

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

**Finding of No New Significant Impact
Gateway West 500-kV Transmission Line Project
Land Use Plan Amendments and Right of Way for Segments 8 and 9
DOI-BLM-ID-0000-0002-EA**

The Gateway West Environmental Assessment (EA) and Proposed Land Use Plan Amendments for Segments 8 and 9, Idaho, analysis shows that the Proposed Action to authorize a right-of-way (ROW) to PacifiCorp (d/b/a Rocky Mountain Power) and Idaho Power Company (the Proponents) for Segments 8 and 9 and to amend associated land use plans would have no new significant effects beyond those already analyzed and disclosed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) and the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Final SEIS). This Finding of No New Significant Impact (FONNSI) tiers to and incorporates by reference the EA, the Final EIS, and Final SEIS in their entirety.

Based on the analysis of environmental impacts contained in the EA, and the supporting documents, I find that the Proposed Action will not cause any new significant impacts to the quality of the human environment beyond those previously described in the Final EIS and the Final SEIS. Therefore, consistent with Department of the Interior regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 46), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) does not need to complete an additional or supplemental EIS before authorizing Segments 8 and 9 of the Gateway West Project and amending the associated land use plans for the Jarbidge, Shoshone, and Four Rivers Field Offices.

The Proposed Action, which incorporates all the environmental constraints and environmental protection and mitigation measures, would not create any new significant effects above those already disclosed in the Final EIS or Final SEIS. Therefore, implementing the Proposed Action would not have sufficient context and intensity, as defined in Section 7.7 of the BLM NEPA Handbook (Manual H-1790-1, page 70), to be considered significant as defined at 40 CFR § 1508.27. This finding is based on my consideration of both the context and intensity of the Proposed Action as described below.

The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant.

The transmission line segments and associated plan amendments were thoroughly analyzed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS. In relation to context, the transmission line's total length is approximately 1,000 miles, crossing Wyoming and southern Idaho, to enhance the capacity and reliability of the electrical grid in the region and deliver electricity from existing and new generating resources. The Proposed Action is specific to Segments 8 and 9 and has a combined length of 295 miles. The Project facilities include:

- two transmission line segments, their associated access roads, multipurpose and helicopter fly yards, and other temporary construction ground disturbances;
- proposed substation and expansions or modifications at two existing substations and at one substation approved under the 2013 Record of Decision (ROD);

- reconstruction of portions of existing 138-kilovolt (kV) and 500-kV lines;
- removal of one small existing substation and associated lines;
- other associated facilities including communication systems and optical fiber regeneration stations; and
- access roads and distribution supply lines where needed for proposed substations and optical fiber regeneration stations.

Selecting the Proposed Action in a Decision would require seven plan amendments to three current BLM land use plans, as follows:

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

The context of the Project has not changed from what was analyzed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS. There would be no new societal or regional impacts and no new significant impacts to potentially affected resources because the Proposed Action is exactly the same as Alternative 1 of the Final SEIS.

Intensity refers to the severity of impact. I must consider that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The EA analyzed both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed project for various resources, including archaeological and historical resources, soils, biological resources, invasive plants, socioeconomics, visual resources, and water resources. Measures are incorporated into the Proposed Action to avoid, minimize, and then mitigate for adverse impacts to these resources. None of the environmental impacts discussed in detail in the Environmental Effects section of the EA are considered significant beyond those disclosed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS.

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR §1508.27) include the following 10 considerations for evaluating intensity:

1. **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse**
There would be no new significant effects as a result of approving the Proposed Action beyond those already disclosed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS and as discussed in the EA. See the discussions in Chapter 4 of the EA for the analysis of the impacts of the Proposed Action on the respective resources described.
2. **Degree of effect on public health and safety**
The decision to issue a ROW in itself does not affect public health and safety. The transmission line would be operated and maintained to meet or exceed the requirements of the National Electrical Safety Code, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Standards, and the Proponents' requirements for safety and protection of landowners and their property. The plan amendments are an administrative change. As a result, no adverse direct or indirect effects on human health and safety are expected.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas**
No new adverse effects were found during the EA analysis beyond those disclosed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS to the unique characteristics of the area including; historic

or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The necessary RMP amendments would remain the same as discussed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS.

4. **Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial**

Controversy in this context means disagreement about the nature of the effects. Substantial dispute with the effects from a scientific perspective would indicate there may be controversial effects, which is not the case here. The possible effects of the Proposed Action are not highly controversial because there is no substantial dispute with regard to the environmental consequences. Scoping for the EIS, SEIS, and EA was open to the public and conducted early in the process and served to identify the range, or scope, of issues to be addressed in each analysis. Alternatives for Segments 8 and 9 were analyzed in the Final EIS, Final SEIS, and EA. The analysis was the product of years of coordination, effort, and analysis of different alternatives/alignments all with varying types and degrees of impacts. The process was implemented with full public involvement and members of the public contributed greatly to the identification of the environmental issues during the environmental review process. The BLM engaged subject matter experts to analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Action which were disclosed in Chapter 3 of the Final SEIS. Construction timing restrictions, design features, and mitigation measures would minimize or prevent adverse effects to the resources. The draft version of the EA was available for a 30-day comment period. Eleven comment letters were received and detailed responses can be found in Appendix H of the EA.

Based on the environmental analysis, avoidance and mitigations measures, and the extensive public involvement, the effects on the quality of the human environment are not considered highly controversial beyond those disclosed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS.

5. **Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk**

The effects of amending the applicable land use plans as well as constructing, operating and maintaining the transmission line as defined in the Proposed Action are as described in the EA. The EA incorporates by reference and tiers to the analysis found in the Final EIS and Final SEIS. The analysis in the documents was the result of years of effort by subject matter experts and public input to determine the effects on the environment that would result from implementing the project. There would not be a high uncertainty of the effects, nor any new unique or unknown risks not previously disclosed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS.

6. **Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration**

The Proposed Action does not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects beyond those described in the Final EIS and Final SEIS, and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. This project is similar to many other projects approved by BLM responsible officials establishing ROW grants on public land, in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and amending governing land use plans.

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts**

Cumulative effects are bounded by geographic and temporal scopes that can vary by resource. Geographic scope is generally based on natural boundaries and not jurisdictional boundaries. The temporal scope is generally based on the duration of effects of the Proposed Action or alternatives. The temporal scope considered for cumulative effects is 60 years for this analysis. This is based upon the 50 year expected physical operational service life of the Project, plus the estimated 10 years needed for substantial site rehabilitation after decommissioning.

The Proposed Action is for Segments 8 and 9 of the 10-segment Gateway West Project analyzed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS. Segments 1-7 and 10 have been authorized. The Proposed Action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant effects beyond those considered in the Final EIS and Final SEIS. The BLM has reviewed the list of current and planned projects disclosed in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS and Final SEIS to determine if any new projects, not included in these chapters, are applicable to the EA. The BLM identified three projects within the area of the Proposed Action and considered their effects on the resources within the cumulative impact analysis area. The BLM determined the projects would not result in new significant impacts beyond those identified in the Final EIS and Final SEIS.

8. **Degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources**

The proposal will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places in a manner or degree beyond that disclosed in the Final EIS and Final SEIS.

A Historic Properties Treatment Plan (HPTP) has been prepared to guide mitigation of adverse effects to historic properties from the undertaking. Detailed, site-specific Segment Plans will be prepared for the historic properties identified as having adverse effects and that cannot be avoided. Development of the Segment Plans will involve coordination and consultation with Tribes, parties to the Programmatic Agreement for this Project, and the Proponents. Mitigation plans and monitoring will all be identified through this collaborative process in accordance with BLM policy.

9. **Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat**

There would be no new effects to threatened or endangered species, including to their proposed or designated critical habitat, beyond those disclosed in the Final EIS, Final SEIS, and Appendix G of the EA (BLM and FWS Endangered Species Act [ESA] compliance memoranda). The BLM concluded that the effects on the relevant ESA listed species from Alternative 1 assessed in the Final SEIS and EA would be the same, reduced, or non-existent in comparison to the Agency Preferred Alternative routes assessed in the 2013 Final EIS/Biological Assessment. All Environmental Protection Measures related to ESA listed species and enumerated in the 2013 Final EIS, 2016 Final SEIS, the EA, and as required in the 2017 ROD and 2018 Decision Record, would be implemented.

10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law**

The Proposed Action conforms to the provisions of NEPA (40 CFR 1502.13) and FLPMA

(43 United States Code 1761-1771) and is compliant with the ESA, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and Executive Orders 12898, 13007, 13212, 11988, and 11990. Approving the Proposed Action would not violate any federal, state, or local laws or regulations imposed for the protection of the environment.

/s/ Peter J. Ditton

Peter J. Ditton
Acting Idaho State Director
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior

January 5, 2018

Date