



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

DOI-BLM-ID-0000-0002-EA

Gateway West 500-kV Transmission Line Project

Segments 8 and 9



**DRAFT Environmental Assessment
and Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments, Idaho**

November 3, 2017

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Biological Assessment
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIAA	cumulative impact analysis area
CO	Conference Opinion
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPM	environmental protection measure
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
Gateway West	Gateway West Transmission Line Project (10 segments)
HPTP	Historic Properties Treatment Plan
H.R.	House Resolution
IBLA	Interior Board of Land Appeals
kV	kilovolt
LUP	land use plan
Modification Act	Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Boundary Modification Act
MFP	Management Framework Plan
NCA	National Conservation Area
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHT	National Historic Trail
NOI	Notice of Intent
NO _x	nitrogen oxide
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PM _{2.5}	particulate matter with a diameter less than 2.5 microns
PM ₁₀	particulate matter with a diameter less than 10 microns
POD	Plan of Development
Project	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
Proponents	PacifiCorp d/b/a Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power Company
RAC	Resource Advisory Council
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	right-of-way
SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Solar Project	Simco Solar Project

TES	threatened, endangered, and sensitive
U.S.C.	United States Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	Visual Resource Management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On May 7, 2007, Idaho Power Company and PacifiCorp (doing business as Rocky Mountain Power), collectively known as the Proponents, applied to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for a right-of-way (ROW) grant to use the National System of Public Lands for portions of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project). The original Project comprised 10 transmission line segments originating at the Windstar Substation near Glenrock, Wyoming, and terminating at the Hemingway Substation near Melba, Idaho with a total length of approximately 1,000 miles. The original application was revised in October 2007, August 2008, May 2009, and January 2010 to reflect changes and refinements in the proposed Project and in response to public feedback regarding routing alternatives. The BLM published the Final Environmental Impact Statement ([Final EIS](#)) for this Project on April 26, 2013 and a Record of Decision (ROD) on November 14, 2013. In the ROD, the BLM deferred a decision for 2 of the 10 segments (i.e., Segments 8 and 9) to allow additional time for federal, state, and local permitting agencies to examine additional routing options, as well as potential mitigation and enhancement measures for these segments, in part, because Segments 8 and 9 involve resources in and near the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA).

In August 2014, the Proponents submitted a revised ROW application to the BLM for Segments 8 and 9 and a revised Plan of Development for the Project, which the BLM determined required additional environmental analysis through a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement ([Final SEIS](#)). A [Final SEIS](#) that analyzed seven alternative ROW routes for Segments 8 and 9 and the land use plan amendments needed to accommodate each alternative route pair was released on October 7, 2016. The BLM issued a ROD on January 19, 2017, selecting the route described as Alternative 5 in the [Final SEIS](#).

1.1 New Information Developed Since the Final SEIS ROD

Following the decision, the State of Idaho, Owyhee County, Idaho, and three environmental organizations appealed the ROW decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). In a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Interior (Secretary), the Governor of Idaho requested that the BLM reconsider the January 19, 2017, decision and select an alternative with fewer impacts to State and county resources and communities. The Proponents also requested that the BLM reconsider the January decision and select the alternative proposed in their revised application, as more cost-effective and providing greater system reliability. On April 18, 2017, the IBLA granted the BLM's unopposed motions to remand the January 19, 2017, decision for reconsideration.

On May 4, 2017, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (House Resolution [H.R.] 244), which incorporated the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Boundary Modification Act (Modification Act) by reference [Division G, Title IV, Sec. 431(a)]. President Donald Trump signed the Appropriations Act into law on May 5, 2017. The Modification Act (see Appendix D) directed the BLM to issue a ROW grant for the lands described in Sec. (b)(2) of the Modification Act for

portions of Gateway West Segments 8 and 9, which represent the portions of the Proposed Action from the [Final SEIS](#) within the boundaries of the NCA. Specifically, the Modification Act stated that the ROW grant “be in alignment with the revised proposed routes for Segments 8 and 9 identified as Alternative 1 in the Supplementary Final Environmental Impact Analysis released October 5, 2016.” The Modification Act also removed the lands affected by this ROW from NCA status and stipulated that the Mitigation Framework presented in the [Final SEIS](#) would apply to the authorized segments. Sec. 2(c)(1) of the Modification Act directed the BLM to issue the ROW within 90 days of enactment, or by August 3, 2017. BLM offered the statutory ROW grant authorized by the Modification Act to the Proponents on July 26, 2017.

1.2 Purpose and Need for Proposed Action

The purpose of the proposed action is to decide whether to grant in whole, grant with modifications, or deny the Proponents’ amended application to construct and operate a transmission line on public lands.

The need for the proposed action has been modified from the [Final SEIS](#) in response to the statutory direction of the Modification Act, which mandates the issuance of a ROW for certain portions of Segments 8 and 9 in alignment with Alternative 1 of the Final SEIS.

The need is now threefold:

1. The need for the federal action is to respond to the Proponents’ amended ROW application to use federally managed lands for a portion of the Gateway West transmission line pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), 43 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 1701 et seq. In accordance with FLPMA and the BLM’s ROW regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 2800, the BLM must manage public lands for multiple uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. The Secretary is authorized to grant ROWs “over, upon, under, or through [public] lands” for “systems for generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy” (43 U.S.C. 1761(a)(5)).
2. The Modification Act directed the BLM to issue, within 90 days, a ROW for the lands described in Sec. 2(b)(2) of the Modification Act for portions of Gateway West Segments 8 and 9. The BLM offered the ROW on July 26, 2017. The statutory ROW grant authorized by the Modification Act dictates the Proposed Action described in this environmental assessment (EA). The feasibility of the statutory ROW for these portions of Segments 8 and 9 is dependent on the Decision resulting from this EA.
3. The BLM’s need is also to reconsider its Decision of January 19, 2017. In light of the Modification Act’s non-discretionary direction to issue the ROW for portions of Gateway West Segments 8 and 9, the BLM’s reconsideration of the January 19, 2017, decision will involve only those certain portions of the alternative(s) from the [Final SEIS](#) that feasibly and reasonably connect with the ROW mandated by the Modification Act, so as to meet the agency’s purpose and need for action.

The BLM Idaho State Director is the agency official who will issue a decision on this application and the associated plan amendments. In making its decision, the BLM must consider the environmental impacts of granting a ROW across public land. The BLM published a [Final SEIS](#) on October 7, 2016, analyzing the effects of seven pairs of possible route combinations for Gateway West Segments 8 and 9. The [Final SEIS](#) also identified the land use plan amendments associated with each alternative.

The analysis in this EA addresses only the portions of the Project related to Segments 8 and 9. Tiering (40 CFR 1508.28) uses the analysis in broader EIS documents to narrow the range of alternatives and concentrate on the issues not already addressed. This EA incorporates by reference and tiers to the analysis found in the 2013 [Final EIS](#) and 2016 [Final SEIS](#) regarding Project-wide impacts. It also incorporates by reference the 2017 Modification Act in its entirety. The BLM will, through a Decision Record supported by this EA, complete the necessary land use plan amendments needed to accommodate ROW segments defined by Alternative 1 in the [Final SEIS](#) that are beyond the extent of the statutory ROW created by the Modification Act. These amendments will allow a ROW grant that will 1) be in conformance with the corresponding land use plans and will 2) connect with the statutory ROW corridor through the NCA.

The BLM's discretionary authority is limited by the Modification Act, which directed the agency to issue a statutory ROW for a transmission line and mandated where the ROW would be located. As intended and directed by the legislation, the BLM has offered the statutory ROW to the Proponents. It would now be unreasonable for a BLM decision to deny a ROW for segments intended to connect to the statutory ROW or to offer a ROW that would not physically connect to the statutory segments. For additional ROW segments to connect to the statutory ROW, the BLM has no choice but to select the segments as defined by Alternative 1 in the [Final SEIS](#) and mandated in the legislation (Sec. 2(c)(1) of the Modification Act). Said another way, segments that would not align with and connect to the statutory ROW segments are not feasible or reasonable to select at this time.

The Modification Act also removed the statutory ROW from the NCA by redefining the NCA boundary. The statutory ROW created a public land corridor across the NCA that is not within the NCA and is therefore not subject to the Public Law 103-64 (16 U.S.C. 460iii-2; 107 Stat. 304) (Enabling Act) that created the NCA.

1.3 Conformance with BLM Land Use Plans

The BLM must consider existing land use plans (LUPs) in the decision to issue a ROW grant in accordance with 43 CFR 1610.0-5(b). The Proposed Action is within the area identified in the following BLM LUPs:

- Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP) (1988)
- Snake River Birds of Prey Resource Management Plan (RMP) (2008)
- Jarbidge RMP (1987)
- Jarbidge RMP (2015)

- Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP (1980)
- Kuna MFP (1983)

RMPs and MFPs allocate public land resource use and establish management objectives. Portions of the proposed transmission line are not in conformance with several BLM land management plans, and therefore amendments to these plans are analyzed as part of this EA.

The [Final SEIS](#) identified 17 amendments to BLM land use plans needed to authorize the Proposed Action. The January 2017 Decision approved two amendments to the Twin Falls MFP and one amendment to the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP that would also be necessary to authorize the Proposed Action. Although the IBLA agreed to remand the January Decision, these approved plan amendments remain in effect. In addition, the Modification Act superseded the need for seven plan amendments to the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP associated with the Proposed Action analyzed in the [Final SEIS](#). As a result, selecting the Proposed Action in a Decision on reconsideration would require seven plan amendments to three current BLM land use plans, as follows:

- Kuna MFP;
- Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP; and
- Jarbidge RMP 1987 (for areas not covered by the 2015 Jarbidge RMP).

In order to authorize Segment 8 in the Proposed Action, the Kuna MFP would need an amendment to allow the transmission line outside of existing corridors. An amendment to the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP would be needed to allow the route near archeological sites and to change Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes. The 1987 Jarbidge RMP would need amendments to change VRM Classes, allow crossing of the Oregon National Historic Trail, and change a utility avoidance/restricted area designation.

In order to authorize Segment 9 in this alternative, the 1987 Jarbidge RMP would need an amendment to change VRM Class II to VRM Class III for areas still managed under that plan.

The BLM selected the route pairing identified in the [Final SEIS](#) as Alternative 5 (Route 8G and Route 9K) in the January Decision. The January 19, 2017, ROD approved one amendment to the Bruneau MFP, two amendments to the Twin Falls MFP, and one amendment to the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP needed to grant a ROW for Alternative 5. These plan amendments remain in effect. However, the alignment pairing in this alternative does not align with the ROW the BLM offered pursuant to the Modification Act.

1.4 Consistency with Laws, Regulations and Policies

Table 1.4-1 (Section 1.4) of the [Final EIS](#) and Table 1.5-1 (Section 1.5) of the [Final SEIS](#) lists the major federal, state, and local permits, approvals, and consultations identified for the construction and operations of the portion of the Gateway West Project along Segments 8 and 9. The Proponents would be responsible for obtaining all permits

and approvals required to implement the proposed Project regardless of whether they appear in the tables.

1.5 Scoping and Identification of Issues

The public scoping process for this EA began with the publication in the Federal Register of Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Assessment to Reconsider the January 19, 2017, Record of Decision Approving Segments 8 and 9 for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project, Idaho, 82 Fed. Reg. 165 (August 28, 2017), including associated land use plan amendments for the Jarbidge, Shoshone, and Four Rivers Field Offices. The NOI is on the Project website, <https://www.blm.gov/gatewaywest>. The BLM also published the Federal Register Notice on the agency's ePlanning website for public review to solicit comments as well as on the Project website noted above. On August 28, 2017, the BLM sent an electronic project newsletter to 2,650 interested publics to solicit comments on the Project. Appendix F contains a table with all the scoping comments and responses.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives were developed based upon the BLM's obligation to respond to the IBLA's remand of BLM's January 19, 2017 decision for reconsideration, and in response to the direction of the Modification Act, which mandated the issuance of a ROW for portions of Segments 8 and 9, formerly within the NCA.

2.1 Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

This Alternative would authorize a ROW to the Proponents for those portions of Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West Project that allows for physical connectivity to the segments of the transmission line authorized through the Modification Act ROW (see Appendix A). Alternative 1 is also the alternative recommended by the Boise Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) in its May 30, 2014 report.

The Proposed Action would include the Toana Road Variation 1 (as describe on pages 2-22 through 2-23 of the [Final SEIS](#)). This alternative would amend the applicable land use plans for the Jarbidge, Shoshone, and Four Rivers Field Offices, to accommodate the ROW segments described above. The routes addressed in the Proposed Action are identical to the routes analyzed in Alternative 1 in the [Final SEIS](#) for Segments 8 and 9. The legal descriptions for the proposed ROW for the long-term developments and temporary construction sites are presented in Appendices B and C, respectively.

2.2 Alternative 2 – No Action

This Alternative would continue the current condition that resulted from the ROD issued on January 19, 2017. That Decision selected Alternative 5 from the [Final SEIS](#). If the BLM were to reaffirm that Decision when this EA process is concluded, a ROW grant would be issued to the Proponents with the same routes as Alternative 5 in the [Final SEIS](#). A second element of the January 2017 Record of Decision approved land use plan amendments. These amendments will remain in place whether or not the Decision selecting Alternative 5 is reaffirmed. Alternative 2 would be inconsistent with the intent

of the Modification Act but still meet the need of the Proponents' amended ROW application.

2.3 Alternatives Analyzed in Detail but Eliminated from Consideration

As stated above in Section 1.1, with the passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (H.R. 244), Congress directed BLM to issue a ROW grant for the lands described in Sec. (b)(2) of the Modification Act for portions of Gateway West Segments 8 and 9 (see Appendix A), which represent the portions of Alternative 1 from the [Final SEIS](#) within the boundaries of the NCA. The BLM had no discretion in issuing this statutory ROW because the Modification Act mandated it and thus, BLM offered the ROW to the Proponents on July 26, 2017. The BLM is now limited to selecting an alternative that will feasibly and reasonably connect to the route mandated by H.R. 244 otherwise the ROW offered in July would be isolated and provide no connectivity from the Midpoint and Cedar Hill substations to the Hemingway substations. The BLM now finds its discretion limited as a result of the mandates of the Modification Act and the clear intent of the legislation. However, the seven alternatives originally analyzed in the [Final EIS](#) and analyzed again in the [Final SEIS](#) were the result of years of coordination, effort, and analysis of different alternatives/alignments all with varying types and degrees of impacts. In the end, given the mandates of the Modification Act, Alternative 1 from the [Final SEIS](#) and in this EA, the Proposed Action, remains the only action alternative that is feasible and reasonable.

2.3.1 Alternative 3 – No Development

A Decision selecting this Alternative would deny the Proponents' application for a ROW for those portions of Segments 8 and 9 outside the boundary of the NCA (the Modification Act mandated a ROW for these segments in the area within the NCA boundary). Selecting this Alternative would result in the ROW mandated by the Modification Act being isolated within the boundaries of the NCA with no connection between ROW Segments 6, 7, and 10 of the intended transmission line. A Decision selecting this Alternative would not amend the governing land use plans (RMPs and MFPs) mentioned above in the Proposed Action.

The [Final SEIS](#) analyzed seven pairs of route alternatives for Segments 8 and 9 of the Project. As shown on Appendix A, only Alternative 1, as described in the [Final SEIS](#), would feasibly and reasonably connect to the ROW issued in response to H.R. 244. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 would not entirely connect to the mandated ROW thus, they would be inconsistent with the intent of the Modification Act. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 are therefore eliminated from further consideration in this EA.

2.4 Land Management Plan Amendments

In several cases, the Proposed Action, which is equivalent to Alternative 1 analyzed in the [Final SEIS](#), would be incompatible with land allocation classifications. The [Final SEIS](#) identified 17 amendments to BLM land use plans needed to authorize Alternative 1. The January 2017 Decision approved two amendments to the Twin Falls MFP and one amendment to the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP that would also be necessary to authorize Alternative 1. Although IBLA remanded the January Decision, these approved

plan amendments remain in effect. In addition, the Modification Act, through its redefinition of NCA boundaries, eliminated the need for seven plan amendments to the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP associated with Alternative 1 analyzed in the [Final SEIS](#). As a result, selecting the Proposed Action in a Decision on reconsideration would require seven plan amendments to three current BLM land use plans as follows:

- Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP;
- Kuna MFP; and
- Jarbidge RMP (1987, for areas not covered by the 2015 Jarbidge RMP).

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

This chapter presents the baseline information considered for the Project area by resource, and discloses the predicted effects of the Proposed Alternative and associate LUP amendments for Segments 8 and 9. BLM reviewed the affected environment information from the [Final EIS](#) and the [Final SEIS](#) for all resources and determined it to be valid for this EA because no substantive changes to the regulatory framework information or the resources have occurred since the publication of the documents.

The analysis in this EA is tiered to and incorporates by reference the analysis and discussion of potential effects from the [Final EIS](#) and the [Final SEIS](#) as per 40 CFR 1502.20 and 1508.28. The effects analysis of the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) discusses the direct and indirect effects. Direct effects are those caused by the Project, such as soil disturbance. Indirect effects are those effects caused by the Proposed Action but that are later in time or farther removed in distance, such as sedimentation from soil disturbance, yet still reasonably foreseeable. For each resource area, the effects of the No Action Alternative are discussed first.

3.1 Mitigation Measures

As described in Chapter 3 of the [Final SEIS](#), mitigation are those measures that could reduce or avoid adverse impacts, and are measures that have *not* been incorporated into the Proposed Action or an alternative. Mitigation can include (40 CFR 1508.20):

- Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- Minimizing impact by limiting the degree of magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.
- Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The following Project-wide mitigation plans apply to the Proposed Action:

- The Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Mitigation Plan ([Appendix J](#) in the 2013 Final EIS, also see Section 3.11 of the Final SEIS)
- The Migratory Bird Habitat Mitigation Plan ([Appendix D](#) to the 2013 ROD, also see Sections 3.10 and 3.11 of the Final SEIS)
- The Historic Properties Treatment Plan ([Appendix C-1](#) to the 2013 Final EIS)
- The Programmatic Agreement Regarding Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act ([Appendix E](#) to the 2013 ROD; also see Sections 3.1 and 3.3 of the Final SEIS)
- The Framework for Compensatory Mitigation for and Monitoring of Unavoidable Impacts to Waters of the U.S ([Appendix C-2](#) in the 2013 Final EIS).

In addition to these Project-wide plans, the BLM has worked with the Proponents to develop the Mitigation Framework for the NCA (Appendix K to the [Final SEIS](#)). The Mitigation Framework for the NCA is intended to analyze and facilitate the development of a Mitigation Plan to offset reasonably foreseeable remaining residual effects from the Project within the NCA.

BLM offered the statutory ROW grant authorized by the Modification Act Sec. 2(c)(1) to the Proponents on July 26, 2017. In Sec. 2(c)(2)(A), the Modification Act also stipulated that the Mitigation Framework presented in the [Final SEIS](#) would apply to the authorized segments. For mitigating Gateway West Transmission Project impacts, the BLM will implement, as directed by Congress, all conditions in Sec. 2(c) of the Modification Act (see Appendix D).

3.2 Affected Environment

Table 3-1 provides the relevant [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) affected environment sections and the geographical extent of the Analysis Area for each resource. The referenced sections in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) include detailed discussions for each resource that may be impacted within the Project Area.

Table 3-1. Affected Environment Summary

Resource	FEIS Section	SEIS Section	Analysis Area		Resource Component Evaluated
			Transmission Line	Access Roads	
National Historic Trail	NA	3.1.1	5 miles on either side of centerline	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation • Natural • Visual • Cultural/historic
Visual Resources	3.2.1	3.2.1	5 to 15 miles on either side of centerline	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual resources of foreground, middle ground, background, and seldom seen landscape areas

Table 3-1. Analysis Area (continued)

Resource	FEIS Section	SEIS Section	Analysis Area		Resource Component Evaluated
			Transmission Line	Access Roads	
Cultural Resources	3.3.2	3.3.1			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prehistoric resources • Protohistoric period • Historic resources
Socioeconomics	3.4.1	3.4.1	Counties crossed by Project	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioeconomic environment • Economic conditions • Housing • Property values • Education • Public services • Tax revenues
Environmental Justice	3.5.1	3.5.1	Counties crossed or potentially affected by Project	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority populations • Low income populations
Vegetation Communities	3.6.1	3.6.1	250 to 500 feet on either side of centerline	13 feet on either side of road centerline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endangered Species Act (ESA) Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species • BLM and USFS Sensitive Species • State Heritage Program Species of Concern
Special Status Plants	3.7.1	3.7.1	0.5 miles on either side of centerline	0.25 miles on either side of road centerline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatened, endangered, and candidate species under ESA • Forest Service or BLM listed Sensitive • State Heritage Program species of concern
Invasive Plant Species	3.8.1	3.8.1	Counties crossed by Project	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive plants • Noxious weeds

Table 3-1. Analysis Area (continued)

Resource	FEIS Section	SEIS Section	Analysis Area		Resource Component Evaluated
			Transmission Line	Access Roads	
Wetlands and Riparian Areas	3.9.1	3.9.1	Minimum of 250 feet either side centerline Minimum 50 feet around perimeter of Project site features	Minimum 25 feet either side of road centerline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbaceous riparian • Shrub riparian • Mixed riparian • Forested riparian
General Wildlife and Fish	3.10.1	3.10.1	0.5 miles on either side of centerline	0.5 miles on either side of centerline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-SSS terrestrial and aquatic wildlife
Special Status Wildlife and Fish Species	3.11.1	3.11.1	Minimum 500 feet either side of centerline Various, depending on species	Minimum 50 feet of road centerline Various depending on species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatened and endangered • Candidate species and those formally proposed for ESA listing • Forest Service or BLM listed Sensitive • Forest Service management indicator species
Minerals	3.12.1	3.12.1	0.5 miles on either side of centerline		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locatable minerals • Leasable minerals • Saleable minerals
Paleontological Resources	3.13.1	3.13.1	0.5 miles on either side of centerline	Those outside transmission line corridor would be examined case-by-case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fossilized remains, traces, or imprints of organisms preserved in or on the earth's crust
Geologic Hazards	3.14.1	3.14.1	For subsidence, landslides, and blasting - 0.5 miles on either side of centerline Earthquakes defined by a variable buffer distance around epicenters, or groups of epicenters, of historical earthquakes and extended out to 100 miles	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earthquakes • Subsidence • Landslides • Blasting

Table 3-1. Analysis Area (continued)

Resource	FEIS Section	SEIS Section	Analysis Area		Resource Component Evaluated
			Transmission Line	Access Roads	
Soils	3.15.1	3.15.1	0.5 miles on either side of centerline	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil erosion • Soil compaction • Soil permanently removed from productivity
Water Resources	3.16.1	3.16.1	0.5 miles on either side of centerline	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface water • Ground water
Land Use and Recreation	3.17.1	3.17.1	250 feet on either side of centerline	25 feet on either side of road centerline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land ownership • Use of designated utility corridors • Commercial properties • Residential properties • Timber management • Fire management • Indian reservations • Recreational and public interest areas • Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use
Agriculture	3.18.1	3.18.1	250 feet on either side of centerline	25 feet on either side of road centerline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime farmland • Livestock grazing • Crop production • Lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program • Grassland Reserve Program • Wetlands Reserve Program • Dairy farms
Transportation	3.19.1	3.19.1	Existing transportation infrastructure	Existing transportation infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing transportation and traffic system • Airports

Table 3-1. Analysis Area (continued)

Resource	FEIS Section	SEIS Section	Analysis Area		Resource Component Evaluated
			Transmission Line	Access Roads	
Air Quality	3.20.1	3.20.1	Geographic areas defined by applicable state air quality plans, federal General Conformity thresholds, and local requirements within the geographic areas crossed by the Proposed Action	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emissions of air pollutants
Electrical Environment	3.21.1	3.21.1	300 feet on either side of centerline		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric and magnetic fields Audible noise Radio noise
Public Safety	3.22.1	3.22.1	0.25 miles on either side of centerline	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public safety and inconveniences
Noise	3.23.1	3.23.1	1000 feet from proposed edge of ROW	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise on human environment
Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA	NA	3.24.1	Entire NCA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raptors/upland wildlife, Upland habitat/vegetation Cultural resources/NHTs NHTs Recreation and visitor services

3.3 Environmental Effects

3.3.1 National Historic Trails (Final SEIS)

Section 3.1.2 of the [Final SEIS](#) describes the potential direct and indirect impacts to the Oregon NHT and North Alternate Study Trail from construction, operations, and decommissioning activities.

Construction of the Project and its ancillary facilities could directly impact segments of the Oregon National Historic Trail (NHT) and North Alternate Study Trail. Short-term impacts from construction would include the visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and a work force in staging areas, along access roads, and along the new transmission line right-of-way. Long-term impacts from construction include ground-disturbing activities that could directly disturb ruts, swales, and previously

recorded and/or undetected sites associated with the trails. Project crossings and access road construction and/or improvements are the most likely locations for this type of impact to occur.

Construction or improvement of roads may encourage unauthorized site access, artifact collection, and vandalism. Project construction is not expected to permanently preclude the use of or access to any existing trail-related recreation areas or activities. Some short-term impacts are expected. These include impacts to dispersed trail-related recreation activities that would likely diminish the quality of trail-related recreational activities or vicarious experiences for the duration of the construction phase of the Project. These impacts, caused by the presence of construction noises, visual disturbances, or other humans, would be localized and short-term in nature. Vegetation removal caused by construction activities has the potential for short and long-term impacts to natural resources, more specifically vegetation communities, within the Project area.

If the transmission line is constructed, the presence of large transmission structures would introduce long-term visual impacts. Periodic access to the transmission line ROW is required to maintain its operating function. Thus, access roads would be kept open, at least at a two-track level, which would increase the potential for vandalism and illicit artifact collection.

Decommissioning Impacts from decommissioning would be similar to those for construction.

The extent of the effects to the Oregon NHT and North Alternate Study Trail are thoroughly analyzed and disclosed in the [Final SEIS](#) and no additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.2 Visual Resources

The visual resources section of the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.2.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.2.2) addresses potential impacts on visual resources during construction, operations, and decommissioning activities.

Construction would result in the visual intrusion of construction vehicles, equipment, materials, and a work force in staging areas, along access roads, and along the new transmission line ROW. Vehicles, heavy equipment, tower components, and workers would be visible during substation construction and modification, access and spur road clearing and grading, structure erection, conductor stringing, and cleanup and restoration. However, disturbance from construction activities would be transient and of short duration as activities progress along the transmission line route. Affected viewers would be aware of the temporary nature of Project construction impacts, which would decrease their sensitivity to the impact. The towers and transmission lines would cause the major long-term change in scenery. In addition, there would be the alteration of topography, grading for access roads and work areas, dust generation, and clearing of vegetation along the ROW for structures and access roads that would be long-lasting in semi-arid and forested, mountain environments and would introduce some adverse visual change and contrast.

During operations, towers and transmission lines, as well as existing and new permanent access roads, would be used by maintenance crews and vehicles for inspection and maintenance activities. Visual impacts would result from inspection and maintenance activities producing traffic and dust on access roads; however, these impacts would be intermittent and temporary. Increased visual contrast from the clearing and grading of staging areas and construction yards, construction of new access and spur roads, and activities adjacent to construction sites and along the ROW could be long-lasting in semi-arid and forested, mountain environments where vegetation establishment and growth are slow. Views along linear land scars or newly constructed roads would introduce visual change and contrast by causing unnatural vegetative lines and soil color contrast. Vegetation clearing would occur during construction and in some instances would remain substantially cleared for the life of the Project while other areas would be allowed to revegetate or may be planted with native plant materials. The greatest impact would occur from the long-term presence and operations of the transmission line in sensitive visual resource areas due to the cleared ROW, large vertical structures, and multiple overhead conductors, and some access roads to the structures.

Environmental protection measures (EPMs) have been adopted in order to minimize impacts to the visual contrast of the transmission line in the landscape.

At the end of the operational life of the transmission line, conductors, structures, and related facilities would be removed. Foundations would be removed to below the ground surface level. There would be residual visual impacts for many years after the Project has been decommissioned and structures removed such as vegetative cutbacks, cut and fill scars from construction activities, and access roads, which all add to the visual impact, though these impacts would be at ground level. These areas would be apparent after the removal of structures but are expected to diminish over time.

The extent of the effects to visual resources are thoroughly analyzed and disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) and no additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.3 Cultural Resources

The [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.3.3) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.3.2) discusses cultural resources in the Project area and the impact construction, operations, and maintenance activities of the alternatives would have on the resources. Transmission line construction disturbance is generally limited to construction of new service roads and pads for the transmission structures and can avoid many cultural resources. For the purposes of this EA, direct impacts to cultural resources are estimated based on preliminary locations of ground-disturbing activities. The agencies would require pedestrian surveys to be conducted for the entire Propose Action Alternative ROW, with a buffer, to allow for micro-siting within the ROW to avoid or minimize direct impacts to cultural resources where found. While direct and indirect impacts may be reduced in some limited individual cases by shifting tower locations, in general the visual impact of a very large high-voltage transmission line is perceptible across a broad extent of

landscape, such that moving transmission structures along the centerline does not substantially reduce the indirect impact.

Construction of the transmission line and its ancillary facilities could directly impact existing cultural resources, such as prehistoric or historic archaeological sites, districts, buildings, trails, roads, and landscapes. Construction or other ground-disturbing activities could directly or indirectly impact previously undetected cultural resources, especially buried resources. Such impacts are likely to be adverse. Identification of new or previously recorded cultural resources and increased use of existing and new access roads may encourage unauthorized site access, artifact collection, and vandalism. Impacts on the setting and feeling for cultural resources may be introduced through the addition of structural elements to the landscape.

Construction of transmission line structures would introduce a long-term, indirect (visual) impact upon existing cultural resources, especially historic trails. Periodic access to the transmission line ROW is required to maintain its operating function. Thus, access roads would be kept open, at least at a two-track level, which increases the potential for vandalism and illicit collection.

Impacts from decommissioning would be similar to those for construction. No EPMs are provided by the Proponents to address decommissioning; however, the EPMs proposed by the Proponents for construction would be applicable and would be generally effective at reducing the potential for adverse impacts.

EPMs ([Appendix M of Final SEIS](#)) will be implemented project-wide should eligible resources be adversely impacted as well as to minimize impacts to cultural resources.

The extent of the effects to cultural resources are thoroughly analyzed and disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) and no additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.4 Socioeconomics

The potential impacts to socioeconomics during construction, operations, and decommissioning from the alternatives were analyzed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.4.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.4.2). The effects to the labor force and economic conditions is thoroughly discussed in these documents and no impacts to socioeconomics resulting from approving the Proposed Action, beyond the impacts disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#), are anticipated. The Proposed Action requires no changes to or additional RMP amendments than those identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.5 Environmental Justice

The potential impacts to environmental justice during construction, operations, and decommissioning from the alternatives were analyzed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.5.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.5.2). Construction or operations of the proposed Project is not expected to have high and adverse human health or environmental effects on nearby communities. Adverse construction-related impacts would likely include increases in local traffic and noise, as well as dust, and could result in temporary delays at some

highway crossings. These impacts would be temporary and localized, and are not expected to be high. Overall impacts associated with decommissioning the proposed Project are expected to be similar to those that would occur under construction.

The effects are analyzed in detail in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) and no impacts to environmental justice resulting from approving the Proposed Action beyond the impacts disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) are anticipated. The Proposed Action requires no changes to or additional RMP amendments.

3.3.6 Vegetation Communities

Potential impacts to vegetation communities during construction, operations, and decommissioning activities are discussed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.6.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.6.2). The proposed Project would directly affect vegetation communities through the temporary trampling of herbaceous vegetation, the partial removal of aboveground plant cover, and the complete removal of vegetation in places due to construction of the transmission line structures, access roads, temporary work spaces, and other project facilities. Indirectly, vegetation removal can increase the potential for invasive plants and the introduction and spread of noxious weeds and would also expose soil to potential wind and water erosion. This can result in further loss of soil and vegetation, as well as increase sediment input to water resources. Indirect effects would also result from the fragmentation of connected vegetation types. During operations, long-term vegetation loss would occur within the ROW, where only low growing vegetation would be maintained, and under permanent structures maintenance areas, substations, regeneration stations, and permanent access roads. Decommissioning activities would restore vegetation within the Project footprint. To minimize direct and indirect effects of vegetation removal under each alternative, the Proponents have proposed a Framework Reclamation Plan in the Plan of Development (POD) ([Appendix B of Final EIS](#)) that provides procedures for pre-construction treatment of noxious weeds and invasive plants, weed prevention and control, topsoil treatment, ROW restoration, stabilization of disturbed areas to minimize erosion and runoff, seedbed preparation, seeding methods, preliminary seed mixes, road reclamation, monitoring, and remedial actions. This plan would be implemented under the Proposed Action.

The extent of these effects are disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) and no additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.7 Special Status Plants

The effects to special status plants from construction, operation, and decommissioning activities are addressed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.7.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.7.2). Direct impacts from construction activities could result in crushing or removal of plants, as well as direct loss of habitat. Indirect impacts include fragmentation of suitable habitat; alteration of fire regimes; increased competition from early successional plant species; increased competition by herbivores in newly disturbed areas; introduction or spread of invasive exotic species; isolation of subpopulations due to physical separation by access roads or transmission infrastructure; increased erosion; and alteration of habitat microclimates or hydrology. There is less potential for adverse impacts to occur

during operations than during construction, however, some disturbances could occur due to routine maintenance activities, including the potential for altered fire regimes resulting from the increased risk of fire starts associated with use of maintenance vehicles, and the continuing potential for spreading exotic plant species. Effects from decommissioning activities would be similar to those identified above. The Proponents have proposed a series of EPMs ([Appendix M of Final SEIS](#)) meant to reduce or prevent impacts to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed or candidate plant species. In many cases, EPMs that apply to general vegetation (see Section 3.6 – Vegetation of the [Final EIS](#)) are sufficient to protect sensitive plant resources. However, in some cases additional species-specific EPMs are warranted and have been implemented to reduce construction and operations effects to all threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) plant populations and their habitats on federally managed lands.

Slickspot peppergrass was reinstated as a threatened species on September 16, 2016, which was subsequent to the completion of the 2013 Biological Assessment (BA). We have determined that implementation of the Proposed Action for Segments 8 and 9 of the 2017 EA “may effect”, and is “likely to adversely affect” slickspot peppergrass in a manner or to an extent similar to that which was analyzed in the original 2013 BA and for which the Service provided its 2013 Conference Opinion (CO). The BLM has requested U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) acknowledgement of this “may effect, likely to adversely affect” determination for slickspot peppergrass and its proposed critical habitat for the Proposed Action and further request USFWS confirm the conclusion of the 2013 CO as formal consultation and as the USFWS’s Biological Opinion.

The Proposed Action requires no changes to or additional RMP amendments than those identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.8 Invasive Plant Species

The analysis of the effects of construction, operations, and decommissioning activities on the spread and/or introduction of invasive plant species is found in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.8.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.8.2). Table 2.7-1 in Chapter 2 of the [Final EIS](#) contains a list of the EPMs that have been developed as part of this Project to offset or reduce potential impacts related to non-native plant species, as well as a description of where these various measures would apply (e.g., on private, state, or federally managed lands). These measures also contain commitments by the Proponents to follow all existing federal Best Management Practices (BMPs) and restrictions that are applicable to the BLM Field Offices crossed by the Project, and the utilization of third-party environmental monitors who would ensure the Project complies with all environmental restrictions and requirements during construction. No impacts due to invasive plant species resulting from approving the Proposed Action, beyond the impacts disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#), are anticipated. The Proposed Action requires no changes to or additional RMP amendments than those identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.9 Wetlands and Riparian Areas

The effects to wetlands and riparian areas from construction, operation, and decommissioning activities are addressed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.9.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.9.2). The primary impact to wetland and riparian areas would result from the clearing of vegetation. Removal of vegetation could alter various functions provided by these areas, including their ability to serve as wildlife habitat, as well as their ability to trap sediment and nutrients. The Framework Reclamation Plan ([Appendix B of Final EIS](#)) provided by the Proponents addresses measures to be undertaken to ensure reclamation and revegetation of disturbed areas that are not occupied by permanent Project facilities, as well as to prevent the accidental introduction or transport of noxious weeds or exotic species in the Project Area along the ROW during and after construction. The effects from the Proposed Action would be the same as what was disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#). No changes to the proposed plan amendments are necessary.

3.3.10 General Wildlife and Fish

The effects to general wildlife and fish species from construction, operations, and decommissioning activities are addressed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.10.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.10.2). Direct and indirect effects to wildlife and fish species and their habitat occurring in the area are discussed. The effects vary by species from differing sensitivity, mobility, and habitat requirements. Direct impacts to habitat and to species living in the immediate area of construction would occur at the actual footprint of disturbance during construction, which includes the clearing of vegetation and other activities at construction areas for each transmission structure, access roads, laydown yards, fly yards, and wire pulling/splicing areas. Indirect impacts would extend beyond the location of construction and operations activities and include noise and edge effects. These impacts included direct mortality and/or disturbance of individuals, loss or degradation of habitats (e.g., vegetation removal, habitat fragmentation, weeds, fire, reduced vegetation cover, and changes to stream temperatures or sedimentation levels), as well as indirect effects (e.g., alterations to predation rates, effects to migratory corridors, effects to prey-base health or populations, creating increased access for recreationalists and hunter).

No additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action and no RMP amendments would be required in addition to the ones identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.11 Special Status Wildlife and Fish Species

The general impacts that would occur to TES wildlife and fish species as well as their habitats from construction, operations, and decommissioning of the Gateway West Project were analyzed in detail within Section 3.11.2.2 of the [Final EIS](#) and Section 3.11.2 of the [Final SEIS](#). These impacts included direct mortality and/or disturbance of individuals, loss or degradation of habitats (e.g., habitat fragmentation, weeds, fire, reduced vegetation cover, and changes to stream temperatures or sedimentation levels), as well as indirect effects (e.g., alterations to predation rates as well as prey base health or populations, effects to migratory corridors, creating increased access for recreationalists and hunters, increased avian predator presence and predation, potential

decrease in survival and productivity, as well as a possible avoidance of transmission lines by sage-grouse).

The effects to the relevant ESA-listed species from Alternative 1 assessed in the 2016 SEIS and 2017 EA Proposed Action would be the same, reduced, or non-existent in comparison to the Agency Preferred Alternative routes assessed in the 2013 [Final EIS/BA](#). Additionally, all EPMs related to ESA-listed species and enumerated in the 2013 FEIS, 2016 SEIS, and required in the 2016 ROD would be implemented for the Proposed Action if the Project were approved. In addition, we have determined that implementation of the Proposed Action “may effect”, but is “not likely to adversely affect” the endangered Banbury Springs limpet and Snake River physa, and the threatened Bliss Rapids snail in a manner or to an extent similar to that which was analyzed in the original 2013 BA and for which the Service provided its 2013 CO. The EA Proposed Action will have no effect on Bruneau hot springsnail, bull trout critical habitat, and yellow-billed cuckoo and its proposed critical habitat.

Table 2.7-1 in Chapter 2 of the [Final EIS](#) contains a list of the EPMs that have been developed as part of this Project to offset or reduce potential impacts to wildlife species (including TES), as well as a description of where these various measures would apply (e.g., on private, state, or federally managed lands). These measures also contain commitments by the Proponents to follow all existing federal BMPs and restrictions that are applicable to the BLM Field Office crossed by the Project and the utilization of third-party environmental monitors who would ensure the Project complies with all environmental restrictions and requirements during construction. These EMPs would still apply to the Proposed Action.

No additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action and no additional RMP amendments would be required other than those already identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.12 Minerals

The [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.12.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.12.2) discusses the effects the project during construction, operation, and decommissioning activities on locatable, leasable, and saleable minerals. The presence of existing mineral claims and leases could interfere with plans to construct the Project. The construction of the Project could restrict exploration of mineral resources during the 2-year construction period. Construction activities could also restrict mining companies’ ability to access land for mining or exploration. The extent of these effects are disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) and no additional effects would occur from the Proposed Action. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.13 Paleontological Resources

The effects to paleontological resources from construction, operation, and decommissioning activities are presented in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.13.2) and the [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.13.2). Direct effects due to construction common to the Alternatives include possible damage to paleontological specimens and possible loss of associated data. No direct effects to the paleontological resources due to operations are foreseen.

Very limited effects due to decommissioning are foreseen because the activities would occur within the same footprint as construction. There are no additional effects from the Proposed Action than those already disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#). The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.14 Geologic Hazards

The effects from geologic hazards on construction, operations, and decommissioning activities for the proposed project are discussed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.14.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.14.2). Transmission lines and associated facilities could be negatively affected by geologic hazards, including earthquakes, landslides, subsidence, and blast vibrations in shallow bedrock. Earthquakes could occur in any segment of the Project. Project construction, operations, or decommissioning would have no effect on earthquake risks. However, ground shaking and displacement related to earthquakes may damage human-made structures, including transmission lines and substations. The effects from the Proposed Action would be the same as what was disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#). No changes to the proposed plan amendments are necessary.

3.3.15 Soils

The potential impacts to soils from construction, operation, and decommissioning activities are discussed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.15.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.15.2). Project construction activities that could affect soils include clearing, grubbing, and grading along the ROW and at additional temporary workspaces; trenching; backfilling; excavating; and construction of permanent structures, such as transmission line towers, access and service roads, co-generation sites, and substations; and construction or improvement of access roads. Ground clearing during construction could increase the potential for erosion.

The amount of erosion from disturbances is a result of climate factors (precipitation, wind, etc.). Effective use of construction stormwater BMPs, and compliance with the soil EPMs stated in the [Final EIS](#), would reduce the effects of erosion. Service roads used for construction, operations and decommissioning would be reclaimed to minimize erosion potential.

Reclamation would be necessary in disturbed soil areas. The Proponents' POD ([Appendix B of Final EIS](#)) describes Project reclamation. The POD and the EPMs presented in [Appendix M of the Final SEIS](#) also contain many BMPs that would be used during Project construction, operations, and reclamation. Erosion in all areas could be exacerbated unless revegetation efforts are implemented as soon as possible following disturbance.

The analysis was reviewed and the potential impacts disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) are not expected to change.

3.3.16 Water Resources

The potential impacts to surface water and groundwater from the alternatives were analyzed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.16.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.16.2). The effects on water resources that would occur as a result of construction, operation, and

decommissioning of the project were disclosed. These impacts include increased erosion and surface water sedimentation from disturbed lands, temperature changes from vegetation removal, increased stream channel instability from construction of roads, and potential degradation of water quality due to potential spills from hazardous materials.

3.3.17 Land Use and Recreation

The land use and recreation Section of the [Final EIS](#) (3.17.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.17.2) discusses the potential impacts of the route alternatives during construction, operation, and decommissioning. The analysis included land ownership affected by the Project's activities; use of designated utility corridors and existing ROWs; and the potential impacts of the Project on specific land uses including commercial and residential properties, timber and fire management, Indian reservation, recreational and public interest areas, and OHV use. The analysis was reviewed and the potential impacts disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) are not expected to change.

3.3.18 Agriculture

The potential impacts to agriculture from the alternatives were analyzed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.18.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.18.2). Short-term disruption of farming activities along the ROW could occur locally during construction. However, EPMs will be implemented to reduce impacts. The effects disclosed would be a result of the construction, operation, and decommissioning activities. These effects have not changed since the publication of the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.19 Transportation

The environmental effects to the existing transportation and traffic system and airports were analyzed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.19.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.19.2). The Proponents have committed to preparing a detailed transportation plan (including road maps) that would be developed to consider road conditions, wear and tear on roads, bridges, stream crossings, traffic control, and post-construction repair, reclamation, and access control. This plan would be approved by the appropriate federal, state, and local agencies prior to any Notice to Proceed to construction. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.20 Air Quality

The air quality section of the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.20.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.20.2) discusses the potential impacts the various alternatives would have on air quality during construction, operation, and decommissioning activities. For both construction and operations, there are sections summarizing emissions of criteria pollutants (nitrogen oxide [NO_x], carbon monoxide, sulfur oxide, volatile organic compounds, and particulate matter with diameters less than 10 and less than 2.5 microns [PM₁₀/PM_{2.5}]), and greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, and NO_x) for the route alternatives. The effects from the Proposed Action would be the same as what was disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#). No changes to the proposed LUP amendments are needed for the Proposed Action.

3.3.21 Electrical Environment

The electrical effects of the various alternatives are discussed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.21.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.21.2). Electrical effects would only occur when the transmission line is energized therefore, only the operations phase of the Project has been analyzed for the effects. The [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) described the potential effects of audible and radio noise, electromagnetic interference with communication systems, induced currents and nuisance shocks, and effects on human and animal health. The electrical effects from the Proposed Action would be the same as what was disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#). The Proposed Action requires no changes to the proposed RMP amendments.

3.3.22 Public Safety

The effects to public safety are discussed in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.22.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.22.2). According to the documents, there is no strong geographical distinction driven by public safety. If the protective measures proposed by the Proponents and additional measures identified by the BLM are incorporated into the Project design, construction, operations, and decommissioning, the expected public safety impacts would be low among all alternatives. No new alternatives are proposed in this EA so the impacts would be the same as discussed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#). The Proposed Action requires no changes to or additional RMP amendments as those identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.23 Noise

The analysis of noise from construction, operations, and decommissioning activities for the proposed Project is found in the [Final EIS](#) (Section 3.23.2) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.23.2). No impacts to noise resulting from approving the Proposed Action beyond the impacts disclosed in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#) are anticipated. The Proposed Action requires no changes to or additional RMP amendments than those identified in the [Final EIS](#) and [Final SEIS](#).

3.3.24 Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (Final SEIS)

The potential impacts to the NCA were discussed in the [Final SEIS](#) (Section 3.24.2). Although the transmission line corridor under consideration in this EA no longer includes those portions authorized within the NCA by the Modification Act, the effects of its construction, operation and decommissioning would be the same as analyzed in the Proposed Action of the [Final SEIS](#). The Modification Act (see Appendix D) superseded the need for seven plan amendments to the Snake River Birds of Prey RMP associated with the Proposed Action analyzed in the [Final SEIS](#). In Sec. 2(c)(2)(A), the Modification Act also mandated that the Mitigation Framework presented in the [Final SEIS](#) would apply to the authorized segments. For mitigating Gateway West Transmission Project impacts, the BLM will implement, as directed by Congress, all conditions in Sec. 2(c) of the Modification Act (see Appendix D). This action will meet the requirement of enhancement of resource conditions within the NCA as mandated by the Enabling Act that created the NCA.

3.4 Land Use Plan Amendments

3.4.1 Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills Management Framework Plan

Segment 9 of the Proposed Action crosses the Oregon NHT and would impact visual resources and archeological resources; thus, the Project would not be in conformance with the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP. One amendment would have an extent larger than the transmission line ROW itself because of reclassification of visual management areas.

The visual resource protection would be rewritten (SEIS-9) to allow development of this Project and would read (changes in italics):

“No management activity should be allowed to cause any evident changes in the form, line color or texture that is characteristic of the landscape within this Class II area. *The VRM Class II area within 3,000 feet to the north of the existing transmission line ROW will be reclassified from VRM II to VRM III (including the existing ROW).*”

The amendment changing the VRM Class II classification to VRM Class III would change the classification of lands within 3,000 feet of an existing transmission line. This may result in up to two additional transmission lines being located along this route, which would result in additional impacts to resources managed under the MFP. The cumulative effect of the plan amendment would not differ substantially from the effect of the Project itself, particularly given that no projects other than possible future transmission lines are proposed for the area. In addition, to allow the crossing of the Oregon NHT, the amendment (SEIS-10) would read (changes in italics):

“Prohibit all land disturbing developments and manage all cultural resources with applicable law and policy.”

Allowing land-disturbing developments up to 330 feet from the Oregon NHT could potentially affect the ability to conform to agency policy of protecting archaeological sites; however, stipulations for managing archeological sites as required by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) should minimize this possibility. Additionally, EPMs (CR-1 through CR-8) as stated in [Appendix M](#) of the Final SEIS would be aimed at reducing these impacts and construction would occur in a manner that would avoid disturbing important historic resources.

3.4.2 Kuna Management Framework Plan

A portion of Segment 8 of the Proposed Action would cross through the Kuna Planning Area. Because the Project does not conform to the current direction provided in the Kuna MFP for cultural resources and following existing corridors, the land use plan would need to be amended (SEIS-11) to permit the Project in this area. The amended decision would read (changes in italics):

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

3.4.3 1987 Jarbidge Resource Management Plan

A portion of Segment 8 of the Proposed Action would cross land managed as a utility restricted area. Because a powerline would not conform to this restriction, an amendment (SEIS-3) would be needed for the Lands decision to read (new language in italics):

“MUA-3 Utility avoidance/restricted area – three Paleontological areas (Sugar Bowl, Glens Ferry, & McGinnis Ranch) and Oregon Trail ruts (7,200 acres/22.5 miles) to overhead and surface disturbance and underground utilities. *The current Lands decision is amended to reclassify the area identified as restricted in Section 35, T. 04 S., R. 09 E. to allow the overhead lines of a 500-kV powerline right of way, while protecting the Oregon Trail ruts.*”

Portions of Segment 8 of the Proposed Action would cross lands managed to protect NHTs, which would not allow “incompatible uses to occur within a ½ mile corridor through which these routes pass.” Because a powerline would not conform to this restriction, an amendment (SEIS-4) would be needed for the Cultural Resources direction in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP. The amendment would read (revisions in italics):

“The existing ruts of the main route, north and south alternate routes of the Oregon Trail and Kelton Road will be protected by not allowing incompatible uses to occur within ½ mile corridor *of ruts except where visual impacts are already compromised.* Protect existing trail ruts from surface disturbance.”

Portions of Segment 8 of the Proposed Action would cross VRM Class I land associated with the Oregon NHT, which is not part of the west-wide energy corridor. As a powerline would not conform to the VRM Class I objectives, a new VRM decision (SEIS-5) would be needed and would read (new language in italics):

“The visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The Degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400. VRM Classes will be managed as shown on Map 9. *The VRM decisions and Map 9 are amended to accommodate a major powerline R/W. These VRM boundaries are modified according to the new manual to reclassify the VRM Class I area associated with Oregon Trail and the Proposed 500-kV line as VRM Class IV.*”

A portion of Segment 9 of the Proposed Action would cross VRM Class II just west of the NCA. An amendment (SEIS-14) would be needed to conform to the VRM designations in the 1987 Jarbidge RMP and would read (new language in italics):

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

4.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such actions” (40 CFR Part 1508.7). This section presents a discussion of the potential cumulative effects to the resources associated with the Proposed Action. This section summarizes what BLM disclosed in Section 4.4 of the [Final SEIS](#) as well as considers actions and reasonably foreseeable actions that BLM became aware of subsequent to the January 2017 Decision.

The BLM is aware of one constructed project within the area of the Gateway West statutory ROW. The Simco Solar Project (Solar Project), built by Swinerton Renewable Energy of San Diego, California is located on approximately 164 acres of private land adjacent to Interstate 84 in Elmore County.

A proposed sustainable water supply for Mountain Home Air Force Base is in the planning stages and BLM posted a revised EA for public review in July, 2017 with a preliminary finding of no significant impacts to those resources of issue (cultural, visual, T&E/sensitive species) in the Gateway West Alternative 1 corridor. The project would consist of approximately 14.4 miles of underground pipeline connecting a pump station located along the C.J. Strike Reservoir to a water treatment facility on the Mountain Home Air Force Base.

Orchard Land Exchange is a proposed lease and subsequent land exchange of BLM-managed public lands and State of Idaho lands in Ada, Canyon, Elmore, and Owyhee Counties. This potential project involves modifications to the Idaho Army National Guard's Orchard Combat Training Center south of Boise within the NCA. While the BLM considers this project a foreseeable event worth mentioning here, as of this writing, the lease/exchange is in the early stages of planning and has not been fully defined. Details of the scope and scale of the project and the effects resulting from it are not yet known. The anticipated environmental analysis process, most likely through an EIS, will be completed once the project is defined with more clarity and public scoping is conducted. The information in the likely EIS will contain a comprehensive Cumulative Effects Analysis and will consider the cumulative effects resulting from the Gateway West Project at that time.

The three above mentioned projects (see Appendix E) have been considered for their effects to the resources within the cumulative impact analysis area (CIAA) as defined by Alternative 1 of the [Final SEIS](#) using the same parameters and process as described in Section 4.4. The spatial extent of the CIAA is defined in Table 4.1-1 of the [Final SEIS](#). The temporal extent of the project is the expected physical operational service life of the Project (approximately 50 years), plus the estimated 10 years needed for substantial site rehabilitation after decommissioning.

Because the proposed water supply pipeline and the Orchard Training Center projects are located within the NCA, they are subject to the terms of Enabling Act that created the NCA. The Enabling Act requires that ground disturbing projects within the NCA must include enhancement of resource conditions. Thus, these two proposed projects would

not result in detrimental effects to the natural resources but instead, eventual enhancement of resource conditions. Therefore, there would be no new significant detrimental effects from these two potential projects that would overlap with effects from the Project.

As mentioned above, the Solar Project is located on approximately 164 acres of private land adjacent to the highly disturbed Interstate 84 corridor. The Solar Project is located outside the NCA and a significant distance from the Project impacts necessitating land use plan amendments for VRM reclassification. As such, there would be no new significant detrimental effects from the Solar Project that would overlap with effects from the Project.

To determine the cumulative impact of all the projects taken together, this analysis relies on the direct and indirect impacts disclosed in the Final SEIS and this EA, and considers the impacts in conjunction with the cumulative effects analysis completed in Section 4.4 of the [Final SEIS](#). The BLM anticipates that the direct or indirect effects to the resources listed below that result from building the Gateway West transmission line, Segments 8 and 9, may overlap with the effects from the three projects listed above but will cause no new significant impacts. With these considerations in mind, the BLM has determined that the Proposed Action would have no new significant effects beyond those already analyzed the [Final SEIS](#) Section 4.4.

4.1 National Historic Trails

As discussed in the [Final SEIS](#) (Section 4.4.3) Segments 8 and 9 of Gateway West and the other current and reasonably foreseeable actions would result in substantial cumulative adverse effects to NHTs. Construction of the Gateway West transmission line and its ancillary facilities could directly impact the existing Oregon NHT, North Alternate Study Trail, and indirectly impact its associated visual contexts, recreational values and settings, and associated cultural resources and landscapes. Construction or other ground-disturbing activities could directly or indirectly impact previously undetected components of the Oregon NHT. Such impacts are likely to be adverse. Impacts on the setting and feeling of the Oregon NHT may be introduced through the addition of structural elements to the landscape. Construction of transmission line structures introduces an indirect (visual) impact upon the visual contexts, recreational values, and historic/cultural settings of the Oregon NHT.

Other current and reasonably foreseeable activities with ground-disturbing activities (essentially all those listed in Section 4.2 of the [Final SEIS](#)) have the potential for additional effects on NHTs and associated resources. Visually prominent Gateway West activities associated with the Oregon Trail are included in [Appendix J](#) to the [Final SEIS](#), which includes maps of each analysis unit and the locations of existing transmission lines and wind farms. These projects have already affected the visual environments around the Oregon NHT and the North Alternate Study Trail and, in some areas, already degraded the visual, cultural, recreational, and natural resources, qualities, values, and settings related to the trails primary purpose and use. [Appendix J](#) also provides an indication of how the Project either falls into the immediate foreground of

trail-related settings, thus having a larger impact than the existing projects, or falls into the background, where it would largely be obscured by existing energy infrastructure.

The Proponents of Gateway West have committed to avoiding direct effects to National Register of Historic Places eligible features wherever feasible. Avoidance of indirect effects is not likely to be possible. Historic Properties Treatment Plans (HPTPs) would be prepared for areas that may experience direct or indirect effects. Treatment plans would be reviewed and approved by the BLM prior to issuance of a Notice to Proceed for that work element.

4.2 Visual Resources

The cumulative impacts of Segments 8 and 9 to visual resources were analyzed in Section 4.4.3 of the [Final EIS](#) and in Section 4.4.4 of the [Final SEIS](#). The Alternatives were designed to take advantage of existing utility corridors to minimize the introduction of a new transmission facility into a previously undisturbed landscape and reduce the visual impact on the landscape. However, even with careful siting and the implementation of mitigation measures, they are expected to have a substantial, unavoidable adverse visual impact on the landscape in certain locations. There are no known future projects or actions that would substantially add to the impacts of the Project.

4.3 Cultural Resources

The [Final EIS](#) (Section 4.4.4) and [Final SEIS](#) (Section 4.4.5) discusses the cumulative impacts to cultural resources. In some areas, the construction of Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West transmission line could lead to the establishment of a corridor in which other lines may be installed in the future. There is a potential that cumulative impacts to the visual settings for some cultural resources would occur due to the establishment of a corridor and the subsequent construction of additional transmission lines. An indirect effect of construction of the transmission line could result in increased use of existing and new access roads and may encourage unauthorized site access, artifact collection, and vandalism.

The Proponents of Gateway West have committed to avoiding historic properties wherever feasible. The programmatic agreement (PA) ([Appendix N of the Final EIS](#)) provides for site-specific HPTPs to be reviewed and approved by the BLM prior to issuance of a Notice to Proceed for that work element. Gateway West would introduce “visual, atmospheric or audible elements that diminish the integrity of the property’s significant historic features” (36 CFR 800.5(a)(2)(v)) with regard to the setting for historic trails where the Project crosses those trails. This would be considered an adverse effect. The creation of a corridor would introduce additional elements, from other projects that would further diminish a property’s historic setting.

Gateway West and the rest of the current and reasonably foreseeable actions would result in substantial cumulative adverse effects to known historic properties. All projects with a Section 106 nexus would complete surveys and record sites, contributing to the knowledge base in the CIAA. Each project also has the potential for inadvertent damage to previously undetected resources during construction, though all reasonable

precautions would be built into each PA or historic properties treatment plan governing monitoring of and compliance with avoidance, minimization, and reporting requirements.

4.4 Vegetation Communities

Section 4.4.8 of the [Final SEIS](#) describes the cumulative impacts to vegetation communities. The major ecological changes to vegetation that have occurred, and that continue to occur in the CIAA due to past and present actions include changes in vegetation composition and conditions due to fire, grazing, mining, agriculture, infrastructure development, and other forms of development. Of particular concern is the continuing degradation of shrub-steppe habitat, primarily due to increased abundance and dominance of non-native species.

Permanent vegetation removal and disturbance associated with Gateway West transmission line structures, access roads, and associated facilities, along with other infrastructure construction and expansion of residential development, would contribute to this overall loss of native vegetation, increase habitat for non-native plants and noxious weeds, and result in the potential loss of rare plant occurrences and habitat (see [Final SEIS](#), Sections 3.7 – Special Status Plants and 3.8 – Invasive Plant Species). Mechanisms for weed distribution would be minimized by implementing mitigation measures listed in the [Final SEIS](#), Section 3.6 – Vegetation Communities.

The cumulative impact of past and present land uses on native vegetation is considerable. While the impact of the Project would be minor compared to the much larger past events, when taken together with various proposed developments as specified in Section 4.2 of the [Final SEIS](#), and when added to the impacts from past and present land use changes, the overall cumulative impact would be substantial.

4.5 Special Status Plants

The cumulative effects to special status plants is discussed in Section 4.4.9 of the [Final SEIS](#). Ground-disturbing activities during construction and operations of the Project have the potential to impact special status plant species either directly or indirectly by disturbing habitat. Projects on federal lands or requiring federal permits would be required to conduct preconstruction surveys to identify and avoid the locations of sensitive plant populations. However, projects not requiring federal permits probably would not conduct surveys and might not avoid habitat or populations entirely. Slickspot peppergrass habitat would be surveyed and avoided to the extent practicable for Gateway West and for other projects with a federal nexus.

Several other special status plant species occur along Segments 8 and 9. The Project has the potential to impact individuals and habitat of these special status plants. Impacts to special status plants, however, do not differ substantially by Alternative. Therefore, cumulative effects of Gateway West would not vary substantially by Alternative. With implementation of survey and avoidance measures, the Project impact to special status plants would be minor, its impacts when added to possibly substantial (but largely unknown) impacts from non-federally licensed activities on remnant habitat for these species, could contribute to a substantial impact.

4.6 Invasive Plant Species

The cumulative effect of Gateway West to invasive plant species are discussed in Section 4.4.10 of the [Final SEIS](#). Past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions that could add to the introduction or spread of weeds were included in the analysis.

Cumulative effects on the introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants do not differ substantially by Alternative, except by length of the route—longer routes have greater ground disturbance, more access roads, and therefore additional opportunity for introduction or spread of weeds. The No Action Alternative is longer by approximately 26 miles. Given concern for introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants on both public and private lands, and requirements for the prevention of introduction or spread of noxious weeds imposed on all projects, the cumulative impact of reasonably foreseeable projects, including Gateway West, is not anticipated to be substantial.

4.7 Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities that could combine with Gateway West and result in cumulative effects to the NCA are discussed in Section 4.4.26 of the [Final SEIS](#). This would include projects with the potential to affect the resources and values for which Congress established the NCA:

- Raptors/upland wildlife,
- Upland habitat/vegetation,
- Cultural resources/NHTs,
- NHTs, and
- Recreation and visitor services

The Modification Act also removed the lands affected by this ROW from NCA status; however, the effects of the transmission line would not change due to the de-designation. The effects from Gateway West would be the same as discussed in the [Final SEIS](#).

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

On August 28, 2017, BLM published a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment to Reconsider the January 19, 2017, Record of Decision Approving Segments 8 and 9 for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project, Idaho.

The BLM has fulfilled its requirement to conduct Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In a memo to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the BLM concluded that the effects to the relevant ESA listed species from the Alternative 1 assessed in the [Final SEIS](#) and 2017 EA would be the same, reduced, or non-existent in comparison to the Agency Preferred Alternative routes assessed in the 2013 [Final EIS/BA](#). Additionally, all EPMs related to ESA listed species and enumerated in the 2013 [Final EIS](#), 2016 [Final SEIS](#), and 2017 EA and required in

the 2016 ROD and 2017 Decision Record would be implemented for Alternative 1 if the Project were to be approved.

In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA, as amended and the Advisory Council Historic Properties' revised regulations (36 CFR 800), the BLM initiated government-to-government consultation in April 2008 at the beginning of the Gateway West Project. The BLM has maintained government to government consultation while preparing this EA. The consultation has been conducted to inform the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the proposed undertaking and associated land use plan amendments in order to solicit their concerns and/or comments regarding the possible presence of Traditional Cultural Properties or places of cultural, traditional, or religious importance to the Tribes in the proposed Project area.

The BLM held two Project ad hoc meetings in 2017 discussing the preparation of the EA and associated land use plan amendments as a result of reconsidering the January 19, 2017 BLM decision. The BLM invited the Tribes to provide responses to the agenda items discussed in the September ad hoc meeting in consideration of the EA by October 18, 2017. The BLM received no response.

Cooperating Agencies participating:

- City of Kuna
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Governor's Office of Energy Resources
- Idaho Army National Guard
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Idaho State Historic Preservation office
- National Park Service
- Twin Falls County, Idaho
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

5.1 List of Preparers

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