Appendix K
Compliance with Applicable Sage-grouse Policies, Plans, and Procedures and Applicant-proposed Mitigation

APPENDIX K – COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE SAGE-GROUSE POLICIES, PLANS, AND PROCEDURES AND APPLICANT-PROPOSED MITIGATION

K.1 Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and several cooperating agencies participating in the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Energy Gateway South Transmission Project (Project) have recently updated or are in the process of revising policies and plans addressing management and conservation of greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) in the Project area. These revisions are largely in response to declining greater sage-grouse populations in the western United States, agency responsibilities for sage-grouse conservation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) *12 Month Findings for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-grouse as Threatened or Endangered*, published in March 2010, which found that listing the species under the Endangered Species Act was warranted but precluded by higher priority listing actions. Several of these policy and sage-grouse management plan revisions have been initiated or completed since the Applicant (PacifiCorp, doing business as Rocky Mountain Power) submitted an *Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands* (Standard Form 299) on November 28, 2007, initiating the BLM and cooperating agencies' review of the Project.

The BLM and cooperating agencies have collaborated to prepare the EIS in accordance with current relevant law, regulation, policies, and plans; including those guiding agency decisions that may have an impact on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat. This appendix addresses actions and planning undertaken by the BLM, cooperating agencies, and the Applicant to prepare the EIS and potentially develop the Project in compliance with applicable law, regulation, policies, and plans related to sage-grouse.

The BLM and cooperating agencies collaborated to prepare a *Framework for Sage-grouse Impacts Analysis for the Energy Gateway South Transmission Project* (April 2013; Exhibit F1) as an early step to addressing potential impacts on sage-grouse during preparation of the EIS. The framework outlines the analysis and potential mitigation required for agencies whose decisions pertaining to the Project are evaluated in the EIS to adequately analyze the potential effects of the Project on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat and potentially select an action alternative that would be consistent with agency missions and goals pertaining to sage-grouse conservation. The framework also was developed to facilitate relevant cooperating agency decisions and evaluation of compliance with applicable plans and policies that are not subject to National Environmental Policy Act review and not addressed in the EIS.

K.2 Applicable Sage-grouse Policies and Plans

K.2.1 Federal

K.2.1.1 Bureau of Land Management Washington Office Instruction Memorandum 2012-043 Greater Sage-Grouse Interim Management Policies and Procedures

On December 22, 2011, BLM issued Washington Office (WO) Instruction Memorandum (IM) 2012-043, which provides interim conservation policies and procedures for greater sage-grouse that are to be applied by BLM field offices to ongoing and proposed authorizations and activities. The purpose of the WO-IM 2012-043 is to promote sustainable greater sage-grouse populations and conserve greater sage-grouse

habitat while BLM develops and decides how to best incorporate long-term conservation measures for greater sage-grouse into applicable land-use plans. The IM policies and procedures apply to BLM actions in preliminary priority habitat (PPH) and preliminary general habitat (PGH) for greater sage-grouse, which will be identified by the state wildlife agencies. (Note: The conservation policies and procedures described in the IM do not apply in areas where a state and/or local regulatory mechanism has been developed for the conservation of the greater sage-grouse in coordination and concurrence with the FWS, and the state sage-grouse plan has subsequently been adopted by the BLM through the issuance of a state-level BLM Instruction Memorandum). The WO-IM 2012-043 prescribes specific procedures for pending and future right-of-way applications in preliminary priority and preliminary general habitat. The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the Project was published in the *Federal Register* on April 1, 2011, and therefore these procedures are applicable to the Project.

WO IM 2012-043 procedures for pending and future right-of-way applications in preliminary priority habitat include:

- Conduct pre-application meetings for all new right-of-way proposals consistent with the right-of-way regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 2804.10) and consistent with current renewable energy right-of-way policy guidance (WO-IM-2011-061, issued February 7, 2011).
- For pending applications, assess the impact of the proposed right-of-way on greater sage-grouse and its habitat, and implement the following:
    - Ensure that reasonable alternatives for siting the right-of-way outside of the PPH or within a BLM-designated utility corridor are considered and analyzed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act
    - Identify technically feasible best management practices, conditions, etc. (e.g., siting, burying power lines) that may be implemented in order to eliminate or minimize impacts
- For right-of-ways where the total project disturbance from the right-of-way and any connected action is less than 1 linear mile, or 2 acres of disturbance, develop mitigation measures related to construction, maintenance, operation, and reclamation activities that, as determined in cooperation with the respective state wildlife agency, would cumulatively maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse habitat.
- For right-of-way applications where the total project disturbance from the right-of-way and any connected action is greater than 1 linear mile or 2 acres of disturbance, it is BLM policy that where a field office determines that it is appropriate to authorize a right-of-way, the following process must be followed:
    - The BLM will document the reasons for its determination and require the right-of-way holder to implement measures to minimize impacts on sage-grouse habitat.
    - In addition to considering opportunities for onsite mitigation, the BLM will, to the extent possible, cooperate with project proponents to develop and consider implementing appropriate offsite mitigation that the BLM, coordinating with the respective state wildlife agency, determines would avoid or minimize habitat and population-level effects (refer to WO-IM-2008-204, Off-site Mitigation). When developing such mitigation, the BLM should consider compensating for the short-term and long-term direct and indirect loss of greater sage-grouse and its habitat.
    - Unless the BLM determines, in coordination with the respective state wildlife agency, that the proposed right-of-way and mitigation measures would cumulatively maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse habitat, the proposed right-of-way decision must be forwarded to the appropriate BLM State Director, State Wildlife Agency Director, and FWS representative for their review. If this group is unable to agree on the appropriate mitigation for the proposed right-of-way, then the proposed decision must be forwarded to the Greater Sage-Grouse

National Policy Team with the addition of the State Wildlife Agency Director, when appropriate, for its review. If the National Policy Team and the State Wildlife Agency Director are unable to agree on the appropriate mitigation for the proposed right-of-way, the National Policy Team will coordinate with and brief the BLM Director for a final decision in absence of consensus.

The three states crossed by the Project (Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah) all have statewide sage-grouse management plans and are participating with BLM and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in the ongoing amendments of resource management plans (RMPs) and land and resource management plans (LRMPs), respectively, and interim management of sage-grouse differently as follows:

- Wyoming has established a state regulatory mechanism for the conservation of the sage-grouse and the BLM has adopted this state strategy through the issuance of BLM IM WY 2012-019; therefore, PPH and PGH will not be designated in Wyoming. The Wyoming Core Areas have been adopted by the BLM.
- Colorado has developed PPH and PGH that focus conservation efforts on the most important habitat for the species and provides a biological basis for land use recommendations under BLM WO IM 2012-043 and is participating with the BLM in the ongoing amendments of RMPs in Colorado.
- Utah has developed a state regulatory mechanism for the conservation of sage-grouse that could be adopted by the FWS and BLM in place of the conservation measures identified in the IM and has not designated PPH and PGH. However, BLM has not adopted the state regulatory mechanism at this time. For the purposes of identifying PPH and PGH, BLM considers the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) occupied sage-grouse habitat layer to be synonymous with PPH in the Utah; no PGH has been identified.

K.2.1.2 U.S. Forest Service Interim Recommendations for Greater Sage-grouse and Greater Sage-grouse Habitat

On October 12, 2012 the USFS issued Interim Recommendations for Greater Sage-Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat. Similar to BLM WO IM 2012-043, the USFS Interim Recommendations provide conservation policies and procedures for greater sage-grouse that are to be applied on National Forest system land until USFS LRMPs are incorporated to include sage-grouse conservations measures. Additionally, USFS seeks to promote consistency with BLM management of sage-grouse on BLM-administered lands under BLM WO IM 2012-043.

The USFS Interim Recommendations for Greater Sage-Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat recommendations for nonrecreational special use proposals including power lines direct USFS to:

- Within 3 kilometers of sage-grouse habitat, avoid authorizing placement of overhead power lines or other tall structures that provide perch sites for raptors.
- Determine, in coordination with the respective state wildlife agency, whether a proposal that may affect sage-grouse or sage-grouse habitats would likely have more than minor adverse effects on sage-grouse or sage-grouse habitat.
- If the proposed use likely would have more than minor adverse effects on sage-grouse habitat:
    - Consider feasible alternatives for siting the use outside of sage-grouse habitat; and
    - Identify technically feasible best management practices in terms of siting placement of overhead power lines or other tall structures (e.g., burying power lines) that may be implemented, to avoid or minimize impacts on sage-grouse or sage-grouse habitats.

- In consultation with the state wildlife agency, develop mitigation measures for construction, maintenance, operation, and reclamation of the proposed use that minimize impacts on sage-grouse habitat.

K.2.1.3 BLM Resource Management Plans and USFS Forest Plans

Many BLM RMPs and USFS LRMPs contain land-use restrictions to promote sage-grouse conservation (e.g., limitations on development activities near sage-grouse leks). Restrictions identified in applicable plans are detailed in EIS Appendix J, Table J-12 and have been considered in the analysis presented in Chapter 3. BLM and USFS have proposed RMP and LRMP amendments in Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah to include additional sage-grouse conservation measures. The proposed BLM and USFS amendments are anticipated to be complete prior to the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Project. .

Due to overlapping timelines and objectives for the proposed BLM RMP and USFS LRMP sage-grouse amendments and the Project, any BLM RMP and USFS LRMP amendments will not apply to portions of the Project in Wyoming and Colorado and in areas of Utah that are colocated with the proposed TransWest Express Transmission Line Project. In this EIS, however, the BLM has analyzed a similar suite of mitigation measures for the greater sage-grouse and its habitat (refer to Section 3.2.8.4, Mitigation Planning and Effectiveness) and will consider the implementation of those mitigation measures in the ROD for this Project, with a goal of achieving a net conservation benefit for the greater sage-grouse and its habitat. In addition, the Applicant has committed to comply with seasonal restrictions included in the proposed BLM RMP and USFS LRMP amendments and implement additional site-specific mitigation measures.

K.2.1.4 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Guidance

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) released the Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report in 2013 and the Greater Sage-grouse Range-wide Mitigation Framework in 2014. The Conservation Objectives report details the finding of a Conservation Objectives Team (COT) that recommended the types of threats that would need to be reduced or eliminated to conserve sage-grouse so it would not be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The COT report provides specific conservation objectives for energy and infrastructure projects and project-specific options for actions and measures to avoid impacts to sage-grouse and their habitats. A key component of the COT report is the identification of Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs), which represent key areas that are essential for sage-grouse conservation. The Rangewide Mitigation Framework identifies the factors that FWS will consider in evaluating the efficacy of mitigation practices and programs in reducing threats to sage-grouse. The FWS developed a checklist using the COT report and the Rangewide Mitigation Framework for reviewing new energy or infrastructure projects where such projects and activities occur in sage-grouse PACs, Preliminary Priority Habitat, Preliminary General Habitat, and/or state-designated sage-grouse habitat. The COT checklist is intended to help FWS determine if proposed energy projects and the associated infrastructure are consistent with the recommendations and guiding concepts provided in the COT report and the Rangewide Mitigation Framework.

K.2.2 State

K.2.2.1 Wyoming

The Governor of Wyoming issued Executive Order 2011-5 in June 2011. Executive Order 2011-5 replaced previous executive orders pertaining to sage-grouse in Wyoming and established a state regulatory mechanism to protect sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat. The Executive Order established

Core Population Areas and focuses conservation efforts in these areas including limits on the density of surface disturbance and restrictions on surface occupancy and seasonal use (EIS Appendix J, Table J-10). Additionally, the Executive Order established new transmission line corridors through the Core Population Areas and implemented restrictions on development of new transmission lines within core areas outside of the established corridors.

In addition to Executive Order 2011-5, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission adopted the Wyoming Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan in 2003. The plan was developed to maintain and improve sage-grouse habitats in Wyoming, provide for coordinated management across jurisdictional or ownership boundaries, and develop the statewide support necessary to assure the survival of Wyoming's sage-grouse populations. The plan is intended to be used as guidance regarding sage-grouse management by state and federal agencies in Wyoming and the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has sought agreements with federal agencies to implement the plan.

K.2.2.2 Colorado

The Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Steering Committee published the Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan in 2008. The purpose of the plan is to facilitate the conservation of sage-grouse and their habitats in Colorado by supporting goals that, if achieved, would facilitate the recovery of the species and result in its removal from the state's species of concern list. Guidelines for sage-grouse protection from populations and habitat disturbance were developed as a part of the plan (EIS Appendix J, Table J-10). Colorado Parks and Wildlife works collaboratively with federal, state, and local agencies as well as local working groups to implement the recommendations included in the plan.

The Colorado Department of Natural Resources is working collaboratively with BLM during the ongoing amendment of BLM RMPs to include sage-grouse conservation measures and is providing information to FWS for consideration in its development of a listing decision for the species. This work includes the identification of sage-grouse PPH and PGH in the state as well as preparation of "The Colorado Package," a compilation of accomplishments and ongoing actions to promote sage-grouse conservation based on the strategies identified in the 2008 Colorado Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Plan.

K.2.2.3 Utah

The Governor of Utah approved the Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah in April 2013 and issued Executive Order 2015/001 in February 2015 directing state agencies to implement the Plan. The plan is designed to eliminate the threats facing sage-grouse while balancing the economic and social needs of the residents of Utah by establishing incentive-based conservation programs for private, local government, and School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration lands and regulatory programs on other state- and federally managed lands. To achieve this goal, the plan establishes sage-grouse management areas and implements management protocols in these areas. Management provisions in sage-grouse management areas include seasonal and spatial restrictions on development activities, limits on extent of new cumulative permanent disturbance, and special provisions for electric transmission lines.

The BLM has coordinated with the state regarding the consistency of the Project with the management provisions for transmission lines included in the *Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah*. BLM will continue to coordinate with the state regarding consistency of the Applicant's Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan with additional mitigation that may be required in the *Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Utah.*

Additionally, the UDWR published the Utah Greater Sage-grouse Management Plan in 2009. The plan identifies threats and issues affecting sage-grouse management in Utah as well as goals, objectives, and strategies intended to guide UDWR, local working groups, and land managers efforts to protect, maintain,

and improve sage-grouse populations and habitats and balance their management with other resource uses.

K.2.3 Local

K.2.3.1 Local Area Working Groups

The Project could cross sage-grouse habitats in the boundaries of eight sage-grouse local working groups; three in Utah (Uinta Basin, Strawberry Valley, and Castle Country), three in Colorado (Northwest Colorado, Piceance/Parachute/Roan Creek, and Pinon Mesa), and 2 in Wyoming (Bates Hole/Shirley Basin and South-central Wyoming). Each local working group has prepared a conservation plan to assess the status of local populations, to provide guidance and recommendations to meet objectives for maintaining sage-grouse populations and improving habitat, and to promote incorporation of local knowledge and local participation in larger efforts to promote conservation of sage-grouse.

K.3 Coordination and Actions Taken to Comply With Applicable Plans and Policies

Sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats are widespread in landscapes crossed by the alternative routes in Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah. BLM and the cooperating agencies acknowledged that alternative routes that avoid sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat would not be feasible early during the preparation of the EIS. The agencies collaborated with the Applicant to identify feasible strategies to avoid, minimize, and compensate for the potential effects of the Project on sage-grouse pursuant to the plans and policies described in Section K.2.

K.3.1 Project Siting

The BLM worked with the cooperating agencies and the Applicant to avoid and minimize potential effects on sage-grouse by identifying and eliminating or modifying alternative routes that would have substantially greater effects on sage-grouse or sage-grouse habitat compared to other alternative routes considered.

K.3.1.1 Routes Eliminated from Further Consideration

Transmission line alternative routes and segments included in the Applicant's Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands were systematically screened and analyzed using the methods described in EIS Sections 2.5.1.1 and 2.5.1.3. Alternative routes that would have substantially higher impacts on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat compared to other alternative routes studied were eliminated from further consideration in the EIS. Alternative routes and segments that were eliminated from further consideration at least in part due to their impacts on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats include (refer to *Energy Gateway South Transmission Project Siting Study Report*, BLM 2012; EIS Section 2.5.1.1; and EIS Maps 2-3a and 2-3b):

Wyoming

- Links W17 and W18 were eliminated from consideration because they cross the Hannah sage-grouse core area outside of the utility corridor identified in the Wyoming Governor's Executive Order 2011-5 and are not parallel to an existing transmission line. Therefore, these links do not comply with the Executive Order regarding greater sage-grouse core area protection.
- Links W19 and W20 were eliminated from consideration because they cross the Hannah and South Rawlins sage-grouse core areas outside of the utility corridor identified in the Wyoming

Governor's Executive Order 2011-5 and do not parallel to an existing transmission line. Therefore, these links do not comply with the Executive Order regarding greater sage-grouse core area protection.

- Links W453, W454, W490, W491, W492, W493, and W520 were eliminated from consideration because any route using these links would be required to cross the Salt Wells sage-grouse core area outside of the utility corridor identified in the Wyoming Governor's Executive Order 2011-5 and would not be parallel to an existing transmission line. Therefore, alternative routes using these links do not comply with the Executive Order regarding greater sage-grouse core area protection. Additionally, alternative routes using these links may have substantial impacts on sage-grouse in Utah (refer to description of Links U20, U30, and U90).

Colorado

- Links C50, C45, C51, and C80 were eliminated from consideration because they cross important habitats that support some of the highest densities of breeding sage-grouse in the Northwest Colorado sage-grouse population, which is the largest sage-grouse population in Colorado.

Utah

- Links U20, U30, and U90 were eliminated from consideration because they cross important habitats occupied by the Diamond Mountain sage-grouse population, which is one of the largest and most robust sage-grouse populations of sage-grouse in Utah. Additionally, alternative routes using these links may have substantial impacts on sage-grouse in Wyoming (refer to description of Links W453, W454, W490, W491, W492, W493, and W520).
- Link U322 was eliminated from consideration because it crosses important habitats occupied by the Halfway Hollow sage-grouse population that have not been affected by previous transmission line development. Additionally, alternative routes using this link may have substantial impacts on other important sage-grouse habitats in Wyoming and Utah (refer to description of Links W453, W454, W490, W491, W492, W493, W520, U20, U30, and U90).
- Links U422 and U423 were eliminated from consideration because they are not located adjacent to an existing high-voltage transmission line and therefore would have greater impacts on sage-grouse compared to Links U425, U426, and U427, which were retained for analysis, where they cross important habitats occupied by the Strawberry/Fruitland sage-grouse population.

K.3.1.2 Revision to Alignments and Incorporation of Local Route Variations

The BLM, cooperating agencies, and the Applicant worked collaboratively to refine the alternative routes analyzed in the EIS, as practicable, to avoid or minimize effects on sage-grouse and important sage-grouse habitats. These refinements included local adjustments to the alternative routes to locate them outside of designated sage-grouse habitat or in habitats of lower value to sage-grouse and development of local route variations that would avoid important sage-grouse habitats. Segments that were refined and local route variations that were developed at least in part to reduce potential effects on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitats include:

Wyoming

- The alignment of Link W21 was refined to reduce impacts on sage-grouse by locating the segment closer to other planned infrastructure and closer to the center of the utility corridor identified in Wyoming Governor's Executive Order 2011-5 in the Hanna sage-grouse core area.

Colorado

- The alignment of Links C61, C71, C72, and C91 were refined to reduce impacts on sage-grouse, to the extent practicable, by locating the segments farther away from known sage-grouse leks and outside of sage-grouse priority habitat used by the Northwest Colorado sage-grouse population.

Utah

- The alignment of Links U401 and U404 were refined to avoid important habitats occupied by the Anthro Mountain sage-grouse population.
- Links U409, U411, U520, U514, U516, U560, U515, U540, and U513 were developed to provide local route variations in Utah that would avoid sage-grouse leks and other important habitats occupied by the Emma Park sage-grouse population, which is one of most robust sage-grouse populations in Utah (refer to EIS Section 3.2.8.5).

K.3.2 Development of Additional Onsite Mitigation

The BLM, cooperating agencies, and the Applicant are working collaboratively to develop onsite mitigation measures that could be used to reduce impacts on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat in addition to the mitigation measures in applicable BLM, USFS, and state agency plans. Development of additional onsite mitigation measures to reduce potential effects on sage-grouse is ongoing and the final measures will be outlined in the Applicant's voluntary sage-grouse conservation and mitigation plan for the selected alternative route. Mitigation measures that are being considered include:

- Modification of the proposed tower design to use H-frame tubular steel structures (Selective Mitigation Measure 6 [EIS Table 2-13]) and the installation of perch deterrents on these structures (Selective Mitigation Measure 14) within 4 miles of sage-grouse leks in designated sage-grouse core areas and priority habitats to reduce potential sage-grouse predation by raptors (refer to EIS Section 3.2.8.4).
- Reduced speed limits during construction and maintenance activities to reduce risk of sage-grouse collision with moving vehicles and reduce disturbance to sage-grouse resulting from vehicle noise;
- Additional restrictions on use of herbicides in areas where sage-grouse are known to congregate;
- Special reclamation standards focused on restoring functionality and quality of sage-grouse habitat beyond the minimum standards required by agency policy;
- Expanded seasonal and spatial restrictions in important sage-grouse habitats beyond the minimum restrictions required by applicable agency policies and plans; and
- Reducing the separation between the Project and other linear infrastructure (including other transmission lines) for short distances in important sage-grouse habitats where high levels of impact on sage-grouse are anticipated.

K.3.3 Development of Offsite Mitigation

Despite removing and modifying alternative routes and segments that would have comparatively higher impacts on sage-grouse and implementing additional onsite mitigation, BLM and the cooperating agencies anticipate that implementation of any of the alternative routes analyzed in the EIS would result in high residual impacts on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat (refer to EIS Section 3.2.8.5). The residual impacts would not be consistent with the objectives for sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat management identified in applicable agency plans and policies (Section K.2). In accordance with BLM

WO IM 2013-142, applicable BLM land and resource management plans, BLM mitigation policy, and other cooperating agency policies pertaining to offsite mitigation, BLM, the cooperating agencies, and the Applicant are working collaboratively to develop appropriate offsite mitigation that could be implemented to facilitate reasonable development of the Project consistent with applicable agency plans and policies pertaining to sage-grouse. To facilitate preliminary collaboration, the Applicant has convened a group of sage-grouse biologists from the BLM and cooperating agencies (the Habitat Equivalency Analysis [HEA] Technical Working Group) to provide input and guidance for developing the Applicant's Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan, including the HEA (refer to EIS Section 6.2.2.1). The methods used in the preliminary development of the Applicant's Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan, including the HEA and the types of offsite mitigation that may be considered are described in Exhibit B (Energy Gateway South Transmission Project Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Equivalency Analysis Plan).

If the BLM selects an action alternative, the BLM will require that the Applicant complete a Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan that meets BLM standards for sage-grouse management and compensatory mitigation. The BLM's standards would require that the Project be designed and built to minimize impacts on sage-grouse. Compensatory mitigation would be required to account for all direct and indirect effects on sage-grouse that may occur as a result of the Project. The amount of compensatory mitigation required would provide an overall net conservation benefit for sage-grouse from the construction and operation of the Project. In reviewing the Applicant's mitigation plan, BLM would coordinate with the FWS and the applicable state wildlife agencies. The COT checklist developed by FWS (refer to Section K.2.1.4) is one of the tools that the BLM would use to evaluate the adequacy of the Applicant's mitigation plan.

K.4 Applicant Provided Commitments for Mitigation

The following statement was prepared by the Applicant to outline the company's intention to prepare a voluntary sage-grouse conservation and mitigation plan for the selected alternative route:

> The EIS analysis describes potential Project-related impacts on sage-grouse and their habitat. These impacts have been minimized or avoided to the extent feasible by the BLM and cooperating agencies using avoidance and minimization measures (e.g., seasonal restrictions) from applicable BLM, USFS, and other applicable land-use and conservation plans. After application of these avoidance and mitigation measures, the BLM analysis indicates that impacts on sage-grouse and their habitat are likely to occur as a result of implementation of the Project. To meet requirements of BLM IM 2012-043, October, 2012 USFS Manual updates, and other applicable agency policies, Rocky Mountain Power will take voluntary actions to avoid, minimize, and compensate for the Project's effects on sage-grouse and their habitat.
>
> The agencies have developed a framework for Sage-grouse Impacts Analysis for the Energy Gateway South Transmission Project. The framework is used by the Applicant and the agencies to identify and analyze Project-related impacts and develop adequate mitigation. The framework identifies the use of a Habitat Equivalency Analysis (HEA), conducted by the project Applicant, as a replicable method for determining mitigation that is scaled to Project-related permanent and interim losses of sage-grouse habitat services.
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> In coordination with the agencies, Rocky Mountain Power will develop a voluntary sage-grouse conservation and mitigation plan for the preferred alternative route. The final plan will document Rocky Mountain Power's offer of scaled mitigation and other voluntary Applicant-committed mitigation measures for sage-grouse. The mitigation plan will offer measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for all Project effects characterized by the framework and identified in the EIS that could not be mitigated or avoided using

measures in BLM or other agency plans, including losses of habitat services quantified using the HEA.

K.4.1 Energy Gateway South Transmission Project Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Equivalency Analysis Plan

The *Energy Gateway South Transmission Project Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Equivalency Analysis Plan*, developed by the Applicant in coordination with the HEA Technical Working Group (refer to EIS Section 6.2.2.1) is included as Exhibit K2.