



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Idaho State Office
1387 South Vinnell Way
Boise, Idaho 83709-1657



Dear Reader:

Attached for your review is the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments for Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West 500-kV Transmission Line Project (Project) for public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Idaho.

General Information

The BLM prepared this Final SEIS in consultation with cooperating agencies and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Department of the Interior (DOI) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508; 43 CFR 46) to analyze the effects of granting the Proponents (Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power) a right-of-way (ROW) to construct and operate Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project.

The Proponents have submitted applications for ROW grants to utilize portions of the National System of Public Lands in southern Idaho. The BLM Idaho State Office is the lead BLM office for the SEIS. The BLM will decide whether to approve, approve with modifications, or deny the ROWs for the Proposed Action or an Action Alternative for Segments 8 and 9 of the Project. The BLM's decision will be documented in a Record of Decision (ROD), which will be issued before any ROW grants are approved.

In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.0-5(b), the BLM must consider existing resource management plans (RMPs) and management framework plans (MFPs) in the decision on whether or not to issue ROW grants. Portions of Segments 8 and 9 of the proposed Gateway West project are not in conformance with BLM land use plans, and therefore, amendments to these plans are analyzed as part of the SEIS.

In addition, the BLM must ensure that to the extent the Project would cross the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP), it would be compatible with the purposes for which Congress designated the SRBOP in Public Law 103-64 and with current policy for managing units of the National Conservation Lands.

Changes Between the Draft and Final SEISs

The SEIS assesses the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and a range of other Route Alternatives, and includes analysis of a No Action Alternative. The Final SEIS responds to

comments received on the Draft SEIS, corrects and adds information obtained after preparation of the Draft SEIS, and identifies the BLM Preferred Alternative for the Project.

Key changes to the SEIS between Draft and Final include:

- A new section detailing resources, objects and values in the SRBOP and expected project effects
- Analysis of helicopter-assisted construction for Alternative 5 (a Draft SEIS co-Preferred Alternative)
- Additional visual resource surveys and impact analysis for the area around the Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument
- Updated information on road construction and improvements needed for the action alternatives
- A fully developed framework for compensatory mitigation in the SRBOP
- A strategy to achieve an overall net conservation gain for Greater sage-grouse.

The Draft SEIS identified Alternatives 2 and 5 as Co-Preferred Alternatives. In the Final SEIS, the agency's Preferred Alternative is Alternative 5. The Environmentally Preferable Alternative is the No Action Alternative.

Land Use Plan Amendments and the BLM Protest Process

The BLM has identified five Proposed Plan Amendments located in three planning areas that are needed for the preferred routes to conform to approved RMPs/MFPs. Details on each Proposed Plan Amendment can be found in Sections 2.3.5 and 2.7 and Appendix F of this Final SEIS.

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2) provide an opportunity for any person who participated in the planning process for the Gateway West SEIS and who has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the proposed planning decisions to protest the proposed land use plan amendments. A person who meets the conditions and wishes to file a protest must file the protest within 30 days of the date that the Notice of Availability for the Final SEIS is published in the *Federal Register*.

Instructions for filing a protest with the BLM Director regarding the Proposed RMP/MFP Amendments may be found in the Notice of Availability published in the *Federal Register*, or online at http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution/filinginstructions.html. The attachment accompanying this letter contains a critical items checklist for preparing a valid protest.

Emailed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the email as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration. Please direct such advance notification emails to protest@blm.gov.

All protests must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:

Director (210)
Attn: Protest Coordinator
P.O. Box 71383
Washington, D.C. 20024-1383

Overnight Mail:

Director (210)
Attn: Protest Coordinator
20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM
Washington, D.C. 20003

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information with your comments or protest, be advised that your entire comment or protest, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. Although you may ask us in your submission to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

The BLM Director will render a prompt decision on each protest – either dismissing the protest, granting the protest based on the merits of the protest issues, or denying the protest based on the merits of the protest issues. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

The decision of the BLM Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior on each protest. Responses to protest issues will be compiled and formalized in a Director's Protest Resolution Report made available along with the decisions.

Upon resolution of all land use plan protests, the BLM will issue a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD will be available electronically to all who participated in the environmental analysis and planning process, on the BLM website, or by mail upon request.

For additional information, contact Heather Feeney, email hfeeney@blm.gov, phone (208) 373-4060, or visit the project website at: <http://on.doi.gov/lsExpBP>.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this process. We greatly value your involvement.

Sincerely,



Timothy M. Murphy
BLM Idaho State Director

Attachment: Plan Protest Critical Items Checklist (1 p.)

Resource Management Plan Protest Critical Item Checklist

**The following items *must* be included to constitute a valid protest
whether using this optional format, or a narrative letter.
(43 CFR 1610.5-2)**

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your **protest**, be advised that your entire **protest**--including your personal identifying information--may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your **protest** to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations and businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

Resource Management Plan (RMP) or Amendment (RMPA) being protested:

Name:

Address:

Phone Number: ()

Your interest in filing this protest (how will you be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of this plan?):

Issue or issues being protested:

Statement of the part or parts of the plan being protested:

Chapter:

Section:

Page:

(or) Map:

Attach copies of all documents addressing the issue(s) that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party, OR an indication of the date the issue(s) were discussed for the record.

Date(s):

A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decisions is believed to be wrong: