# 1.0 Introduction

The TransWest Express Transmission Project (Project) is proposed as an extra high voltage (EHV), direct current (DC) transmission system extending from south-central Wyoming to southern Nevada (**Figure 1-1**). The proposed transmission line (and alternatives) would cross four states (Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada) encompassing lands owned or administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Reclamation, Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (URMCC), various state agencies, Native American tribes, municipalities, and private parties. The Project would provide the transmission infrastructure and capacity necessary to deliver approximately 3,000 megawatts (MW) of electric power from renewable and/or non-renewable energy resources in south-central Wyoming to southern Nevada. One-MW (or 1 million watts) of power can deliver approximately 6.5 million kilowatt-hours of electricity in 1 year. An average U.S. household consumes about 10,655 kilowatt-hours of electricity in 1 year. Therefore, 1-MW of power provides electricity for 610 households' annual use (American Wind Energy Association 2008). The Project would transmit power for over 1,800,000 households annually.

The TransWest Express LLC (TransWest/Applicant) proposed action would consist of an approximately 727-mile-long, 600-kilovolt (kV), DC transmission line and two terminals, each containing a converter station that converts alternating current (AC) to DC or vice-versa. The northern AC/DC converter station would be located near Sinclair, Wyoming, and the southern AC/DC station near the Marketplace Hub in the Eldorado Valley, approximately 25 miles south of Las Vegas, Nevada. The Project would retain an option for a future interconnection with the existing Intermountain Power Project (IPP) transmission system in Millard County, Utah. The Project has been divided geographically into four regions for analysis in this environmental impact statement (EIS). Each Project region contains the applicant proposed route and two to seven alternative routes. The impacts of constructing, operating, maintaining, and decommissioning the project are disclosed in this EIS. The BLM and Western Area Power Administration (Western) identified an agency preferred alternative within each of the four Project regions that would collectively create a complete agency preferred alternative from Wyoming to Nevada. A more detailed description of the proposed and alternative routes, Project facilities and design, and construction schedule is presented in Chapter 2.0.

The following describes the Project ownership history, and the BLM right-of-way (ROW) application process.

- In November 2007, National Grid filed a ROW application with the BLM to construct and operate portions of an EHV transmission line between Wyoming and delivery points in the southwestern U.S.
- In 2008, The Anschutz Corporation (TAC) formed TransWest Express LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of TAC, and acquired the Project from National Grid. In September 2008, National Grid and TransWest submitted an amended ROW application to the BLM requesting the assignment of the application and related project files to TransWest. As a result, TransWest became the project applicant.
- TransWest submitted an amended ROW application in December 2008 and again in January 2010 to reflect changes and refinements in the proposed Project. The application was assigned case file number WYW-177893. A subsequent application was filled with the USFS requesting use of National Forest System lands.

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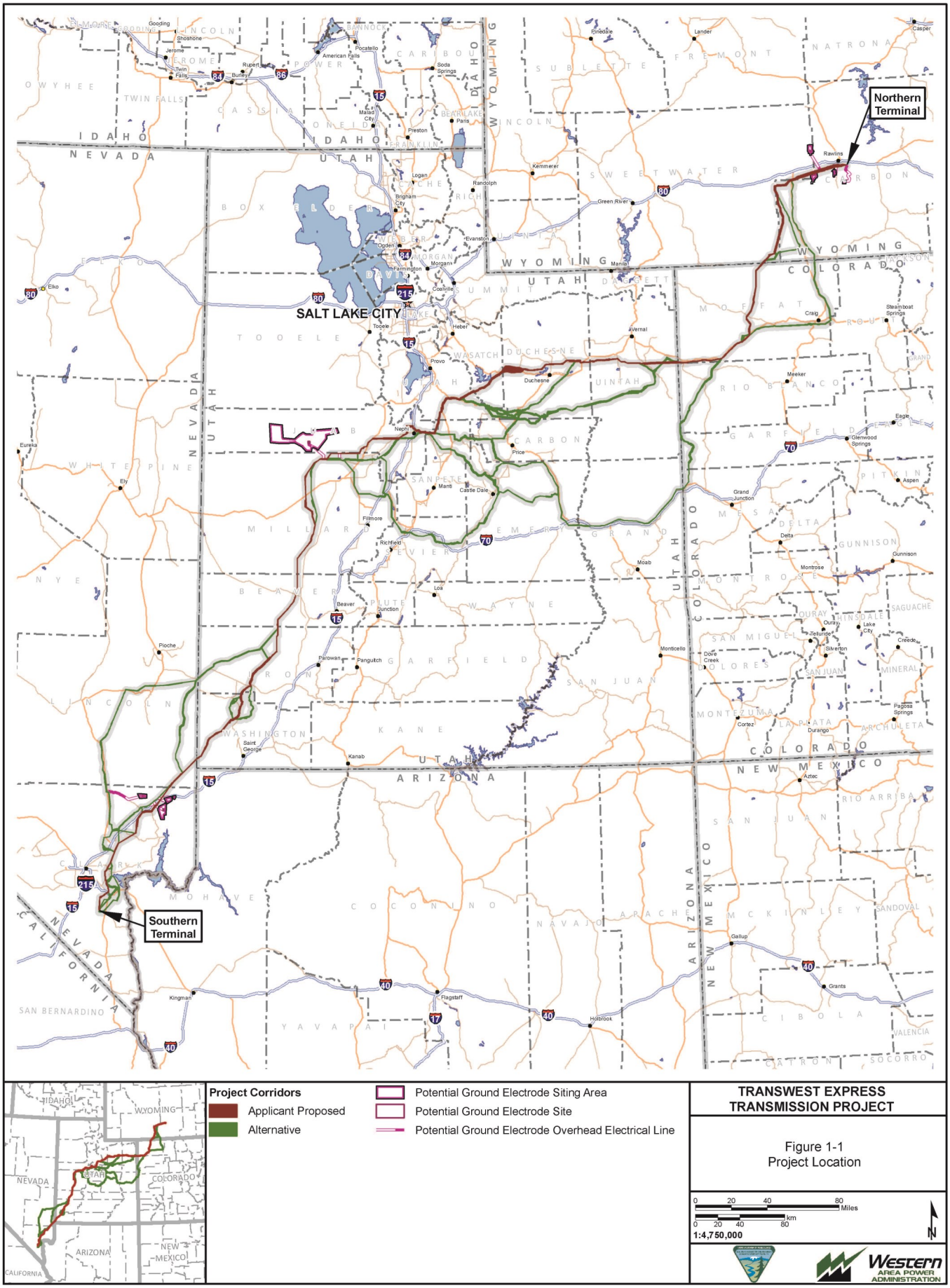

- In July 2010, BLM and Western, an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which Western agreed to act as joint lead agency with the BLM in the preparation of the EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). BLM's status as a joint lead agency was based on its potential federal action to grant a utility ROW across BLM lands. Western's status as a joint lead agency was based on its potential federal action to provide federal funds for the Project. Each of these decisions will be informed by the NEPA analysis contained in this EIS.
- Western and TransWest entered into a Development Agreement (executed in September 2011, as amended in June 2014) wherein Western agreed to support Project development by providing technical assistance and/or financing. As with BLM's decision on whether to grant a ROW for the Project, Western's decision on whether to invest federal funds into the development and future phases of this Project will be informed by the results of this NEPA analysis.

This EIS has been prepared in compliance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500). The BLM (through the Wyoming State Office) and Western are joint lead federal agencies for the NEPA process, and are mutually overseeing the preparation of the EIS. This EIS also conforms to both the BLM's and Western's requirements for NEPA implementation as described in the U.S. Department of the Interior's (USDOI's) NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46), BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1), and the DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR 1021), respectively. The EIS analyzed the environmental impacts of construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the transmission system on all lands potentially crossed by the Project. However, depending on the chosen alternative, this Project potentially would cross other federal lands. While the EIS contains sufficient information to allow the BLM and Western to choose among alternatives, in some instances, cooperating agencies may require additional information before making decisions related to specific lands within their jurisdiction. Accordingly, project implementation would require other federal agencies to make decisions related to granting ROWs. The BLM has included those agencies, as well as non-federal agencies and/or municipalities with jurisdictional authority or special expertise with respect to resource issues addressed by the NEPA analysis, as cooperating agencies in this EIS process. The cooperating agency relationship ensures that the BLM engages and considers comments of these agencies when making Project decisions and includes information required to satisfy the environmental and public review processes associated with those decisions. The cooperating agencies are responsible for assisting the BLM with identifying issues to be addressed, providing associated data or feedback, assisting with development of alternatives, and for providing review and feedback on the NEPA document. In addition to cooperating with other agencies and government, the lead agencies have a responsibility to involve the public throughout the NEPA process. The Draft EIS was available for public review and comment for a 90-day period beginning on July 3, 2013. All comments received during the public review period were considered, and applicable revisions were made to the Final EIS. The general steps in the EIS process are illustrated in **Figure 1-2**.

## 1.1 Lead Federal Agencies' Purpose and Need and Decisions

The joint-lead federal agencies' purpose and need for the major federal actions for the proposed Project are described below. The two joint-lead Federal agencies' common purpose in consideration of the proposed Project is to ensure that all physical and socioeconomic environmental considerations are fully considered and that, where appropriate, effective routing decisions and enforceable mitigation measures to address adverse or disruptive impacts are adopted in the event that the Project is approved. The lead agencies agree that, within the statutory mandate of each, the objective of the NEPA process in this instance is to demonstrate that environmental and energy concerns are balanced and Project-induced conflicts with the natural environment are disclosed to the satisfaction of both. The final decisions in that regard have not been made and will be addressed in each agency's Record of Decision (ROD).

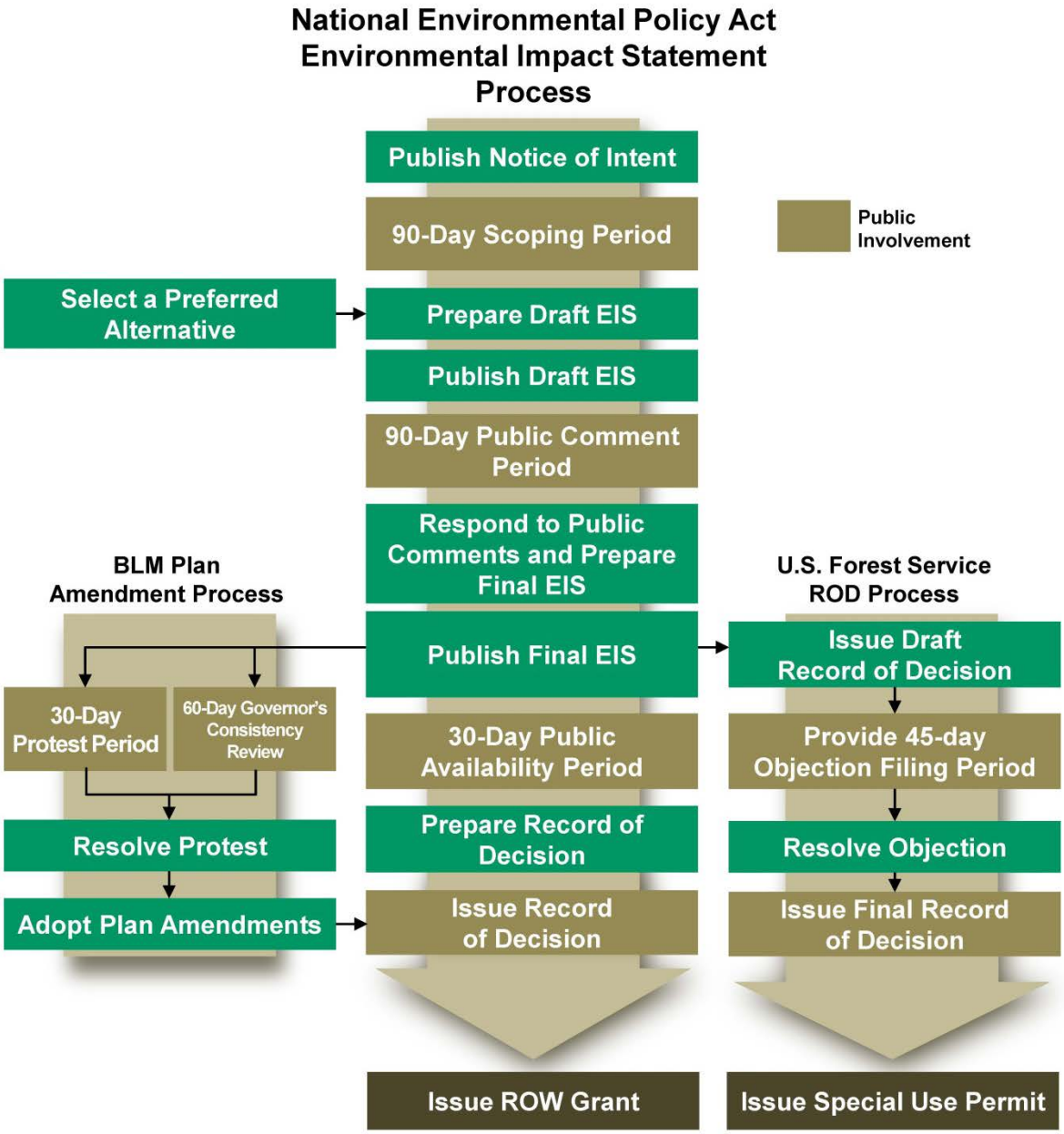


**Figure 1-2 National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement Process**

### 1.1.1 BLM's Purpose and Need

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Section 103(c)), public lands are to be managed for multiple use that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to grant ROWs on public lands for systems of generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy (Section 501(a)(4)).

The purpose of the BLM's federal action is to respond to TransWest's application for a ROW to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a transmission line on public lands. The need for this action is to fulfill BLM's responsibility under FLPMA and BLM ROW regulations to manage the public lands for multiple uses, including transmission of electric energy (43 CFR 2806). To advance these objectives, BLM designates utility corridors through public lands and endeavors to co-locate large, linear facilities such as transmission lines within those corridors, thereby avoiding the proliferation of new routes through sensitive lands and wildlife habitats (43 United States Code [USC] 1763). These designated corridors conform with long-range corridor needs established by the DOE under Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and correlate with designated corridors on adjoining lands.

The BLM's purpose and need also must consider further guidance from the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which recognized the need to improve domestic energy production, develop renewable energy resources, and enhance the infrastructure (e.g., transmission lines) for collection and distribution of energy resources across the nation. To support this, the BLM is charged with analyzing applications for utility and transportation systems on federal lands they administer. When analyzing applications, the agencies also must consider the recommendations in the 2011 Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) 10-Year Regional Transmission Plan regarding future transmission needs (WECC 2011).

#### 1.1.1.1 BLM's Decisions

The BLM must review and authorize each component of the Project that involves the use of public lands (e.g., construction staging/storage areas, access roads, the transmission line towers and conductors, and other ancillary facilities). This use would be authorized by a ROW grant supported by the environmental record. When a ROW grant is offered, a ROD documents the BLM's decision and its rationale for the route authorized, adopts construction and mitigation measures proposed by the Applicant (usually contained in the Applicant's Plan of Development [POD]), and adds terms and conditions deemed necessary by the BLM, in coordination with other agencies, to provide resource protection not included in the Applicant's Proposal. The BLM decisions to be made are to:

- Decide whether to grant, grant with modification, or deny a ROW to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed facilities for a transmission line on public lands;
- Decide whether one or more BLM land use plans should be amended to allow the proposed transmission line;
- Determine the most appropriate location for the transmission line on public lands, considering multiple-use objectives; and
- Determine the terms and conditions (stipulations) for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the transmission line on public lands that should be applied to the ROW grant.

Additionally, mitigation to offset or compensate for impacts on some regulated resources may require mitigation measures and conservation actions to achieve land use plan goals and objectives, including providing for sustained yield of natural resources on public lands, while continuing to honor the agency's multiple-use missions. The sequence of mitigation action would comply with the mitigation identified by the CEQ (40 CFR 1508.20) and BLM's Draft – Regional Mitigation Manual Section 1794 and could include measures for the BLM to consider to compensate for an impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments. Examples include creation or restoration of wetlands; offsite

vegetation treatments to improve greater sage-grouse (sage-grouse) or migratory bird habitat; purchase of property or conservation easements to provide long-term protection for sage-grouse or migratory bird habitats; or appropriate mitigation for impacts to designated National Scenic and/or Historic Trails or those trails recommended as suitable for congressional designation. Any additional mitigation requirements, including compensatory mitigation, would be approved by the agencies and incorporated into the POD prior to Project construction.

The BLM has prepared this EIS to disclose and analyze the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, as required by NEPA, to facilitate public participation and to assist the BLM decision maker in making the decisions listed above. The BLM Wyoming State Director is the agency official who will be making the decisions in the ROD.

### 1.1.2 Western Area Power Administration's Purpose and Need

Western needs to respond to a project proposed by TransWest Express. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's 2009 amendment of the Hoover Power Plant Act of 1984 (Hoover Act) (Public Law [P.L.] 98-381, Title III, Section 301) provides Western the authority to borrow funds from the U.S. Treasury to construct, finance, facilitate, plan, operate, maintain, and/or study construction of new or upgraded electric power transmission lines and related facilities that facilitate delivery of renewable energy. In March 2009 Western issued a request for Statements of Interest (SOIs) that allowed transmission project developers to apply to use Western's borrowing authority to develop qualifying projects. Western evaluated submittals using the following criteria set forth in Section 301 of the Hoover Act:

1. Project will deliver, or will facilitate the delivery of, power generated by renewable resources constructed or reasonably expected to be constructed;
2. Project is in the public interest;
3. Project will not adversely impact system reliability or operations, or other statutory obligations; and
4. Project is reasonably expected to produce revenue adequate to meet Western's financial repayment obligations.

TransWest submitted an SOI that complied with the statutory criteria. Western and TransWest entered into a Development Agreement (executed in September 2011, as amended in June 2014) wherein Western agreed to support Project development by providing technical assistance and/or financing. Western's activities defined in the development agreement include supporting the WECC path rating process, preliminary project design, the NEPA process, and negotiation of commercial agreements. The decision to participate in development phase activities, however, did not commit Western to finance construction or become an owner of the project.

#### 1.1.2.1 Western Area Power Administration's Decision

Western's decision is whether it would use its borrowing authority to partially finance and/or hold partial ownership with TransWest in the resulting transmission facilities and capacity. Specifically, funding would be used to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a transmission line. This decision would be managed through agreements that would include defining the respective rights and obligations associated with ownership of the Project; address construction, operation, and maintenance associated with the transmission line; and provide for acquisition of ROWs for the Project.

Prior to committing funds for construction, Western must certify that the Project is in the public interest; the Project will not adversely impact system reliability, system operations, or other statutory obligations; and it is reasonable to expect the proceeds from the Project will be adequate to make repayment of the loan from Treasury. In addition, the Project will need to satisfy the requirements of Western's Transmission Infrastructure Program (TIP) and its authority under the Hoover Act. As with BLM's

decision, Western's decision is informed by the required NEPA analysis and disclosure in this EIS. The Western administrator is the agency official who will be making the decision in the ROD.

## 1.2 Cooperating Agencies

The CEQ regulations implementing NEPA allow the lead agencies to invite other federal, state, tribal, or local agencies to serve as cooperating agencies in preparing the EIS (40 CFR 1501.6). A cooperating agency must hold legal jurisdiction over resources that could be impacted by the project, or provide special expertise with respect to resource issues addressed by the NEPA analysis. In addition, MOUs are generally implemented between the lead agencies and each cooperating agency.

Forty-nine entities have agreed to be cooperating agencies in preparation of the Project EIS. These agencies are listed in **Table 1-1**.

**Table 1-1 Project Cooperating Agencies**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Federal** | |
| U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Intermountain Region, Ogden, Utah representing:<br>- Ashley National Forest<br>- Dixie National Forest<br>- Fishlake National Forest<br>- Manti-La Sal National Forest<br>- Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest[1] | |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) representing:<br>- Mountain Prairie Region, Lakewood, Colorado<br>- Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, California | |
| National Park Service (NPS)<br>- Intermountain Region, Lakewood, Colorado<br>- Pacific West Region, San Francisco, California | |
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)<br>- South Pacific Division<br>- Northwestern Division | |
| U.S. Army Region 8 | |
| Navy Region Southwest, San Diego, California | |
| Nevada Army National Guard | |
| Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Region | |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Western Region, representing:<br>- Rocky Mountain Region, Billings, Montana<br>- Southwest Region, Albuquerque, New Mexico | |
| Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission | |
| Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) | |
| **Tribal Governments** | |
| Moapa Band of Paiutes | |
| Ute Indian Tribe (Uintah and Ouray Reservation) | |
| **State** | |
| State of Wyoming | State of Colorado |
| State of Utah | State of Nevada |
| **County** | |
| Wyoming: Carbon, Sweetwater | |
| Colorado: Garfield, Mesa, Moffat, Rio Blanco | |

**Table 1-1 Project Cooperating Agencies**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Federal** | |
| Utah: Beaver, Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, Grand, Iron, Millard, Juab, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, Washington | |
| Nevada: Clark, Lincoln | |
| **Other** | |
| Little Snake River Conservation District | Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District |
| Medicine Bow Conservation District | Sweetwater County Conservation District |
| Douglas Creek Conservation District | White River Conservation District |
| N-4 State Grazing Board | University of Wyoming |

[1] In March of 2008, the Uinta National Forest and the Wasatch-Cache National Forest were combined into one administrative unit (Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest). Each of these forests continues to operate under individual forest plans approved in 2003. When the term Uinta National Forest Planning Area is used in this EIS, it refers to the portion of the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest managed under the 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Uinta National Forest.

## 1.3 TransWest's Goals and Objectives

TransWest's primary goal is to provide the transmission infrastructure and capacity necessary to reliably and cost-effectively transmit up to 3,000-MW of electric power from Wyoming to the desert southwest. TransWest's objectives for the Project are to:

- Allow consumers access to renewable energy sources and contribute to meeting national, regional, and state energy and environmental policies, including state-mandated renewable energy portfolio and greenhouse gas reduction targets;
- Meet increasing customer demand with improved electrical system reliability;
- Allow consumers access to domestic energy sources and contribute to complying with national energy policy;
- Provide system flexibility and increased access to the grid for third-party transmission users;
- Expand regional economic development through increased employment and enlargement of the property tax base; and
- Maintain the standard of living associated with highly reliable electricity service.

While meeting these broad objectives, TransWest would work within the following Project-specific objectives:

- Provide for the efficient, cost-effective, and economically feasible transmission of approximately 20,000 gigawatt hours per year (GWh/yr) of clean and sustainable electric energy from Wyoming to markets in the Desert Southwest region. This estimate is based on 8,760 hours per year of 3,000-MW transmission capacity.
- Meet North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) Reliability Standards and WECC planning criteria and line separation requirements.
- Maximize the use of designated utility corridors and existing access roads to the extent practical to minimize adverse effects of the Project.
- Maximize co-location of the Project with existing linear infrastructure and, in particular, existing transmission infrastructure to the extent practicable to minimize adverse effects of the Project.

- Provide these benefits in a timely manner to the Desert Southwest region and the broader Western U.S. to meet the region's pressing environmental and energy needs. TransWest has identified a need for the Project by 2015, which is prior to the expected in-service date of 2017. Provide for flexibility and maximize the use of infrastructure to increase future transmission capacity by configuring the Project to allow for future interconnection with the IPP transmission system near Delta, Utah.

## 1.4 Relationship to Programs, Policies, and Plans

### 1.4.1 Federal Multi-agency Programs

The West-wide Energy Corridor (WWEC) Programmatic EIS was prepared jointly by the USDOI and the DOE for energy corridors in 11 western states and completed in January 2009. The RODs for the WWEC Programmatic EIS designated energy transmission corridors and provided guidance, best management practices (BMPs), and mitigation measures to be used for any power lines proposed to be constructed within the corridors on public lands (BLM 2009; USFS 2009). The WWEC Programmatic EIS provides a framework (further described in Chapter 2.0) for the development of Project alternatives. The analysis in this Project EIS tiers to the analysis from the WWEC Programmatic EIS, to the extent applicable, and incorporates by reference all BMPs and mitigation measures in the RODs for the WWEC Programmatic EIS.

In October of 2009, nine federal entities including the CEQ, the USDOI, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the DOE, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) signed a MOU committing each of the signatories to increase their coordination to expedite and simplify the process for analyzing, permitting, and building transmission lines on federal lands.

On October 5, 2011, the Obama Administration announced the formation of a Rapid Response Team for Transmission (RRTT) composed of the nine agencies who signed the MOU. This team was formed to more quickly advance the permitting for seven pilot transmission projects, including this Project.

The RRTT mission (CEQ 2011) is to "accelerate responsible and informed deployment of these seven key transmission facilities by:

- Coordinating statutory permitting, review, and consultation schedules and processes among involved federal and state agencies as appropriate through Integrated Federal Planning;
- Applying a uniform and consistent approach to consultations with Tribal governments; and
- Expeditiously resolving interagency conflicts and ensuring that all involved agencies are fully engaged and meeting schedules."

### 1.4.2 Federal Agency Roles, Requirements, and Decisions

The following sections briefly describe the roles, policies, plans, programs, and decisions of the federal lead agencies and those agencies whose jurisdictional lands may be requested for Project facilities. Also included are the federal agencies that must consult with the lead agencies, or review and approve applications for certain activities.

The level of involvement by various federal agencies in EIS decisions largely depends on whether lands and resources under agency jurisdiction would be directly or indirectly affected by construction, operation, and decommission of the proposed Project. **Table 1-2** provides miles of potential transmission line ROW that would be required for the proposed Project and alternatives in the various federal jurisdictions.

**Table 1-2 Miles of Proposed Project Transmission Line ROW by Jurisdiction**

| Federal Agency | Proposed Action (miles) | All Other Alternatives (miles) |
|---|---|---|
| USDOI – BLM | 440 | 809 |
| USDOI – Bureau of Reclamation | 8 | 7 |
| USDOI – BIA/Tribal | 0 | 25 |
| USDOI – NPS | 0 | 24 |
| USDA – FS (USFS) | 39 | 132 |
| DOE | 0 | 5 |
| URMCC | 1 | 0 |
| State – Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada | 55 | 152 |
| Private | 185 | 466 |
| **Total** | 727 | 1,618 |

**Figure 1-2** provides the steps in the EIS process and shows how BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) and USFS Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) amendments would fit in to the process. The plan amendment process for these two agencies is described briefly below and discussed in detail in Chapter 4.0.

#### 1.4.2.1 Bureau of Land Management

The regulations and guidance documents used for EIS preparation include: 1) the CEQ implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508); 2) the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1); 3) the USDOI NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46); 4) the BLM Planning Regulations (43 CFR 1601 and 1610); 5) the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1); 6) relevant BLM Instruction Memoranda (IM), including IM Nos. 2011-059, 2011-060, and 2011-061; and 7) the RMPs for the individual BLM field offices (FOs). **Table 1-3** lists the BLM FOs potentially crossed by the Project and their pertinent RMPs.

**Table 1-3 Current BLM Resource Management Plans Relevant to the Project**

| State | Field Office | Current RMP |
|---|---|---|
| Colorado | Grand Junction | Grand Junction Resource Area RMP, January 1987. |
| Colorado | Little Snake | Little Snake FO RMP, October 2011. |
| Colorado | White River | White River FO RMP, July 1997. |
| Nevada | Caliente | Ely District RMP, August 2008. |
| Nevada | Las Vegas | Las Vegas FO RMP, October 1998. |
| Nevada | Las Vegas | Las Vegas FO RMP, October 1998; Approved ROD Maintenance Record, January 2007. |
| Utah | Cedar City | Pinyon Management Framework Plan (MFP), June 1983; amendment to MFP, 1997 |
| Utah | Cedar City | Cedar Beaver Garfield Antimony Planning Area RMP, October 1986. |
| Utah | Fillmore | Warm Springs Resource Area RMP, April 1987. |
| Utah | Fillmore | House Range Resource Area RMP, October 1987. |
| Utah | Moab | Moab FO RMP, October 2008. |
| Utah | Price | Price FO RMP, October 2008. |
| Utah | Richfield | Richfield FO RMP, October 2008. |
| Utah | Saint George | Saint George FO RMP, March 1999. |
| Utah | Salt Lake | Pony Express Resource Area RMP and Rangeland Program Summary for Utah County, January 1990; amendment to RMP, November, 1997. |
| Utah | Vernal | Vernal FO RMP, October 2008. |
| Wyoming | Rawlins | Rawlins FO RMP, December 2008. |

Actions that result in a change in the scope of resource uses, terms, conditions, and decisions of federal agency land use plans, including the approval of this Project, may require amendment of one or more of the plans in **Table 1-3**. As required by 43 CFR 1610.2(c), the BLM notified the public of potential amendments to RMPs in the Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an EIS (see *Federal Register* [FR], Volume 76, No. 2, Tuesday, January 4, 2011). All authorizations and actions considered in the EIS would be evaluated to determine if they conform to the decisions in the referenced land use plans. If the BLM determines that plan amendments are necessary, compliance with NEPA for any land use plan amendments would occur simultaneously with the consideration of the Project as described in 43 CFR 1610. Refer to Chapter 4.0 for additional details regarding the need for plan amendments and how they may relate to the Project.

As illustrated in **Figure 1-2,** the proposed BLM plan amendments are included in the Final EIS and are subject to a 30-day protest period, a 60-day Governor's consistency review, and a resolution of protests. The BLM may adopt the plan amendments after public review, and would address plan amendment decisions in the ROD.

The Project authorization decisions would be documented in the Project ROD prepared by the BLM. The BLM would consider the decisions of other federal land management agencies that are required for the Project before issuing or denying the Project ROW (43 CFR 2800).

Under the authority granted by the FLPMA (43 USC 1701-1787), the BLM may or may not issue a ROW grant for BLM-administered lands crossed by the proposed Project based on the decision documented in the ROD.

#### 1.4.2.2 Western Area Power Administration

Under the Hoover Act, as amended by Section 402 of the Recovery Act, Western was granted authority to borrow funds from the U.S. Treasury to (among other things) construct, finance, facilitate, plan, operate, maintain, and/or study construction of new or upgraded transmission facilities that deliver renewable energy. Prior to committing funds, Western must certify that the Project is in the public interest; the Project will not adversely impact system reliability, system operations, or other statutory obligations; and it is reasonable to expect the proceeds from the Project will be adequate to make repayment of the loan. On March 4, 2009, Western solicited interest in proposed transmission projects that resulted in the submission of SOIs, including one for this proposed Project.

Western is considering whether to participate in the proposed Project beyond the development phase and provide financing using Western's borrowing authority, contingent on the outcome of development agreement activities. To participate, Western needs the Project to satisfy Hoover Act requirements. This environmental analysis supplies one element of many for Western to consider as it determines the extent and nature of its participation in TransWest's proposed Project.

#### 1.4.2.3 Bureau of Reclamation

The Bureau of Reclamation is a cooperating agency on the Project. Project facilities could be located on Bureau of Reclamation lands in the vicinity of Lake Mead in southern Nevada. The Bureau of Reclamation has the discretion to issue a Right of Use Authorization for any transmission facilities to be located on Bureau of Reclamation lands (43 USC 387). The Bureau of Reclamation would issue a separate ROD that would outline the Bureau of Reclamation's decision and the terms and conditions under which the Right of Use Authorization would be granted.

#### 1.4.2.4 Utah Reclamation Mitigation Conservation Commission

The URMCC is a cooperating agency on the Project. Project alternatives cross URMCC managed lands and easements in Duchesne and Wasatch counties, Utah. If the selected route crosses land administered by the URMCC, the URMCC may issue a license agreement for the Proposed Action.

#### 1.4.2.5 Bureau of Indian Affairs

As a cooperating agency, the BIA has participated in the development of the EIS. If a tribe provides written consent to portions of the Project crossing tribal lands, the BIA would prepare a separate ROD and ROW grant across tribal lands (25 CFR Part 169.3).

Tribal lands are crossed by alternatives in Uintah and Duchesne counties, Utah (Uintah and Ouray Indian Reservation), and in Clark County, Nevada (Moapa Indian Reservation). It should be noted that, although one of the alternative routes crosses the Moapa Indian Reservation in southern Nevada, the utility corridor within which the alternative would be located is administered by the BLM; therefore, no tribal or BIA approval would be required if the alternative route remains within the designated BLM-administered utility corridor through the Moapa Indian Reservation.

#### 1.4.2.6 National Park Service

The NPS is a cooperating agency on the Project. NPS policy directs the potential use of authority under 16 USC 79 for electric transmission ROWs, and only if there is no practicable alternative to the use of NPS lands (NPS Director's Order #53). These authorizations are typically limited to 100-foot-wide ROWs. Deviation from NPS guidance on the application of 16 USC 79 to approve a 250-foot-wide transmission line ROW for the electric transmission line would require a policy waiver from the NPS.

In Colorado, some of the Project alternatives cross Deerlodge Road, which is centered on a 200-foot easement owned in fee by the NPS as part of Dinosaur National Monument. These transmission line routes were included in the range of alternatives to address land use and other resource constraints in the area, including proposed and newly established conservation easements. The General Management Plan (GMP) for Dinosaur National Monument indicates that industrial use of the park is an "incompatible use" and that congressionally designated easements along the road corridor are meant to "protect the visual quality of the road." Accordingly, if one of the alternatives crossing Deerlodge Road were selected, NPS would need to issue a ROW permit and amend the GMP to accommodate the permit issued, which would require additional NEPA analysis.

In Nevada, some of the Project alternatives cross portions of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) administered by the NPS. These transmission line routes were included in the range of alternatives to address limited available space within an existing utility corridor through the Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area (ISA), a former wilderness study area. The ISA was released by Congress in the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act. According to the approved GMP for the Lake Mead NRA, Project alternatives would be located in the Park's environmental protection subzone, where lands are most sensitive and identified for protection. Consequently, if one of the alternatives through the Lake Mead NRA were selected, NPS would need to issue a ROW permit and amend the GMP to open new utility corridors that accommodate the Project, which would require additional NEPA analysis.

#### 1.4.2.7 U.S. Forest Service

The USFS is a cooperating agency on the Project. The proposed Project and alternative corridors being analyzed would cross USFS lands under the jurisdiction of up to five different national forests in Utah. The USFS would issue a Special Use Authorization for any transmission facilities and associated activities to be located on USFS lands and a separate ROD that would outline the USFS decision and the terms and conditions under which the Special Use Authorization would be granted.

The purpose of the USFS federal action is to respond to TransWest's application for a ROW to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a transmission line on federal lands. The need for this action is to fulfill USFS responsibility under FLPMA and National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (16 USC 1601-1614) and USFS Special Use Authorization regulations at 36 CFR 251 Subpart B - Land uses and its implementing polices in Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks at FSM 2700, FSH 2709.11, and related environmental policy direction in FSM 1900 and FSH 1900. To advance these objectives, USFS attempts to designates utility corridors through federal lands and endeavors to co-locate large, linear

facilities such as transmission lines within those corridors, thereby avoiding the proliferation of new routes through sensitive lands and wildlife habitats (43 USC 1763). These designated corridors conform with long-range corridor needs established by the DOE under Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and correlate with designated corridors on adjoining lands.

The USFS's purpose and need also must consider further guidance from the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which recognized the need to improve domestic energy production, develop renewable energy resources, and enhance the infrastructure (e.g., transmission lines) for collection and distribution of energy resources across the nation. To support this, the USFS is charged with analyzing applications for utility and transportation systems on federal lands they administer, while balancing the other beneficial uses the federal lands may be needed. When analyzing applications, the agencies also must consider the recommendations in the 2011 WECC 10-Year Regional Transmission Plan regarding future transmission needs (WECC 2011), to the extent necessary to assure balanced land use, reliability, and resource concerns.

The USFS decision maker, in consultation with affected forests, would use this EIS to inform his/her decision regarding: 1) the choice of an agency preferred alternative; 2) whether to issue a Special Use Authorization under FLPMA; 3) under what terms and conditions a permit should be issued; and 4) the need to amend LRMPs relying on NFMA. Under 36 CFR 218, upon issuance of the Final EIS, the USFS also issues a draft ROD for its Project-related decision and any associated Project-specific amendments. This will start a 45-day objection filing period.

The NFMA requires the Secretary of Agriculture to develop and revise LRMPs for lands under its jurisdiction. LRMPs provide direction, goals, and criteria for management, including standards and guidelines for resource use and land management practices. **Table 1-4** lists the national forests potentially crossed by the Project and their pertinent LRMPs.

**Table 1-4 Current USFS Land and Resource Management Plans Relevant to the Project**

| State | National Forest | Current LRMP |
|---|---|---|
| Utah | Ashley | LRMP for the Ashley National Forest, November 1986 |
| Utah | Dixie | LRMP for the Dixie National Forest, September 1986 |
| Utah | Fishlake | LRMP for the Fishlake National Forest, June 1986 |
| Utah | Manti-La Sal | LRMP Manti-La Sal National Forest, November 1986 |
| Utah | Uinta | LRMP Uinta National Forest, May 2003 |

According to the NFMA (16 USC 1604(f)(4)) and its implementing regulations, all actions authorized subsequent to the plan must be consistent with the approved LRMP. To be consistent with USFS LRMPs, a project must do the following: 1) contribute to the maintenance or attainment of one or more goals, desired conditions or objectives, or not foreclose the opportunity to maintain or achieve any goals, desired conditions or objectives over the long term; 2) comply with applicable standards; 3) comply with applicable guidelines, and be designed in a way that is as effective in achieving the purpose of the applicable guideline; 4) occur in an area that is identified as suitable for that type of project, or in an area for which the plan is silent with respect to suitability (36 CFR 219.15(d)).

If a proposed activity would not be consistent with the applicable LRMP, the proposed Project can be modified to make it consistent with the applicable plan, or the responsible official can reject the proposal, or amend the LRMP along with the approval of the project so that the project will be consistent with the LRMP as amended (36 CFR 219.15(c)). The responsible official may complete and approve the LRMP amendment in conformance with the provisions of the prior planning regulation (36 CFR 219.17(b)(3)), including the 1982 planning procedures allowed by the transition provisions of the reinstated 2000 rule (36 CFR 200 to 299, revised as of July 1, 2010). Under the 1982 planning procedures, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether a proposed LRMP amendment would result in a significant change in the plan. Significance of the amendment will be based on criteria provided in Forest Service Manual

(FSM) 1926.52, and the resulting findings will be documented in the USFS ROD. When a plan amendment in a decision document approves one specific project, the objection process at 36 CFR 218 applies (36 CFR 219.59). Such an amendment would become effective on the date the project may be implemented through the fulfillment of the administrative review regulations (36 CFR 219.17(a)(3)).

On January 12, 2001, the USFS published the Roadless Conservation Final Rule in the *Federal Register* (*FR* 66 (9): 3243-3273). The preamble to the Final Rule describes USFS policy concerning roadless areas throughout the National Forest System (NFS) and specifies that constructing new access roads or reconstructing existing unauthorized roads that cross inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) would not be allowed. The Final Rule was implemented on May 12, 2001, and has been recently affirmed. On October 21, 2011, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit decided *Wyoming v. USDA* and found the USFS's adoption of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule does not violate federal law. Accordingly, any proposed construction in IRAs should be done with roadless construction techniques.

The USFS also requires preparation of a Biological Evaluation (BE) for the Project. USFS policy (FSM 2670.32) states that all programs and activities would be reviewed in a BE as part of the NEPA process to determine the potential effect of such proposed activities on regional forester-designated sensitive species. Further, it is policy to avoid or minimize impacts to species whose viability has been identified as a concern, and permitted activities must not result in loss of species viability or create significant trends toward federal listing. The objectives of this policy are to ensure that species do not become endangered or threatened because of USFS actions, and that viable populations of all native and desired nonnative wildlife, fish, and plant species are maintained in habitats distributed throughout their geographic range on USFS lands (FSM 2670.22).

#### 1.4.2.8 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The USFWS is a cooperating agency on the Project. The USFWS is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). The BLM, as the lead federal agency for ESA Section 7 consultation, is responsible for initiating informal consultation (e.g., communication) with the USFWS to determine the likelihood of effects on listed species.

In accordance with the ESA, formal consultation (as described below) with the USFWS is required when the action agency determines that a project may affect a listed species or designated critical habitat. The consultation process determines if a project is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a species, or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat. Formal consultation begins with the BLM's written request for consultation and the submittal of a Biological Assessment (BA) and concludes with the issuance of a Biological Opinion (BO) from the USFWS. The USFWS has been involved in internal agency reviews as a cooperating agency for the Project. The BLM will prepare a draft BA to assess potential impacts on federally listed species and their habitats from the agency preferred alternative. The draft BA will be submitted to the USFWS for review and concurrence. The USFWS would issue either a letter of concurrence on the BA, or a BO, depending on the level of effects on listed species. Any conservation measures resulting from issuance of a BO would be incorporated as part of the lead agencies' decisions.

#### 1.4.2.9 Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

ACHP oversees implementation of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires the lead federal agencies to consider the effects of the agencies' undertakings on properties listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). NRHP properties can include a diversity of archaeological, historical, and traditional cultural properties. Regulations for Protection of Historic Properties (36 CFR 800) implement Section 106, and define a process for federal agencies to consult with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other interested parties as they assess the effects of their undertakings. Pursuant to these regulations, the BLM has initiated Section 106 consultation with the Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada SHPOs.

A Programmatic Agreement (PA) currently is being prepared for the Project. The PA is a document that records the terms and conditions agreed upon to resolve potential effects to historic properties of a federal agency program or complex undertaking in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA. The PA for this Project defines the general and specific measures that would be undertaken by BLM, Western, the USFS, TransWest, and the SHPOs to ensure the agencies' objectives and responsibilities regarding protection of historic properties under the NHPA are fulfilled. Primary signatories for the PA include the BLM, Western, the USFS, TransWest, the SHPOs, and the ACHP. Those tribes whose lands would be crossed by the selected transmission line route also would be invited to sign the PA. The signed PA would be incorporated as part of the decision.

#### 1.4.2.10 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The USACE is a cooperating agency on the Project. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes a permit program administered by the USACE to regulate the discharge of dredge and fill materials into the waters of the U.S., including their adjacent wetlands. The Project would be under the jurisdiction of the Omaha, Sacramento, and Los Angeles districts of the USACE. The Applicant would be responsible for conducting wetland delineations for the final route selected and filing the appropriate Section 404 application(s) and other CWA certifications after issuance of the ROD.

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act establishes a permit program to prevent unauthorized obstruction or alteration of any navigable waters of the U.S. by construction in, over, or under said waters. Section 10 also is administered by the USACE. The Applicant would be responsible for filing Section 10 permit application(s) for crossings at navigable waters after issuance of the ROD.

## 1.5 Additional Governmental Requirements

**Table A-1** in **Appendix A** provides a list of the major federal, state, and local permits and approvals that could be required for construction, operation, and maintenance of the Project.

## 1.6 Right-of-Way Easement Acquisition Process on Non-federal Lands

TransWest, and/or Western if it decides to participate in the proposed Project, would negotiate details regarding needed land acquisition across non-federal lands (e.g., private, county, state), either in fee or as an easement for the transmission line and associated facilities (substations, etc.), with each landowner. A private land easement, usually negotiated with the landowner, is the legal instrument that would be used to convey a ROW to Western or TransWest. The easement would give TransWest or Western the right to operate and maintain the transmission line in the permanent ROW and, in return, would compensate the landowner for the use of the land.

The easement negotiations between TransWest and/or Western and the landowner could include compensation for loss of use during construction, loss of nonrenewable or other resources, and the restoration of unavoidable damage to property during construction. Although BLM does not enforce stipulations on private lands, Project implementation on these lands does have to comply with those regulatory requirements that also apply to private land (e.g., ESA, CWA). Thus, TransWest or Western and their contractors would be responsible for ensuring that the Project complies with these requirements. Additionally, private landowners may negotiate stipulations to address resource impacts as part of their agreements with TransWest or Western.

If a fee ownership or an easement cannot be negotiated with the landowner, federal and state laws allow in some cases for the acquisition of property rights for facilities to be built in the public interest. Should Western invest in the Project, as a federal agency it would have the ability to acquire the rights needed under eminent domain laws prevailing in the affected states. However, Western has committed to working with citizens and landowners to address any concerns regarding acquisition of any private lands required for Project implementation, should it decide to participate. Western views effective public involvement and engagement as a much more productive route than exercising eminent domain

authority. However, neither federal agencies nor the state has the right to exercise eminent domain over tribal lands (25 CFR Part 169).

## 1.7 Public Involvement

### 1.7.1 Public Scoping

Pre-scoping activities were conducted in 2009 and spring 2010 with the BLM FOs, USFS, and the cooperating agencies. Comments received during pre-scoping were considered in developing the alternative corridors presented to the public during the scoping period.

The NOI for the Project was published in the *Federal Register* on January 4, 2011. A Project newsletter was concurrently mailed to approximately 23,000 interested parties including federal, state, and local agencies; tribal governments; and potentially affected landowners along the proposed and alternative routes. The BLM and Western placed display advertisements in local newspapers, and public service announcements were submitted for broadcast on local radio and television announcing the public scoping meetings. TransWest also conducted additional outreach related to the scoping process.

The BLM and Western held 23 public scoping meetings with a total attendance of 678 individuals. Dates and locations of the public meetings are provided in **Table 1-5**. All of the public scoping meetings were held from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

The public meetings were conducted as open houses with seven information stations: Project Scope and Applicant's Interests and Objectives, NEPA and Agencies' Purpose and Need, Engineering/ Construction/Maintenance, Lands Acquisition, Map Book Table, GoogleEarth™ Demonstration, and Geographic Information System (GIS) Comment Station. Public scoping comments were electronically submitted at the GIS comment station at the meetings, through the BLM Project website, or by U.S. Mail.

During the scoping period, the BLM and Western met with representatives of several county commissions. The meetings were scheduled to coincide with the scoping meeting in their respective county. The meetings provided Project information and explained the EIS process. Packets containing the materials available to the public at the scoping meetings were distributed to the commissioners. In addition to the county commissioners, the BLM and Western met with the Clark County, Nevada, Conservation Program on March 1, 2011.

**Table 1-5 Scoping Meetings**

| City, State | Date | City, State | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vernal, Utah | Tuesday, January 25, 2011 | St. George, Utah | Thursday, February 17, 2011 |
| Craig, Colorado | Wednesday, January 26, 2011 | Pine Valley, Utah | Tuesday, February 22, 2011 |
| Rangely, Colorado | Thursday, January 27, 2011 | Central, Utah | Wednesday, February 23, 2011 |
| Grand Junction, Colorado | Monday, January 31, 2011 | Enterprise, Utah | Thursday, February 24, 2011 |
| Moab, Utah | Tuesday, February 1, 2011 | Caliente, Nevada | Monday, February 28, 2011 |
| Castle Dale, Utah | Wednesday, February 2, 2011 | Overton, Nevada | Tuesday, March 1, 2011 |
| Duchesne, Utah | Monday, February 7, 2011 | Henderson, Nevada | Wednesday, March 2, 2011 |
| Nephi, Utah | Tuesday, February 8, 2011 | Las Vegas, Nevada | Thursday, March 3, 2011 |
| Delta, Utah | Wednesday, February 9, 2011 | Rawlins, Wyoming | Tuesday, March 8, 2011 |
| Richfield, Utah | Monday, February 14, 2011 | Rock Springs, Wyoming | Wednesday, March 9, 2011 |
| Milford, Utah | Tuesday, February 15, 2011 | Baggs, Wyoming | Thursday, March 10, 2011 |
| Cedar City, Utah | Wednesday, February 16, 2011 | | |

The BLM and Western received a total of 622 comment submittals (e.g., electronic at a scoping meeting, letter, comment form, email) containing 2,319 individual comments during the public scoping period. The public scoping comments were compiled in a database and analyzed for content. Reports were generated, categorizing the issues first by the Project region and then by resource and/or topic. The individual comments were keyed to a Project map for easy identification.

### 1.7.2 Draft EIS Public Review and Comment Period

The BLM and Western released the Draft EIS for a 90-day public comment period, as announced by publishing a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register* on July 3, 2013. Additionally, the USFS published separate NOAs to notify the public of their involvement. The Draft EIS review period was announced using the same or similar methods as were used during scoping; through the BLM Project web site, newsletters, news releases, postcards, print advertisements, and radio and television public service announcements.

Public meetings were held in August and September 2013, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the dates and at the locations listed in **Table 1-6**.

**Table 1-6 Draft EIS Public Meetings**

| City, State | Date | City, State | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rawlins, Wyoming | Wed, August 14, 2013 | Duchesne, Utah | Wed, August 28, 2013 |
| Baggs, Wyoming | Thurs, August 15, 2013 | Price, Utah | Thurs, August 29, 2013 |
| Craig, Colorado | Fri, August 16, 2013 | Henderson, Nevada | Tues, September 3, 2013 |
| Nephi, Utah | Tues, August 20, 2013 | Panaca, Nevada | Wed, September 4, 2013 |
| Delta, Utah | Wed, August 21, 2013 | Cedar City, Utah | Thurs, September 5, 2013 |
| Ft. Duchesne, Utah | Mon, August 26, 2013 | St. George, Utah | Fri, September 6, 2013 |
| Vernal, Utah | Tues, August 27, 2013 | | |

The BLM and Western received a total of 453 individual comment submittals (e.g., letter, comment form, email, or court reporter transcription). Additionally there were 109 submittals that contained all or portions of one of four form letters that were submitted for the Project. Following the close of the Draft EIS public comment period, comments were compiled and analyzed to identify substantive issues and concerns (as directed by Section 6.9.2.1 of the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1). Within each comment submittal, individual comments were identified, reviewed, and entered into an electronic database. The comment analysis process resulted in approximately 1,963 substantive comments requiring responses. In preparing the Final EIS, the BLM considered all substantive comments. **Appendix L** contains a description of the comment analysis and response process along with each unique substantive comment received, and its associated response.

### 1.7.3 Consultation and Coordination with Federal, State, and Local Governments, and Federally Recognized Indian Tribes

The BLM and Western, along with cooperating agencies, continue to participate in the coordination and consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, and tribal representatives about the potential for the proposed Project and alternatives to affect sensitive resources (40 CFR 1508.5; 1608.6; Forty Questions No. 14[a], 14[b], 14[c], and the CEQ Advisory Memorandum, *Designation of Non-Federal Agencies to be Cooperating Agencies in Implementing the Procedural Requirements of NEPA, July 1999*).

## 1.8 Issues to be Analyzed

After evaluating the comments received during the public scoping period, several key issues emerged. The issues were synthesized into topical areas that represent the most frequent public concerns about the proposed Project. These issues and topical areas defined the focus of the NEPA analyses disclosed

in this EIS. A detailed summary of the scoping issues is contained in the Project Scoping Summary Report, which is posted on the BLM Wyoming State Office website: http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/hdd/transwest.html.

### 1.8.1 Alternatives

Most corridor-related comments were related to alternative locations. Concerns regarding particular alternatives were related to avoidance of sensitive resources, including special status species habitat, impacts to visual resources, areas with special designations or management, and/or historic or cultural sites. Many of the commenters were landowners concerned about public health and safety issues and impacts to property values. A description of the pre-scoping corridor screening process is presented in **Appendix B**, TransWest Express Transmission Project Corridor Screening Report.

### 1.8.2 Potential Private and Public Land Use Conflicts

Conflicts with existing or potential future land uses were a common concern for many of the Project alternatives.

- Alternatives located in Colorado potentially would conflict with private landowner properties, a new airport location, state land uses, and federal lands with special management designations.
- Alternative concerns within Wyoming primarily were associated with impacts to agricultural lands, special status species, historic and cultural resources, and visual resources.
- In Utah, landowners in the Fruitland and Duchesne areas were concerned that the Project would conflict with agricultural activities and limit economic growth. Concerns about alternatives were related to impacts to reservoirs in northern Utah, agriculture lands, Uinta/Ashley national forests, wilderness study areas (WSAs), and the Mountain Meadows National Historic Landmark (NHL) and site.
- Numerous comments about conflicts with existing or potential future land uses came from the Las Vegas area, specifically north of Las Vegas (Apex) and the Henderson area.

### 1.8.3 Impacts to Fish, Wildlife, Vegetation, Special Status Species, and Habitat

Comments about potential impacts to sage-grouse were of high concern in Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah. Wildlife concerns in Wyoming and Colorado included impacts to big game migration and winter/spring range habitat for elk, mule deer, and pronghorn. There were numerous concerns regarding impacts to desert tortoise habitat in southern Utah and Nevada, as well as impacts to bighorn sheep where the proposed Project would traverse desert mountain ranges. Habitat loss for raptors and migratory bird species as well as potential for increased bird collisions with transmission lines were a concern along the entire Project.

### 1.8.4 Concerns about Wildlife Mitigation

Wildlife mitigation measures were important concerns, particularly in areas where the proposed and alternative routes potentially would affect special status species and wildlife. Many of the comments provided recommendations such as construction timing, buffer zones, perching deterrents, and mitigation plans. Compensatory mitigation for wildlife habitat loss also was recommended, particularly for impacts to migratory birds.

### 1.8.5 Noxious Weed Control and Reclamation

In nearly all scoping meeting locations, concerns were expressed about the potential for the spread of noxious and invasive weeds along new ROWs, and the need for appropriate control measures. Concerns and suggestions were expressed regarding the choice of appropriate seed mixtures for surface disturbance reclamation, especially as related to benefits to wildlife and livestock grazing.

### 1.8.6 Public Health and Safety

Numerous comments about public health and safety were received from areas where the proposed Project would cross or be adjacent to private property. Residents in the community of Central, Utah, were concerned about fire risk related to co-locating the transmission line with gas pipelines as well as concerns about firefighter safety in an area with a high risk of wildland fires. Several residents in Henderson, Nevada, voiced concerns about the effects of electromagnetic fields on humans, potential sabotage activities, and structure/conductor failure near homes. Increased construction traffic on roadways was a concern along the entire Project.

### 1.8.7 Impacts to Areas with Special Management Designations

Comments were received about potential impacts to BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), BLM WSAs, USFS IRAs, national monuments/landmarks, national historic trails (NHTs), and state and federal parks. Primary concerns were visual changes that could be viewed from managed or protected areas.

### 1.8.8 Cumulative Impacts

Attendees expressed concern regarding the cumulative effects of numerous transmission lines being proposed within already overcrowded corridors throughout various geographies. Specific areas of concern were along Interstate 80 (I-80) in Wyoming; through the Dixie National Forest and Central, Utah; and in the Las Vegas area on the east side of the Las Vegas Valley.

### 1.8.9 Socioeconomic Impacts (Property Values and Tax Base)

Many landowners were concerned about how the Project would affect property values, particularly where the Project would cross private lands or would be located near urban areas. There were comments that the Project could provide economic benefit to their rural communities through expansion of the tax base and temporary employment during construction.

## 1.9 Organization of this EIS

The Project EIS was organized to facilitate comparison of alternatives and to enable the agencies to efficiently determine the agency preferred alternative. The EIS addresses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts resulting from developing the Project. The content and scope of each chapter is described below.

<u>Chapter 1.0 – Introduction</u>

Chapter 1.0 provides an introduction to the Project and includes a description of the proposed Project, the agencies' purpose and need, and the applicant's interests and objectives. This chapter discusses the federal approval process, decisions to be made, and authorizing federal laws. Relevant state and local regulations are summarized in **Appendix A**. The pre-scoping corridor screening process is presented in **Appendix B**. A summary of the scoping process and issues identified during the scoping period are presented.

<u>Chapter 2.0 – Project Description and Alternatives</u>

Chapter 2.0 provides a description of the alternatives to be analyzed, including the No Action Alternative. Each transmission line alternative is described in terms of its land requirements and the ancillary facilities required for implementing the alternative. The process for identifying the alternatives to be analyzed (or not analyzed) in the EIS is outlined in this chapter. Detailed descriptions of BMPs, design features, and agency stipulations are presented in **Appendix C**. TransWest's detailed description of the technical components of the project are contained in **Appendix D**.

Chapter 3.0 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

For each resource that could be impacted by the Project, Chapter 3.0 describes the analysis area, existing conditions, and environmental consequences of each alternative (including the No Action Alternative). Additionally, Chapter 3.0 provides the regulatory background, sources for baseline data, and a description of the impact indicators and methodology used to determine Project impacts. Proposed mitigation measures to avoid or minimize these impacts and residual impacts after implementation of this mitigation also are disclosed. Resource-specific details not contained in the EIS sections can be found in **Appendix E** through **Appendix I**.

Chapter 4.0 – Federal Agency Land Use Plan Amendments

Chapter 4.0 addresses the federal land use plan amendments required for each alternative. Proposed plan amendments are related to the specific land management plan and alternative. Environmental impacts and planning implications associated with each proposed plan amendment are described.

Chapter 5.0 – Cumulative Impacts

Chapter 5.0 discloses the cumulative impacts of the proposed Project when considered with other past and present actions and reasonably foreseeable future actions (RFFAs). As per CEQ's *Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997), the cumulative effects of past and present actions are summarized in Chapter 3.0 under the current affected environment sections for each resource. The cumulative impacts section then considers RFFAs and their additional impacts for all alternatives.

Chapter 6.0 – Consultation and Coordination

Chapter 6.0 outlines the agency consultation and coordination, including the public involvement and outreach efforts associated with this EIS. These activities are the heart of the NEPA process, and were achieved through *Federal Register* notices, public and informal meetings, individual contacts, media releases, and the Project website, among other activities.