alternative and routes associated with them. The Revised Proposed Routes for Segments 8 and 9 and Route 8H cross the through the most area of the NCA. The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H follow nearly identical alignments through the southern portion of the SRBOP and amendments allowing these crossings would affect SMRAs by allowing transmission lines and changing visual resource management objectives where they would be visible. Changing VRM classifications could affect management of these areas beyond that of just the project. Allowing vehicle access in the Cove non-motorized area has the potential to impact restoration efforts. Consideration for past and future restoration efforts could help to minimize negative effects of construction and maintenance activities on these efforts.

#### **Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route**

Approximately 15 miles of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 would cross the SRBOP on BLM-managed land, paralleling an existing 500-kV line. This is not in a designated corridor, and creating a corridor would impact resource management objectives. Revised Proposed Route 8 would cross the SRBOP in two locations. In the north, it would cross just north of an existing narrow corridor, and then would parallel the existing 500-kV line through the western portion of its route through the SRBOP. While

this route would be 250 feet to the north of an existing line, a corridor was not designated for the existing line, so an amendment would be needed (SEIS-6). This would result in a new ROW, which directly affects how the land within the ROW is managed.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route avoids the majority of the Utility Avoidance area in the SRBOP, crossing it for less than three-tenths of a mile, before exiting the SRBOP to the west. While it was determined that an amendment was not needed for crossing the Utility Avoidance area, a description of the routing and implications is needed. The route would cross this small section, and the top of the Utility Avoidance Area, 250 feet north of the existing transmission line. This routing uses existing roads through the SRBOP for most of its length, and routing through the Utility Avoidance Area is required using this alignment to meet reliability requirements with the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. Approximately 9 miles of Revised Proposed 9/8H route (Alternatives 1, 6, and 7) would cross the Avoidance Area. An alternative that avoids this area has been developed for the SEIS, Route 8G, which avoids the majority of the SRBOP and would not cross the Utility Avoidance area. Allowing construction in the Utility Avoidance Area and in areas of high cultural importance, such as a National Register Historic District, could impact the ability to meet management objectives of protecting these areas and maintaining the cultural landscape. Potential impacts could include loss of historic artifacts, loss of historic character of the landscape, and diminished traditional cultural properties and resources. "Significant mitigation" would be required to limit these impacts as described in the SRBOP Record of Decision (pages 2-1 and 2-2), which could involve extensive cultural surveys, micro-siting, data recovery, and on-site mitigation.

### **Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and 8H**

The Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 (Alternative 1) and Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7) would require the most amendments to the SRBOP RMP of any of the other routes.

Changing the VRM Class II designations and allowing the Project within the Snake River SRMA (Amendments SEIS-15 and SEIS-16, respectively) could affect the ability to meet the management plan objectives. Within the SRMAs, these Visual Resource objectives include protecting visual resources of historic areas. Changing the VRM class would reduce the level of protection for those areas being changed. The VRM areas proposed for reclassification to VRM Class III are within 250 feet of the route centerline, which would likely preclude additional major powerlines from being developed in the same area, due to separation requirements. The lower visual protection, however, could make it easier for other types of disturbance to the visual landscape to occur. The construction of the transmission line, if approved, would adversely affect the historic character of place where it is installed because it would dominate the landscape. Visitors to the Oregon Trail would be affected by the visual impact of a high-voltage transmission line within the proximity of the trail.

In the C.J. Strike SRMA, changing the VRM class would not be consistent with the management of those areas within the SRMA. The SRMA was established partially for scenic values associated with the Oregon Trail; therefore, the amendment to allow the 500-kV transmission line, while protecting the physical characteristics of the trail, is required to maintain consistency with the SRMA management in the revised RMP.

While the transmission line would impact scenic values within the SRMA, maintaining the land within the SRMA allows the area to continue to be managed for recreational values and protection of the Oregon Trail through more concentrated management of the area.

While it was determined that an amendment was not needed for crossing the Utility Avoidance Area, a description of the routing and its effects is needed to explain how this will affect management in this area. The routing up to Salmon Falls Dam follows the existing transmission line through the southern portion of the SRBOP. This routing uses existing roads through the SRBOP for most of its length, and routing through the Utility Avoidance Area is needed to take advantage of these existing infrastructure, which helps reduce overall impacts to the SRBOP from the Project. This routing is proposed in conjunction with Revised Proposed 8 (Alternative 1), FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternative 6), or Route 9K (Alternative 7) to meet the Proponents' reliability requirements. Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 all avoid this area. Alternative 1 through 3 include the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route, which crosses the avoidance area for less than half a mile, parallel to an existing line. Alternative 5 and Alternative 4 avoid this management area, utilizing Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9. Allowing construction in the Utility Avoidance Area and in areas of high cultural importance, such as a National Register Historic District, could impact the ability to meet management objectives of protecting these areas and maintaining the cultural landscape. Potential impacts could include loss of historic artifacts, loss of historic character of the landscape, and diminished traditional cultural properties and resources. "Significant mitigation" would be required to limit these impacts as described in the SRBOP Record of Decision 2-1, which could involve extensive cultural surveys, micro-siting, data recovery, and on-site mitigation.

Amending the RMP to close the Cove Non-Motorized Area to motorized use, subject to authorized use (SEIS-19), allows for authorized actions within this area. This allows for emergency actions as well as the construction of the Project without changing the general management strategy for the area. This area was designated to allow restoration of the landscape. Allowing motorized use in the Cove Non-Motorized Areas could impact the ability of meeting goals for landscape restoration. Careful planning of motorized use for Project construction and maintenance access in these areas can reduce the negative effects. Construction within slickspot peppergrass suitable habitat will require surveys to ensure occupied habitat is not disturbed, in accordance with the CA. Micrositing and thorough surveys would be required to avoid damage to populations near the construction and operations areas (TESPL-4).

The SRBOP RMP contains conservation measures for the protection of slickspot peppergrass and its habitat. Slickspot peppergrass was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2009, but the listing was remanded by the Idaho District Court in 2012 (see Section 3.7.1.5 of the FEIS); however, the BLM's management of the species has not changed. All routes would cross potential and occupied sensitive plant habitat within the SRBOP; therefore, the RMP and associated CA for occupied habitat would apply. While the project would be evaluated under the CA as well as through consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an amendment would still be needed (SEIS-8), as the Project is unlikely to be able to remain 0.5 mile or more from

occupied habitats at all times. The Project includes EPMs to protect natural resources (see Appendix M in the SEIS). Specific EPMs are included to protect slickspot peppergrass habitat, which involve surveys for plants within 50 feet of construction prior to ground disturbance in all three BLM categories of slickspot peppergrass habitat, not constructing within 50 feet of identified plants or known previously occupied areas, limiting disturbance, and using appropriate methods for soil storage and seeding during reclamation activities (TESPL-4).

Because the SRBOP was designated, in large part, to protect raptor species, any impacts to raptors could affect the ability of the SRBOP to meet their management goals. The towers and conductors would be constructed following Avian Power Line Interaction Committee recommendations in avian habitat (WILD-3). Mitigation measures such as avoiding guyed towers where possible (TESWL-11 and WILD-6), and installing anti-collision devices where required could further lower the impacts to raptor species (WILD-6 and WILD-7).

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Appendix M of the SEIS. The Proponents have developed an MEP that contains design features specific to the SRBOP. This plan was developed to mitigate the effects of Project-related impacts within the SRBOP, as well as comply with the SRBOP's enabling statute (P.L. 103-64) which requires enhancement of resources within the SRBOP. A description of the MEP is in Chapter 2 and the effects analysis is discussed by resource in Chapter 3 of this SEIS. The BLM identified additional measures that could be conducted in addition to those proposed in the Proponents' MEP in order to compensate for Project-related residual impacts as well as enhance the resources that the SRBOP was established to manage. The BLM's additional measures are described in the Chapter 3 resource effects analysis.

The degree to which these measures are adopted will affect how implementation of the RMP amendments would affect the ability of the SRBOP to be managed according to the reason for its creation. Plan amendments that would reduce the level of protection for certain areas, such as around the Snake River and Oregon Trail, directly impact the ability to meet goals for land protection. In addition, crossing areas that are specifically designated to not permit road construction or transmission lines would affect management goals for which those prohibitions were designated. Implementation of enhancement measures would reduce the overall degradation to the resources in the SRBOP from the project and therefore improve the ability of the SRBOP to be managed according to the RMP goals and objectives.

### **Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9**

An amendment would be needed for allowing two parallel lines (8G and 9K) to cross the SRBOP under Alternative 5. These parallel lines would deviate from the designated corridor south of the Bruneau Dunes, creating a ROW with two parallel lines, 250 feet apart. In Alternative 4, only one route, Route 8G, would follow this route, while FEIS Proposed 9 would utilize the Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor) through this area of the SRBOP. FEIS Proposed 9 would cross the SRBOP in two locations. In the eastern end of the SRBOP, the route would cross BLM-managed land within the SRBOP within the Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor). The route again enters the SRBOP south of the town of Murphy, within a designated corridor; however, approximately 1 mile of the

route is on BLM-managed land outside of a designated corridor. The amendment (SEIS-7) would allow the Project to cross the SRBOP outside of the designated corridor; however, the distance is short. Amending the RMP to allow the routes in this alternative would therefore result in utilizing two different crossings through a short section of the eastern SRBOP, as well as the effects of FEIS Proposed 9 outside of the corridor near Murphy. Route 9K runs through approximately 8.7 miles of BLM-managed land in the eastern portion of the SRBOP. Approximately 2.2 of those miles are outside of any designated corridor, while the remaining are within a Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor). An amendment (SEIS-21), for Route 9K, when not parallel to 8G, is proposed to allow the Project through this area.

#### **Alternative 5 Helicopter-Assisted Construction Variation**

Land use plan amendment needs would be the same for this variation as for Alternative 5. Impacts of implementing the Project would differ in that construction would minimize ground disturbance related to road construction. Temporary roads and overland vehicle travel would still be used; however, where travel would require heavy machinery needing more than overland or temporary road infrastructure, helicopters would be used instead. While this has the potential to reduce impacts related to ground disturbance, weed control, and traffic, the construction period would likely be extended due to the restrictions imposed by utilizing helicopters as well as sensitive species timing restrictions. Potential impacts to sensitive plant species may be reduced in the long term due to the reduced road requirements and more limited use of roads reducing risk of invasive species and construction-related effects such as erosion, compaction, and unauthorized use.

#### **Alternative 5 WWE Corridor Variation**

The WWE Corridor Variation would result in additional impacts within the SRBOP because the routes would re-enter the Planning Area north of Oreana, Idaho. The routes would be within the WWE corridor for approximately 1.5 miles, but would be outside of the corridor within the SRBOP for just under 1 mile, in order to avoid resources on private property. The amendment would therefore also result in the corridor for the two 500-kV lines applying to this area, and would affect two locations in the SRBOP. This area is located at the edge of the BLM-administered parcel and would be adjacent to irrigated crop land for approximately 0.4 mile, would cross a public road (Ridge Road), and would avoid designated sage-grouse habitat crossed (within the Owyhee Field Office) by the routes without the variation. Under the Alternative 5 WWE Corridor Variation, Routes 8G and 9K would also cross the SRBOP to the northwest of Oreana, under the same alignment as FEIS Proposed 9. Therefore, the amendment would apply to two crossing locations of the SRBOP under this variation.

#### **Alternative Comparison**

Alternative 1 would include the most disturbance within the SRBOP. This Alternative includes impacts from both Revised Proposed Routes. As discussed in Section 3.3.5.1, the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 follows the existing Summer Lake line for much of its route through the SRBOP. This alignment minimizes disturbance to new areas, and enables the Project to use more existing infrastructure (such as roads for the existing transmission line); however, it would create new ground disturbance through a larger portion of the SRBOP than Route 8G, and result in two parallel transmission lines

through the NCA in this area. While the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 would also follow the alignment of an existing line, it would do so for only part of the route through the SRBOP and would result in changing an existing 138-kV line into a double-circuit line for part of its route, which would increase the visual disturbance in the area. This route crosses multiple areas managed for visual resources and land use plan amendments would decrease the ability to manage to these resource objectives. The western portion of the route would cross an area with no existing transmission lines and sensitive Oregon Trail and other historic management objectives.

Alternative 3 would utilize the Revised Proposed Route of Segment 8 and Route 9K. Only one transmission line would be permitted outside of the corridor in the southeast section of the SRBOP whereas Alternative 5 would have two parallel lines. However, Alternative 3 would also have the impacts described above for the Revised Proposed Route of Segment 8. Alternative 7 would have the same Segment 9 effects as Alternative 3 (using Route 9K), but would also have the same effects as described above for Revised Proposed 9 because it shares the same alignment with 8H through the SRBOP. Alternative 6 would have the same Segment 9 effects as Alternative 2, but would also include effects described for Alternative 1 regarding routing of 8H through the NCA.

Alternative 3 would have similar effects in the SRBOP as Alternative 2 because it would include the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route and Route 9K. Amendment effects would differ for Segment 9 in that the 9K route crosses the SRBOP outside existing corridors at the east side of the NCA, while FEIS Proposed 9 (used in Alternative 2) is within the Section 368 corridor (WWE corridor) in that area and is not outside of the corridor until it crosses near Murphy.

Alternative 4 would have similar effects in the SRBOP as Alternative 5. Similar to Alternative 5, this Alternative would avoid crossing the northern and western portion of the SRBOP that is crossed by the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. Unlike Alternative 5, however, the routes would not be parallel where they do cross the SRBOP. This results in two different areas being crossed at the eastern edge of the NCA, as well as the crossing of the NCA by FEIS Proposed 9 near the town of Murphy.

Alternatives 6 and 7 would have very similar effects in the SRBOP. Route 8H is used in both Alternatives, resulting in a need for the same amendments required for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route. As discussed for Alternative 1, these amendments could affect the ability to manage visual and cultural resources to the level currently desired.

### **3.4 Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Land Use Plan Amendments**

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP<sup>7</sup> provides direction for management of public land 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

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<sup>7</sup> BLM. 1980. Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Management Framework Plan. BLM Shoshone Field Office, U.S. Department of Interior.

acres in Blaine, Camas, Elmore, Gooding, and Lincoln Counties and guides actions such as the granting of ROW under Title V of FLPMA. The MFP includes management objectives and recommendations for scenic and cultural resources. The proposed crossing of the Oregon NHT would impact visual resources and archeological resources; thus, the proposed Project would not be in conformance with the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. A land use plan amendment would be needed if any Alternative containing the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is selected (Alternatives 1 through 3). The Preferred Alternative 5 does not contain Revised Proposed Route 8; therefore, no amendments are proposed. However, amendments would be needed for Alternatives 1 through 3 and these amendments are provided in Table F-4.

**Table F-4.** Land Use Plan Amendments for the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing MFP Direction	Land Use Plan Amendment
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3	SEIS-9	Revised Proposed 8	REC 4.1 – No management activity should be allowed to cause any evident changes in the form, line, color, or texture that is characteristic of the landscape within this Class II area.	The VRM Class II area within 3,000 feet to the north of the existing transmission line ROW will be reclassified to VRM III (including the existing ROW).
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3	SEIS-10	Revised Proposed 8	REC 14.6 – Prohibit all land disturbing developments and uses on archeological sites.	Manage all cultural resources with applicable laws and policies.

### 3.4.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP

No amendments are proposed because the Preferred Alternative does not cross this planning area; however, amendments would be needed for Alternatives 1 through 3, which all include the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8. The alignment for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route through the area managed under the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP has not changed from the alignment analyzed in the 2013 FEIS. Approximately 21 miles of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would cross through the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Planning Area, approximately 15 miles of which would be on BLM-managed lands. This route would cross 6.3 miles of VRM Class II lands as well as crossing the Oregon NHT. The location of the Proposed Route was identified to comply with WECC requirements and to protect important resources to the greatest extent feasible. These resources include, but are not limited to, threatened and endangered plants, wildlife, sensitive lands, and archeological and visual resources.

Because the Project would not conform to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, land use plan amendments would be needed if the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide for a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP management objective REC 4.1 for visual resources is to “manage the visual resources within the Planning Area in conformance

with the guidance in BLM Manual 6310.18B-E.” The recommendation for achieving this follows:

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

The decision for meeting the objective is to use the above recommendation as “guidance for the Class II areas, utilizing concealment, repetition of elements, minimizing surface disturbance, etc., to meet the goal” (Bennett Hills-Timmerman Hills MFP; Recreation 4.1). Amendment SEIS-9 addresses the Project’s nonconformance with the guidance in the Bennett Hills Timmerman Hills MFP regarding REC 4.1.

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

“Prohibit all land disturbing developments and uses on archeological sites.”

Amendment SEIS-10 addresses the Project’s nonconformance with the guidance in the Bennett Hills Timmerman Hills MFP regarding REC 14.6.

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

### **3.4.2 Project Alternatives and Associated Routing**

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route follows the FEIS Proposed Route for the first 91.4 miles, including the area through the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Planning Area. Segment 8 of the Proposed Route is a single-circuit 500-kV transmission line that would link the Midpoint and Hemingway Substations. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. Several alternative segments, including the routes evaluated in the 2013 FEIS (Proposed Route, BLM-Preferred Route, and additional routes) were considered. The Revised Proposed Route is described in Chapter 2 of the SEIS, along with the reasons for considering this route and other routes considered but not assessed in detail or previously assessed in the FEIS. Appendix A, Figure A-1 of the SEIS shows the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route.

**Revised Proposed Route:** The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Alternatives 1 through 3) enters lands managed by the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP north of Tuttle and east of Bliss, Idaho. The route is located in a northwesterly direction, spans approximately 21 miles of the southwest corner of the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills management area, and parallels an existing 230-kV transmission line. The route is located south of the Pioneer Reservoir, crosses the Gooding County/Elmore County line, and leaves the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills management area east of King Hill.

An amendment would be needed if Alternative 1, Alternative 2, or Alternative 3 were selected.

**Additional Routes:**

*Route 8G* would not cross land managed under the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP; therefore, no amendment would be needed to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP if an Alternative containing this route (Alternatives 4 and 5) were selected.

*Route 8H* would not cross land managed by the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, and therefore no amendments would be needed for this MFP for Alternatives containing this route (Alternatives 6 and 7). This route would, however, cross through the SRBOP, and multiple amendments would be required for that RMP.

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative analyzed in the SEIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in Section 1.4, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

**3.4.3 Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

There are no additional amendments for proposed for the Preferred Alternative (Routes 8G and 9K with the Toana Road Variation 1), because routes associated with Preferred Alternative 5 do not cross this planning area. Amendments associated with other routes are discussed in Section 3.4.4.

**3.4.4 Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Routes Not Included in the Preferred Alternative**

Alternatives 1 through 3 include the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route, if selected, would require a plan amendment to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP for granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed by the Shoshone Field Office.

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP protects visual and archeological resources. These protections would be rewritten to allow development of this Project. The route would cross land managed as VRM Class II. A 500-kV transmission line would not conform to this VRM Classification and an amendment would be needed.

**Amendment SEIS-9** for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would amend the visual resource protection in this area to allow development of this Project:

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

The route would cross land managed for archaeological sites. Existing management requirements in this area prohibits all land-disturbing developments in the area. Project

disturbance would not conform to this restriction, and an amendment would be needed for the Project to cross.

**Amendment SEIS-10** for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would amend the archaeological resource protection in this area to allow development of this Project and therefore allow crossing of the Oregon NHT by the Project. The amended MFP decision (changes in italics) would read:

*“Manage all cultural resources with applicable laws and policies.”*

### **3.4.5 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The affected environment is discussed in Chapter 3 for each resource: Section 3.2.1 for visual resources, Section 3.3.1 for cultural resources, Section 3.6.1 for vegetation resources, Section 3.10.1 for wildlife resources, Section 3.11.1 for special status species, and Section 3.17.1 for recreation and land use.

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the SEIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.2.3 and Appendix G for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3.3 and 3.3.3.4 for effects on cultural resources; Sections 3.6.2.2 and 3.6.2.3 for effects on vegetation; Sections 3.10.2.2 for effects on wildlife; Sections 3.11.2.2 and 3.11.2.3 for effects on special status species; and Sections 3.17.2.2 and 3.17.2.3 for effects on land use and recreation. The following effects are the same as those discussed in the FEIS because the routing is the same as the FEIS Preferred Route through this area.

#### **3.4.5.1 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5, inclusive of the Toana Road Variation 1) does not include routes that cross through this planning area; therefore, no amendments are proposed. Effects associated with other Alternatives are presented in Section 3.4.5.2.

#### **3.4.5.2 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Alternatives 1 through 3 include Segment 8 of the Revised Proposed Route and would therefore be affected by amendments needed for this route to conform to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP.

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

The amendment changing the VRM Class II classification to VRM Class III would change the classification of lands within 3,000 feet to the north of and including the

existing transmission line. This may result in additional utilities being located along this route, which would result in additional impacts to resources managed under the MFP. A new transmission line would impact plants and wildlife as well as scenic and cultural resources. However, the disturbance would occur in a previously disturbed area.

The VRM Class II areas that would be reclassified under this amendment are also big game habitat. Impacts to big game would occur for both the construction and operations phases. Effects of these activities could result in avoidance of preferable forage, increased demand of energy resources in response to disturbance, temporary displacement from preferred habitat, resulting in possible increase in predation, reduced quality of forage, and impacts to reproduction.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would be within the viewshed of Kings Crown and the surrounding area north of King Hill. Scenery in this area is important to sensitive viewers such as visitors along the Oregon NHT. Existing high-voltage transmission lines and wind towers already interrupt the scenic quality in this area. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would add to this interruption; however, it would avoid disrupting scenic quality in undisturbed areas. Additionally, EPMS such as using dull galvanized finish on lattice steel towers (VIS-1), using non-reflective finishes on subconductors and insulators (VIS-2 and VIS-9), as well as siting towers and access roads to reduce visual impacts (VIS-5 through VIS-7 and VIS-11) will minimize visual impacts.

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Appendix M of the SEIS. Even with mitigation, however, the Project would result in impacts to visual resources and decrease protection of areas that have been designated as high visual resource areas. The presence of the Project through these areas would degrade this visual resource, and changing the VRM such that the Project is not in visual conflict with the land management objectives where it is located would result in a reduction of these VRM Class areas within the MFP Planning Area. This MFP change could also result in higher likelihood of placement of additional future lines through the same area, further reducing protection of historic resources and viewsheds in the surrounding area.

### **3.5 Kuna MFP Land Use Plan Amendment**

The Kuna MFP,<sup>8</sup> approved on March 22, 1983, guides actions that occur within its Planning Area on lands managed by the Four Rivers Field Office, including the granting of ROW under Title V of FLPMA. The MFP confines new ROW to existing corridors, and has management requirements for visual and cultural resources. The Project would not be consistent with these requirements and thus is not consistent with the Kuna MFP. An amendment would be needed if any Alternative containing the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8 is selected (i.e., Alternatives 1 through 3). Additionally, a small portion of the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H crosses the Kuna Planning Area outside of the corridors and would also require the amendment. Since the Preferred Alternative 5 does not contain the route, no amendments are

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<sup>8</sup> BLM. 1983. Kuna Management Framework Plan. BLM Four Rivers Field Office, U.S. Department of Interior.

proposed for the Kuna MFP. Amendments associated with other alternatives are presented in Table F-5.

**Table F-5.** Land Use Plan Amendment for the Kuna MFP for Associated with Alternatives Other than the Preferred Alternative

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Route	Existing MFP Direction	Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment
Alternative 1 Alternative 2 Alternative 3 Alternative 6 Alternative 7	SEIS-11	Revised Proposed 8/Revised Proposed 9/8H	L-4.1 – Confine major new utility R/Ws (i.e., 500 kV or larger or 24-inch pipeline) to existing corridors, as shown on Overlay L-4. The R/Ws will be subject to reasonable stipulations to protect other resource uses.	L-4.1 – Confine major new utility R/Ws (i.e., 500 kV or larger or 24-inch pipeline) to existing corridors as shown on Overlay L-4. The R/Ws will be subject to reasonable stipulations to protect other resource uses. <i>Amend Overlay L-4 to add a major transmission line (500 kV) right-of-way.</i>

### 3.5.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Kuna MFP

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (Alternatives 1 through 3) and a small portion of Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H would cross through the Kuna Planning Area. The Kuna MFP includes management objectives for many resources including lands, minerals, range management, watershed, wildlife, visual, cultural, recreation, and transportation support. Management Actions under “Lands,” “Visual,” and “Cultural” resources were reviewed for consistency with the Project. The route locations for the Project were developed to comply with WECC requirements and to protect resources to the greatest extent feasible.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would cross the Oregon Short Line Railroad within the Kuna MFP management area. An amendment to the Kuna MFP was evaluated for the 2013 FEIS routing through lands managed under Kuna MFP regarding the CRM 2.1 management direction for cultural resources. This management direction requires a ¼-mile corridor around the Union Pacific Railroad and management of specific historic sites for cultural resources. Further review determined that an amendment was not necessary for the effects of the Project action on this management direction.

Because the Project does not conform to the current direction provided in the Kuna MFP for following existing corridors, the land use plan would need to be amended if the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is selected. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1601 provide a process to consider plan amendments for actions that are not in conformance with the plan.

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would cross the Kuna MFP management area outside existing corridors. An amendment would be needed if the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is selected. Proposed Amendment SEIS-11 addresses the Project’s

nonconformance with the management direction in the Kuna MFP. The Kuna MFP L-4.1 emphasizes the following with regard to utility ROWs:

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

This amendment would also be needed for a small section of land crossed by the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/8H alignment, just south of the SRBOP.

### **3.5.2 Project Alternatives and Associated Routing**

The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route follows the Proposed Route from the FEIS for the first 91.4 miles. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is a single-circuit 500-kV transmission line that would link the Midpoint and Hemingway Substations. Approximately 63 miles of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route are within the Kuna MFP boundaries. The transmission lines would be constructed utilizing 500-kV single-circuit lattice steel towers between 145 and 180 feet tall and would cross BLM-managed land covered by the Kuna MFP.

Several alternative segments, including the routes evaluated in the 2013 FEIS (Proposed Route, BLM-Preferred Route, and other routes) were considered. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route is described in Chapter 2 of the SEIS, along with the reasons for considering this route and other routes considered but not assessed in detail or previously assessed in the FEIS. Appendix A, Figure A-2 of the SEIS shows the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route.

**Revised Proposed Route:** The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route enters the Kuna MFP in Elmore County, southeast of Mountain Home, and proceeds in a general northwesterly direction, before heading through the SRBOP, paralleling an existing line. For much of this distance, the route follows the WWE corridor. Starting at MP 87.1, the route exits the WWE corridor and crosses VRM Class III and Class IV land in a west-northwesterly direction, to meet back up with and parallel the existing 500-kV line. The route would exit BLM-managed land in the Kuna MFP Planning Area near MP 99.7.

**Additional Routes:** A small section of land still managed under the Kuna MFP is crossed by the alignment for Segment 9 of the Revised Proposed Route/8H, just south of the SRBOP. Routes 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 cross land south of the SRBOP. Routes 8H and 9K would cross through the southern portion of the SRBOP. These routes cross land managed under the SRBOP RMP and other management plans.

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative analyzed in the SEIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in SEIS Section 1.4, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

### **3.5.3 Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the Kuna MFP RMP Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative would not cross the Kuna MFP Planning Area; therefore, no amendments are proposed. Amendments that would be associated with other routes are discussed in Section 3.5.4.

### **3.5.4 Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Routes Not Included in the Preferred Alternatives**

Alternatives 1 through 3 include the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. The Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route would require a plan amendment to the Kuna MFP. Alternatives 6 and 7 would also require an amendment to the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 9 and Route 8H (these two routes follow the same alignment through land managed under the Kuna MFP). This amendment would allow the granting of a ROW for the Project across lands managed by the Four Rivers Field Office. The Kuna MFP limits new ROWs to existing corridors. This limitation would be rewritten to allow development of this Project. The intent of the amendment is to allow the current Project but not to create a corridor that would facilitate additional major utilities.

**Amendment SEIS-11** for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (for Alternatives 1 through 3) would amend the current Lands decision to permit the Project in this area. The amended decision (changes in italics) would read:

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

There is currently a management objective for managing cultural and historic ruins near the area for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. While it was determined that an amendment was not needed, final alignment and construction activities would need to take this into consideration.

### **3.5.5 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The affected environment is discussed in Chapter 3 for each resource; Section 3.2.1 for visual resources, 3.3.1 for cultural resources, 3.6.1 for vegetation resources, 3.10.1 for wildlife resources, 3.11.1 for special status species, and 3.17.1 for recreation and land use.

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

The “Lands” amendment would allow the Project to conform to the Management Objective. Allowing the additional ROW placement, however, would not establish a new

corridor, and new proposals for siting additional major utility lines would require a plan amendment, in addition to assessment under NEPA.

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

### **3.5.5.1 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5, inclusive of Toana Road Variation 1) does not include routes that cross through this planning area; therefore, no amendments are proposed. Effects associated with other Alternatives are presented in Section 3.5.5.2.

### **3.5.5.2 Effects of Land Use Plan Amendments for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Alternatives 1 through 3 include the Revised Proposed Route for Segment 8, which would require an amendment to cross the Kuna RMP Planning area outside of an existing corridor. Allowing the project outside of the corridors would result in effects associated with the development of a 500-kV transmission line.

Within the Kuna RMP Planning Area, approximately 46 raptor nests are located within 1 mile of the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route (excluding land managed under the SRBOP RMP); 23 of these are on BLM-managed land and include 21 ferruginous hawks and 2 golden eagles. All but four of these sightings occurred at, or adjacent to, existing powerlines. Impacts to raptors could include area avoidance, decreased hunting success, and nest abandonment due to disturbance. EPMs and BMPs following appropriate working and operations windows would limit these impacts.

Stream crossings would occur for the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route. While impacts to fish could include increased siltation from culvert installation and decreased riparian cover, BMPs would be in place to minimize these impacts and correct improperly functioning culverts such that passage is not hindered. Specific EPMs for this Project include routine and corrective operations and maintenance activities in streams with sensitive fish species such as culvert installation, bank stabilization, and ford location throughout the year (OM-16). Culverts on BLM-administered land will be designed to meet BLM Gold Book Standards (FISH-1). Riparian vegetation management will be conducted following EPMs such as OM-17, OM-19, and OM-20. In addition, water quality EPMs such as meeting National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements (WQA-1, WQA-2, and WQA-3) and following Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plans and BMPs (WQA-4 through WQA-12) will avoid and minimize impacts to water resources.

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

Cultural impacts from allowing the Project to cross outside of established corridors could include impacts to the sense of place and historic character of the railroad. EPMs (CR-

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

Mitigation measures designed to reduce adverse impacts are summarized in Appendix M of the SEIS.

The alignment for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H also crosses a small parcel still managed under the Kuna MFP. This is a very small parcel of land and therefore effects described for Segment 8 are likely overstating the impact. Allowing the transmission line in this location would, however, essentially result in the land use for the parcel that is crossed being a ROW, as the parcel is quite small (see Figure F-6).

### **3.6 Bruneau MFP Land Use Plan Amendments**

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Bruneau Field Office, including the granting of ROW under Title V of FLPMA, are guided by decisions recorded in the Bruneau MFP.<sup>9</sup> The 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 routes would cross through the Bruneau Planning Area. The Bruneau MFP includes management objectives for visual resources.

Preferred Alternative 5 would require an amendment to the Bruneau MFP where Routes 8G and 9K cross VRM Class II designated land. Alternative 3 (Route 9K), Alternative 2 (FEIS Proposed 9), Alternative 4 (Route 8G and FEIS Proposed 9), Alternative 6 (FEIS Proposed 9), and Alternative 7 (Route 9K) would also require a plan amendment to the Bruneau MFP. A plan amendment is proposed for the Preferred Alternative (see Table F-6). Other Alternatives, and their associated routes, that would require the same amendment are also included in the table. The Preferred Alternative and routes associated with it are presented in bold. An amendment is proposed for Routes 8G and 9K (see Figure F-4).

No amendments to the Bruneau MFP are currently suggested for the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route (Alternative 1) or Route 8H (Alternatives 6 and 7), which follow the same alignment, along an existing transmission line through the SRBOP for the majority of the routing in this area.

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<sup>9</sup> BLM. 1983. Bruneau Management Framework Plan.

**Table F-6.** Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment for the Bruneau MFP

Affected Alternatives	Number	Affected Routes	Existing MFP Direction	Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment
<p><b>Preferred Alternative 5</b></p> <p>Alternative 2</p> <p>Alternative 3</p> <p>Alternative 4</p> <p>Alternative 6</p> <p>Alternative 7</p>	<p>SEIS-12</p>	<p><b>9K/8G/FEIS</b> Proposed 9</p>	<p>VRM-1.2: Designate 136,000 acres as VRM Class II where activities are designed and located to blend into the natural landscape and not visually apparent to the casual visitor</p>	<p>The area designated as VRM Class II adjacent to Castle Creek will be reclassified to VRM Class III.</p>

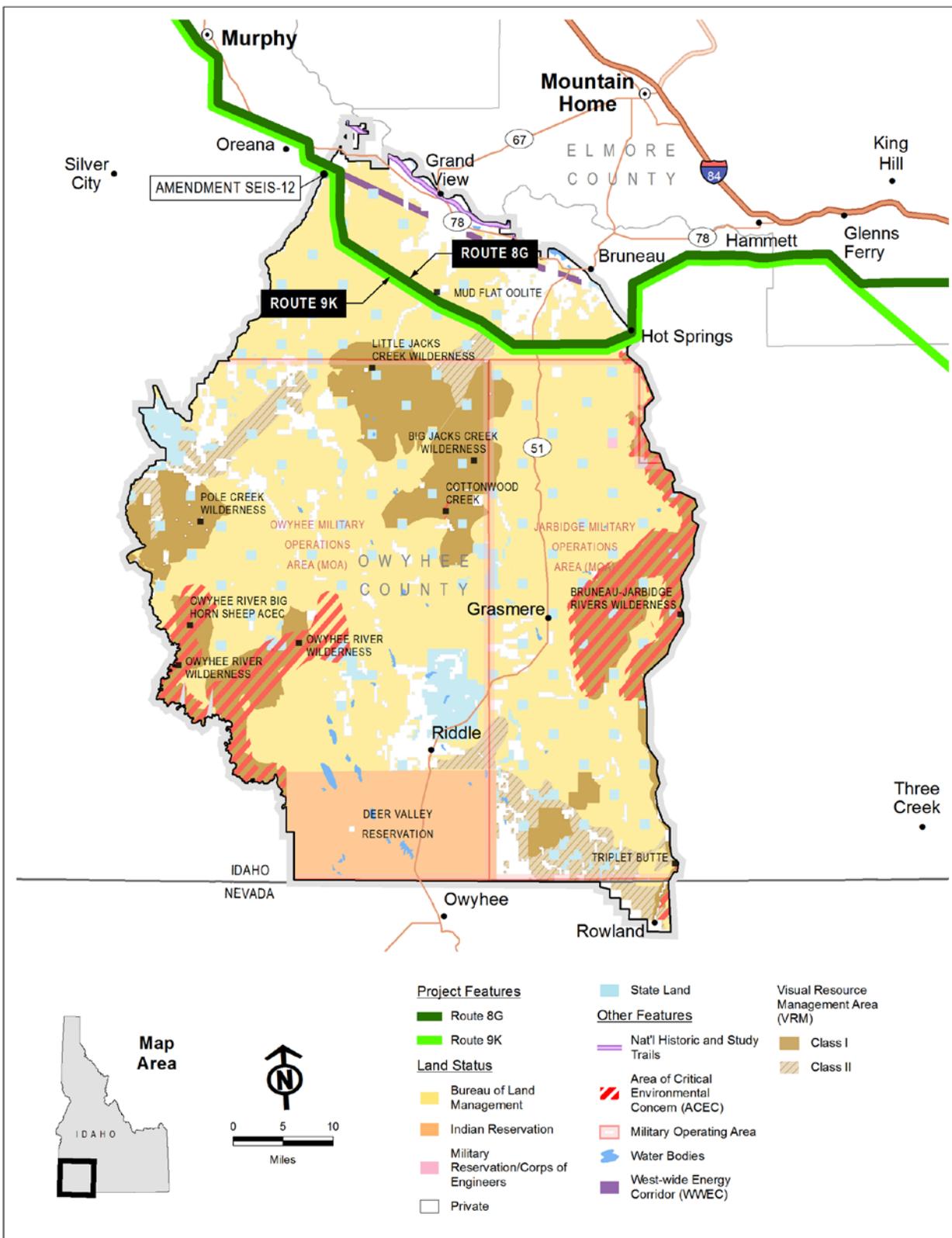


Figure F-4. Location of Bruneau MFP Amendment for Preferred Alternative 5

### 3.6.1 Purpose and Need to Amend the Bruneau MFP

As stated above, the Preferred Alternative contains a route that would cross the Bruneau Planning Area and would cross VRM Class II managed lands. This action would not conform to VRM Class II management objectives, and therefore an amendment would be required to reclassify this area. Route 8G, Route 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 would cross the Planning Area and would cross an area of approximately 281 acres classified as VRM Class II near Castle Creek for 0.3, 0.4, and 0.1 mile, respectively. This action would not conform to VRM Class II management objectives, and therefore an amendment would be required to reclassify this area.

The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route would cross a very small portion of land managed under the Bruneau MFP. Crossing this area would be consistent with the management objectives and therefore no amendment to the Bruneau MFP would be needed for this alignment.

### 3.6.2 Project Alternatives and Associated Routes

Portions of the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H (Alternatives 1, 6, and 7) would cross through the Bruneau MFP Planning Area for less than a mile. In comparison, over 30 miles of the 8G, 9K, and FEIS Proposed 9 would cross through the Planning Area.

These routes are described in Chapter 2 of the SEIS, along with the reasons for considering these routes and other routes considered but not assessed in detail or previously assessed in the FEIS. Appendix A, Figure A-4 of the SEIS shows the Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route.

**Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H:** The Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route and Route 8H cross approximately 0.8 mile of the Bruneau Planning Area north of the town of Bruneau. This alignment crosses the SRBOP RMP Planning Area, north of the Bruneau Field Office.

#### **Additional Routes:**

*Routes 8G and 9K (Preferred Alternative 5):* Under Preferred Alternative 5, Routes 8G and 9K enter the Bruneau Planning Area south of Bruneau and Hot Springs. The alignments would parallel each other and follow a westerly then northwesterly direction, leaving the Bruneau Planning Area at Castle Creek.

*Route 8G (Alternative 4):* Under Alternative 4, Route 8G would not parallel another line and would cross the Bruneau Planning area as a single 500-kV line. The route alignment would be the same, leaving the Bruneau Planning Area at Castle Creek.

*Route 9K (Alternative 3 and Alternative 7):* Under Alternatives 3 and 7, Route 9K would not parallel another line and would cross the Bruneau Planning area as a single 500-kV line. The route alignment would be the same, leaving the Bruneau Planning Area at Castle Creek.

*FEIS Proposed 9 (Alternatives 2, 4, and 6):* The FEIS Proposed 9 route enters into the Bruneau Management Area between Bruneau and Hot Spring. The route proceeds in a northwesterly direction, generally paralleling the FEIS BLM-Preferred Route. The

majority of the FEIS Proposed 9 follows the WWE corridor, crossing both public and private lands and leaving the Bruneau Planning Area at Castle Creek.

These routes were developed to avoid the majority of the SRBOP. In addition, siting was located to minimize Project impacts on private land, the routes being located primarily on BLM-managed land. These routes are outside the WWE corridor, cross crucial big game management range, and are located to avoid Greater sage-grouse leks. Selection of both routes (as would be the case under Alternative 5) would not meet the Proponents' goal of redundancy, but provides an alternative that avoids much of the SRBOP.

**No Action Alternative:** The No Action Alternative analyzed in the SEIS is the predicted result of the denial of the applications. Under the No Action Alternative, Gateway West would not be constructed (no construction of the new substations, substation expansion, or the transmission line); therefore, no associated plan amendments would be required. The objectives of the Project, which include providing increased transmission capacity and a more reliable transmission line system for transport of energy, including wind energy, to meet existing and future needs (as described in SEIS Section 1.4, Proponents' Objectives for the Project), would not be met.

### **3.6.3 Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the Bruneau MFP Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Preferred Alternative 5 includes Routes 8G and 9K. These routes would require a plan amendment to the Bruneau MFP. The Bruneau MFP currently restricts impacts to visual resources where the Project would cross; therefore, an amendment to the MFP to allow impacts to visual resources would be needed if this route is selected.

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

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

Routes 8G and 9K would cross a parcel designated as VRM Class II near Castle Creek. The recently completed Visual Resources Inventory recognizes this parcel as VRM Class III for inventory purposes. With these factors in mind, the visual resource restrictions would be rewritten to reclassify the area.

**Proposed Amendment SEIS-12** for Routes 8G and 9K would amend this MFP. The amended restriction for visual resource impacts (changes in italics) would read:

*“The area designated as VRM Class II adjacent to Castle Creek will be reclassified to VRM Class III.”*

This would reduce the area managed as VRM Class II by approximately 281 acres. The purpose of the amendment would be to modify the visual restrictions, such that the granting of a ROW for construction of the Project would be in conformance with the Bruneau MFP.

### **3.6.4 Land Use Plan Amendments Associated with Routes Not Included in the Preferred Alternative**

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 all contain routes that would cross through the Bruneau MFP Planning Area and require an amendment to change the VRM Classification. This amendment is the same as the amendment for the Preferred Alternative, discussed above. There are no amendments to the Bruneau MFP associated with the Segment 8 Revised Proposed Route or Segment 9 Revised Proposed Route/Route 8H.

### **3.6.5 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The affected environment is discussed in Chapter 3 for each resource: Section 3.2.1 for visual resources, Section 3.3.1 for cultural resources, Section 3.6.1 for vegetation resources, Section 3.10.1 for wildlife resources, Section 3.11.1 for special status species, and Section 3.17.1 for recreation and land use.

The direct and indirect effects of this Project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the SEIS. Cumulative effects are discussed in Chapter 4. Refer to Section 3.2.2 and Appendix G for an analysis of the effects on visual resources; Sections 3.3.3 and Appendix J, Section 6.2 for effects on cultural resources; Section 3.6.2 for effects on vegetation; Section 3.10.2 for effects on wildlife; Section 3.11.2 for effects on special status species; and Section 3.17.2 for effects on land use and recreation. The following effects are similar to those discussed in the FEIS because the routing is similar to Route 9E in the 2013 FEIS.

#### **3.6.5.1 Effects of Amendments Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Reclassifying the VRM Class II parcel to VRM Class III would allow the transmission lines to conform to the Bruneau MFP. More than half of the area of this parcel is within the WWE corridor. The routing for Segments 8 and 9 of Preferred Alternative 5 (Routes 8G and 9K) through this area is just south of the corridor. Reclassifying this parcel to VRM Class III would facilitate siting additional transmission lines in the WWE corridor, which would add to cumulative effects in the area.

The direct effects of amending the MFP to allow the Project include the disruption of form, line, texture, and color of the existing landscape. Construction and operations of a high-voltage transmission line would impact wildlife and other resources as described in the SEIS. Discussion with the BLM Bruneau Field Office personnel and a review of the 2012 Visual Resource Inventory indicated that it was felt this area was considered to have the visual resource qualities consistent with VRM Class III. This amendment would therefore be consistent with VISL Objective #1, but would reduce the VRM Class II designation in VRM-1.2. This reduction would be necessary because managing for a transmission line would not conform to VRM Class II management objectives. The presence of one or two high-powered transmission lines would not blend into the natural landscape and would be apparent to the casual observer (see Appendix G for a discussion of the visual impacts).

Selection of Alternative 5 would result in two parallel 500-kV transmission lines within the reclassified parcel, which would have a greater visual effect than any of the other Alternatives crossing the parcel. However, following the guidance of Objective #1, the re-evaluation of visual resources that was conducted in the 2012 Visual Resource Inventory indicates reclassifying this land to VRM Class III would still meet the objective of using VRM contrast ratings for management activities. In addition, this Alternative avoids most of the impacts to the SRBOP.

### **3.6.5.2 Effects of Amendments for Routes Not Associated with the Preferred Alternative**

Routing for Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 results in the same amendment to the Bruneau MFP being needed, as is discussed above for the Preferred Alternative. Therefore the effects of this amendment would be similar to those discussed above. The direct effect from the Project of reclassifying the Class II area near Castle Creek to VRM Class III would differ across the routes, however, as different routes would be constructed, depending on the action alternative selected. Under Alternative 3 and Alternatives 2, 6, and 7, only one Project route would be constructed through this area as a result of the amendment. Under Alternative 4, two routes would be constructed through this VRM Class II area (similar to Preferred Alternative 5). In Alternative 4, this would result in one route in the WWE corridor and one route south of the corridor, as compared to Preferred Alternative 5, which would result in two routes being constructed 250 feet apart, just south of the WWE corridor.