

US Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# Greenlink West Transmission Project

RECORD OF DECISION/APPROVED RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENTS

**DOI-BLM-NV-0000-2022-0004-EIS**

**September 2024**

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# Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments

## Greenlink West Transmission Project

DOI-BLM-NV-0000-2022-0004-EIS

Prepared by  
US Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Boulevard  
Reno, Nevada 89502-7147  
<https://www.blm.gov/nevada>

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is responsible for stewardship of our public lands. The BLM is committed to manage, protect, and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our Nation's resources within the framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources include recreation, rangelands, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife habitat, wilderness, air, and scenic quality, as well as scientific and cultural values.

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## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Properties
AFB	Air Force Base
AM	Amargosa Microwave
AS	Amargosa Substation
Atwood Preserve	Gary and Lajetta Atwood Preserve
BA	Biological Assessment
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BO	Biological Opinion
Board	Interior Board of Land Appeals
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COM	Construction, Operation, and Maintenance
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOI	Department of the Interior
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EMM	Environmental Mitigation Measure
ES	Esmeralda Substation
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
GLWP	Greenlink West Transmission Project
HPTP	Historic Properties Treatment Plan
IBIA	Interior Board of Indian Appeals
IOP	Interagency Operating Procedure
kV	Kilovolt
LWC	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
NDSL	Nevada Division of State Lands
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHT	National Historic Trail
NNSA	National Nuclear Security Administration
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPS	National Park Service
NTP	Notice-to-Proceed
NTTR	Nevada Test and Training Range
NV	Nevada
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
O&M	Operations and maintenance
PACs	Priority Areas for Conservation
PMU	Population Management Unit
POA	Plan of Action

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations (continued)**

POD	Plan of Development
Proponent	NV Energy
RMP	Resource Management Plan
RMPA	Resource Management Plan Amendments
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	Right-of-way
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SR	State Route
SUP	Special Use Permit
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
TUSK	Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument
US	United States
US 6	United States Highway 6
US 95	United States Highway 95
USC	United States Code
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WVEC	West-wide Energy Corridor



## SUMMARY

This Record of Decision (ROD) reflects the decision of the United States Department of the Interior (DOI) to approve the agency-specific authorizations necessary for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of NV Energy's (Proponent) Greenlink West Transmission Project (GLWP), an approximately 472-mile transmission project and ancillary facilities in the state of Nevada. This ROD also constitutes the decision by the United States Department of Energy (DOE)/National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA), a semi-autonomous agency within the DOE, to approve the Proponent's application for an easement to use NNSA-administered lands for the GLWP. This ROD also approves the BLM's amendments to the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (RMP) of 1998 (1998 Las Vegas RMP) (BLM 1998), Tonopah RMP (BLM 1997), and Carson City Field Office Consolidated RMP (2001), which were amended by the West-wide Energy Corridor (WWEC) (BLM 2009) Approved RMP Amendments/ROD (BLM 2009). Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires that "[t]he Secretary shall, with public involvement...develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans that provide by tracts or areas for the use of the public lands" (43 United States Code [USC] § 1712). These plan amendments ensure the approved ROW on BLM-administered lands conforms to the applicable land use plans consistent with FLPMA and the BLM's land use planning regulations at 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1600, as well as the required procedures set forth in 43 CFR Subpart 1610.

Consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and other applicable laws, this ROD provides the rationale for the decision approving the Preferred Alternative as the Selected Alternative from the alternatives analyzed in detail in the GLWP Final Environmental Impact Statement/Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendments (Final EIS/Proposed RMPA), published June 14, 2024 (BLM 2024), and the specified mitigation measures required as a condition of approval. On July 31, 2024, the BLM issued an errata to correct errors in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA was developed based on an open, collaborative, and robust process among the resource specialists and regulatory staff of the BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service (NPS), DOE/NNSA, and other Cooperating Agencies; the third-party NEPA consultant; and the participating public. This process resulted in a Final EIS/Proposed RMPA that, consistent with NEPA, evaluated the environmental impacts of the Proponent's proposal and a range of reasonable alternatives (including the No Action Alternative) to inform and support all federal reviews and authorizations of the BLM, BIA, DOE/NNSA, and NPS (referred to in this ROD as the "federal ROW agencies") for the proposed GLWP. In accordance with 40 CFR 1500.4(p) and 40 CFR 1506.3(b), the BIA, DOE/NNSA, and NPS—which have participated as Cooperating Agencies—adopt the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, therefore satisfying their compliance with NEPA.

This ROD does the following:

- Authorizes the BLM to issue a FLPMA Title V ROW on BLM-administered lands to the Proponent to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission an approximately 472-mile system of new 525-kilovolt (kV), 345-kV, 230-kV, and 120-kV overhead electric transmission facilities, substations, and ancillary project components that will be constructed between Las Vegas and Reno in Clark, Nye, Esmeralda, Mineral, Lyon, Storey, and Washoe counties, Nevada.
- Amends the Las Vegas (BLM 1998) and Tonopah (BLM 1997) RMPs, which were amended by the WWEC Approved RMPA (BLM 2009), on BLM-administered lands to allow for the adjustments to the

designated WVECs 18-224, 223-224, and 37-223(S). The width of the adjusted WVECs requiring plan amendments will not change, only the alignments.

- Amends portions of the Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II and VRM Class III objectives on BLM-administered lands in the 1998 Las Vegas, 1997 Tonopah, and 2001 Carson City Field Office Consolidated RMPs to a VRM Class IV objective, to allow for management activities that require major modifications of existing landscape character.
- Authorizes the NPS to issue and permit the ROW application for the GLWP for the operation and maintenance of approximately 1.5 miles of new 525-kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission facilities through TUSK. This ROD includes the NPS Non-Impairment Determination for the Selected Alternative (ROD Appendix B).
- Authorizes the BIA to grant the ROWs crossing the trust lands of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribes and a portion of the Walker River Paiute Tribe's reservation<sup>1</sup> for the GLWP.
- Approves the application requesting an easement to authorize use of NNSA-administered lands for GLWP construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of an approximately two-mile-long distribution line and associated existing access roads that traverse a portion of the Nevada National Security Site.

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<sup>1</sup> Under 25 U.S.C. § 324, the Secretary's grant of a right-of-way over and across Tribal land requires the consent of the Indian Tribe. NV Energy has received the consent of the Walker River Paiute Tribe to a right-of-way across a portion of the Walker River Indian Reservation, but NV Energy has yet to receive consent for the remaining portion of the right-of-way. Under 25 C.F.R. § 169.124(d), the Secretary may issue separate grants of right-of-way for one or more tracts traversed by a right-of-way. Thus, this ROD authorizes the BIA to grant the right-of-way for the portion of the Walker River Indian Reservation that the Tribe has consented to. Once Tribal consent to the right-of-way across the rest of the Reservation is granted, the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs will issue a separate decision based on this ROD authorizing the right-of-way across the rest of the Walker River Indian Reservation.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Nevada Power Company and Sierra Pacific Power Company, doing business as NV Energy (Proponent), are proposing to build the Greenlink West Transmission Project (GLWP) in western Nevada (NV). The GLWP will be an approximately 472-mile system of new 525 kilovolt (kV), 345-kV, 230-kV, and 120-kV overhead electric transmission facilities, substations, and ancillary project components that will be constructed between Las Vegas and Reno in Clark, Nye, Esmeralda, Mineral, Lyon, Storey, and Washoe counties, Nevada (Figure ROD-1). The GLWP electric transmission facilities will be located predominantly on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with smaller portions of the project crossing Department of Defense (DOD), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), National Park Service (NPS), Department of Energy (DOE)/National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), Nevada Division of State Lands (NDSL), and Clark County lands, in addition to privately owned lands. In addition, the GLWP crosses the ancestral homelands of different Native American groups who have always lived in the area.

The Proponent filed an Application for Transportation, Utility Systems, Telecommunications, and Facilities on Federal Lands and Property (Standard Form 299) and a Preliminary Plan of Development (POD) with the BLM on July 22, 2020, for a Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) right-of-way (ROW) authorization. Specifically, the Proponent applied for a 600-foot-wide temporary ROW (1,200 feet in areas with steep terrain) for construction and a 200-foot-wide permanent ROW<sup>2</sup> for operations and maintenance (O&M). The Proponent also filed a Standard Form 299 and Preliminary POD with the NPS in May 2023 for a 105-foot permanent ROW on the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument (TUSK) for the O&M of a 525-kV transmission line. The Proponent will file the complete ROW applications with the BIA. The Proponent initiated the NNSA process for issuance of an easement in December 2023. While agency authorities and policies vary regarding the term (duration) of a ROW, the Proponent has requested a 30-year term (except for the term of the temporary ROWs/construction special use permit) from the federal ROW agencies (the BLM, NPS, BIA, and DOE/NNSA).

The decisions made in this Record of Decision (ROD) are based on consideration of the information generated during the analytical and public participation processes required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Trails System Act, and other applicable federal and state laws and policies. The decisions approving the GLWP carefully considered potential impacts on environmental and cultural resources, practicable means to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those impacts, and national policy goals to expedite siting of electricity transmission and distribution facilities. The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA (BLM 2024) analyzed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of potentially granting/permitting the ROWs and the easement for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the GLWP, as well as the BLM land use plan amendments associated with the GLWP.

The following measures were considered to avoid, minimize, or otherwise mitigate potential impacts:

- Environmental mitigation measures (ROD Appendix F),
- Measures to resolve adverse effects to historic properties as reflected in the Historic Properties Treatment Plan (HPTP) (ROD Appendix C),
- A Paleontological Resources Mitigation Plan (PRMP) (ROD Appendix G), and

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the EIS analysis, the term “permanent” ROW refers to 30-years with the option to renew.

- The Reasonable and Prudent Measures with Terms and Conditions identified in and required by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services' Biological Opinion (BO) under Section 7 of the ESA (ROD Appendix H).

The formal public scoping process for the GLWP began on May 2, 2022, with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* communicating the BLM's intent to prepare an EIS. The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIS/Resource Management Plan Amendments (Draft EIS/RMPA) (BLM 2023) was published in the *Federal Register* on May 26, 2023. The 90-day public review period concluded on August 23, 2023.

After reviewing and responding to public comments and making corresponding edits to the Draft EIS/RMPA, the BLM published the NOA in the *Federal Register* for the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA<sup>3</sup> on June 14, 2024, for a 30-day protest period for the proposed land use planning decisions and 60-day Governors' Consistency review. The BLM received six valid protest letters. After consideration, the BLM denied the protests without changing the proposed land use planning decisions as a result of the protests or the other comments on the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA received (See Chapter 6 of this ROD and [http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning\\_overview/protest\\_resolution.html](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution.html)).

Response from the request by the BLM for Governors' Consistency review can be found in Appendix A of this ROD. This ROD details the BLM, NPS, BIA, and DOE/NNSA final decision, including required mitigation for the GLWP.

As described in NPS Management Policies 2006 § 1.4.4, the NPS Organic Act prohibits the impairment of park resources and values. The NPS has completed a non-impairment analysis for the impacts to TUSK and determined that the GLWP will not result in impairment of park resources or in unacceptable impacts as described in § 1.4.7.1 of the NPS Management Policies 2006 (NPS 2006) (ROD Appendix B).

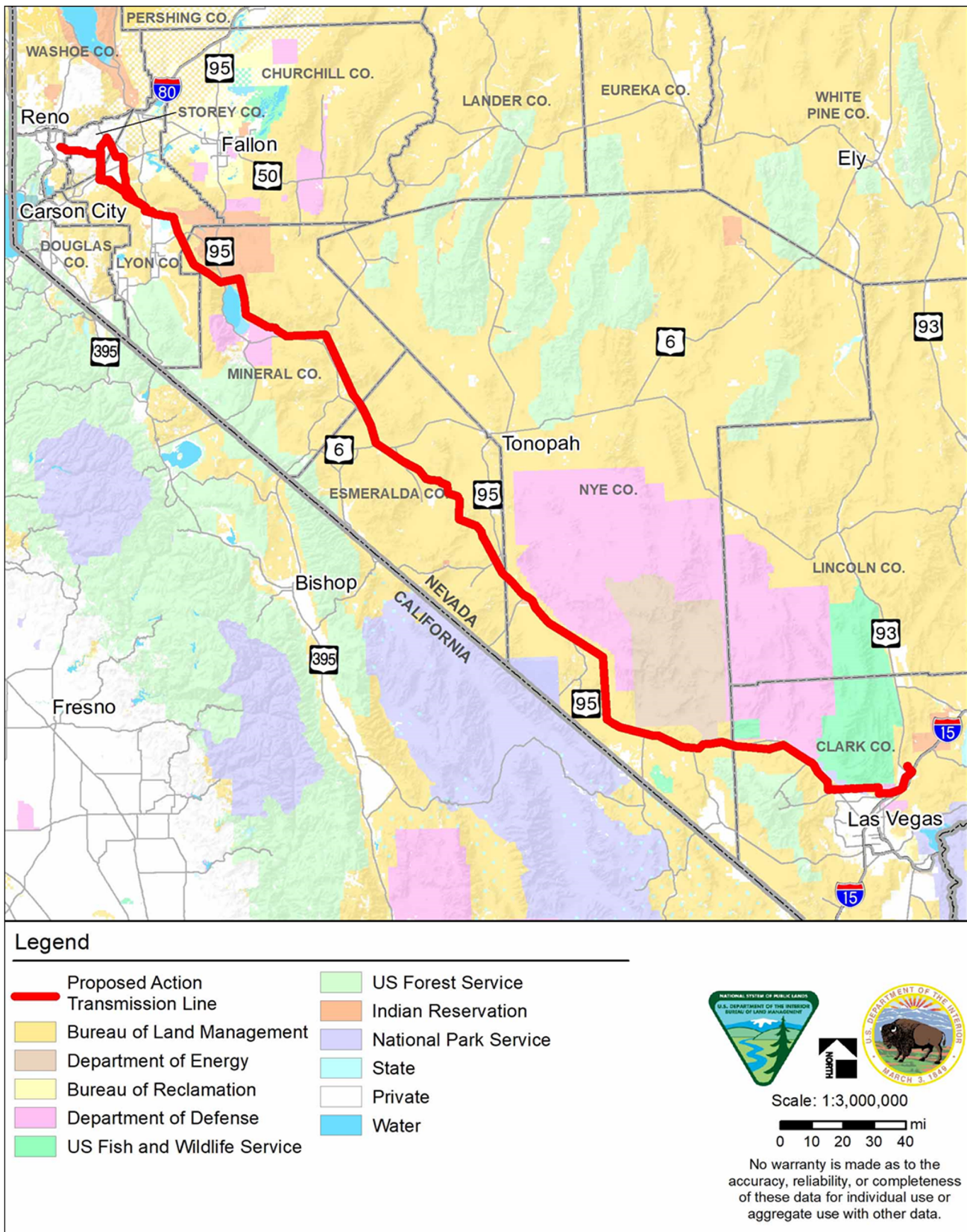
## **1.1 Proponent Goals and GLWP Components**

Under Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations, public utility companies like the Proponent must plan and construct transmission facilities to deliver the projected electric demand in Nevada. The Proponent is also governed by the Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards and criteria, which require transmission systems be planned and constructed with sufficient levels of redundancy to maintain reliable operation in the event of a loss or outage of system elements. The Proponent's goals are to meet the electrical demand of the end users and respond to electrical service requests, to improve overall system reliability, and to provide regional redundancy.

The GLWP components, as analyzed in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, consist of transmission and distribution lines, substations, microwave radio facilities, amplifier sites, and access roads (Figure ROD-3). The 525-kV transmission lines will begin at the Harry Allen Substation north of Las Vegas in Clark County; traverse portions of Clark, Nye, Esmeralda, Mineral, and Lyon counties; and terminate at the Fort Churchill Substation north of Yerington in Lyon County. The three proposed 345-kV facilities will begin at the Fort Churchill Substation and traverse portions of Lyon, Storey, and Washoe counties. Two of the 345-kV lines (Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #1 and #2) will terminate at the existing Comstock Meadows Substation northwest of Silver Springs in Lyon County and the third (Fort Churchill to Mira Loma) will terminate at the existing Mira Loma Substation in south Reno, Washoe County.

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<sup>3</sup> Consistent with 40 CFR 1506.12 (2024), compliance with NEPA, including preparation of the Draft and Final EIS and this ROD, is in accordance with the direction of the 2020 NEPA implementing regulations as modified by the 2022 provisions.



**Figure ROD-1. GLWP Location**



The GLWP will include construction or improvements at seven substation locations: three new substations (Amargosa, Esmeralda, and Fort Churchill), one expanded substation (Northwest), and three substations with improvements within the existing property boundaries (Harry Allen, Comstock Meadows, and Mira Loma). These substations will include fiber optic cable and microwave antennae towers for control and operation of the transmission system.

New microwave radio facilities will be added at Amargosa and at the three new substations (Amargosa, Esmeralda, and Fort Churchill). Microwave radio facilities will also be added with existing microwave facilities at Angel Peak, TV Hill, Pilot Peak, Montezuma, Sawtooth, Spotted Range, and Gold Mountain. The optical data signal that travels through the fiber optic cable degrades with distance and will require installing signal-boosting equipment referred to as amplifier sites. The amplifier sites will be located within existing or new substation sites and along the transmission line, within the permanent ROW. There will be a total of six optical amplifier sites within the substations and four within the transmission line ROW.

Roads will be needed for access to the ROW and structure sites for construction, O&M, and decommissioning activities. Existing roads will be the primary means to access the GLWP. In some cases, existing improved and unimproved dirt roads may require widening or other improvements to accommodate GLWP equipment. The Proponent will construct new access roads, where needed, from existing roads and/or between adjacent structure sites generally in flat areas with low vegetation. In addition to access roads to the ROW, maintenance roads will also be required along the entire length of the transmission and distribution lines for O&M and patrol activities. Construction yards are temporary work areas that will be required for materials and equipment storage and staging for construction activities. During construction, temporary pull sites will be necessary to install the conductor, shield wire, and fiber optic line. Temporary helicopter fly yards and refueling sites will also be needed for helicopter transport of structures, personnel, and materials.

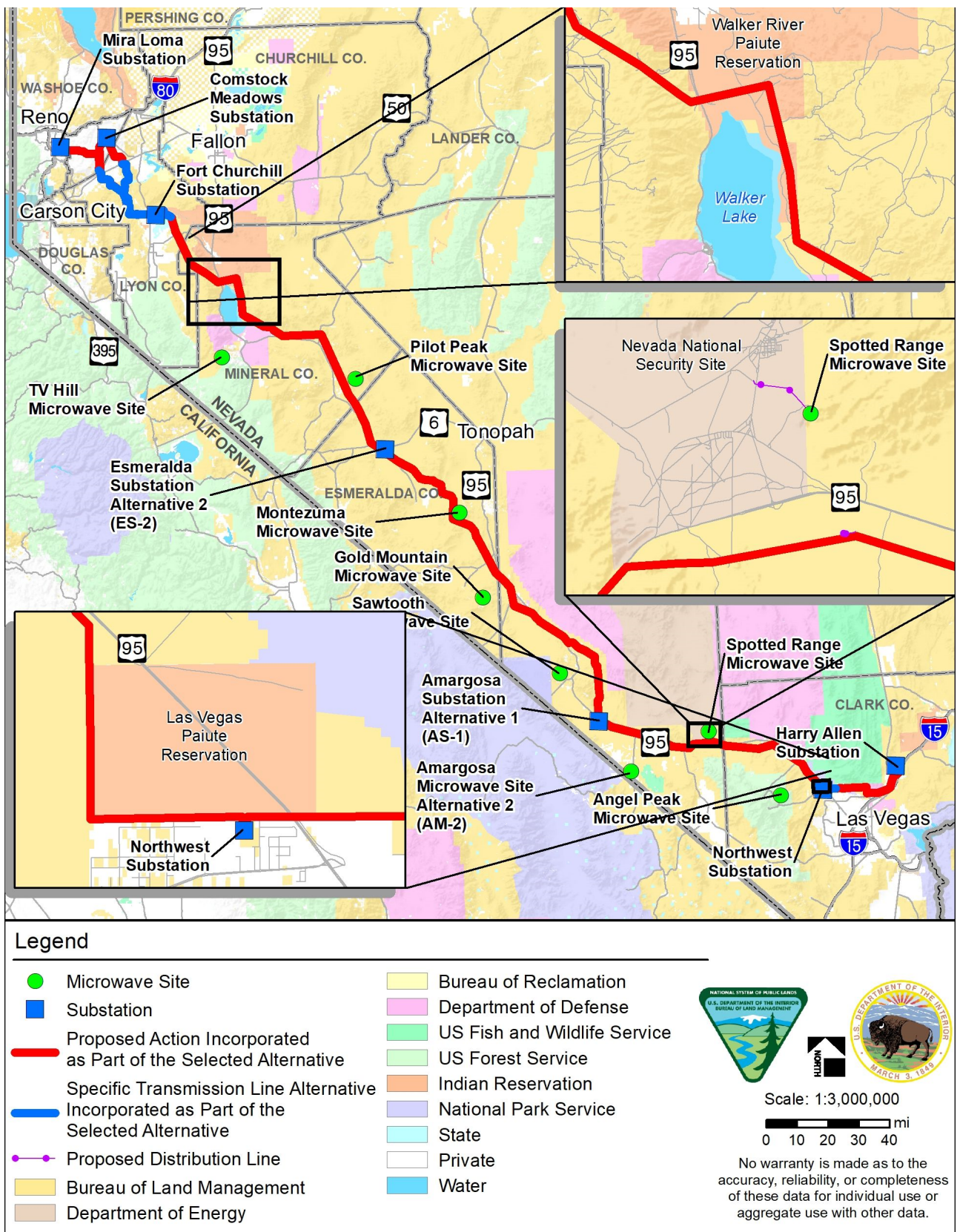
The Proponent has applied to the federal ROW agencies for temporary and permanent ROWs, as applicable. Except within the TUSK, the temporary ROW will be 600-foot-wide (1,200 feet in areas with steep terrain) for construction of the 525-kV and 345-kV transmission lines and 100-foot-wide for construction of the distribution lines. The Proponent has requested a maximum permanent ROW of 200-foot-wide for O&M and decommissioning of the 525-kV transmission line, 160-foot-wide ROW for the 345-kV transmission lines, and 50-foot-wide ROW for the distribution lines. Within the TUSK, the Proponent has requested a 105-foot-wide permanent ROW area. The Proponent will likely modify the proposed ROW further during final engineering. These potential ROW variations are within the scope of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA analysis.

#### **1.4 Purpose and Need for Agency Action and Decisions to be Made**

The purpose and need for agency action and the agency decisions for BLM, BIA, DOE/NNSA, and NPS decisions to be made are described below. Figure ROD-2 identifies the locations of each agency-specific authorizations for the GLWP components within its jurisdiction.

##### **1.4.1 BLM**

The BLM's purpose is to respond to the ROW application submitted by the Proponent to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a system of transmission facilities and associated infrastructure. The need for this action is to fulfill the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA and its ROW regulations to manage the public lands for multiple uses, including the transmission of electric energy,



**Figure ROD-2. Agency Jurisdiction**

guided by the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPA), which directs the agency to expedite applications for the construction of electricity transmission and distribution facilities.

#### **1.4.2 BIA**

The BIA's purpose is to respond to the complete ROW applications submitted by the Proponent to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a transmission line over or across lands held in trust for the Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indians of the Las Vegas Indian Colony (Las Vegas Paiute) and Walker River Paiute Tribe. The BIA's need for this action is to fulfill its responsibility under 25 CFR Part 169 (Rights-of-Way over Indian Land) regulations to review and approve actions on Tribal trust lands.

#### **1.4.3 DOE/NNSA**

The NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the DOE and participated as a Cooperating Agency. The NNSA's purpose for lands within their jurisdiction is to respond to the easement application submitted by the Proponent to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a distribution line and associated access roads on NNSA-administered lands. The NNSA is authorized to grant easements for ROWs by the Atomic Energy Act Section 161q (42 USC 2201(q)).

#### **1.4.4 NPS**

The NPS's purpose is to respond to the application submitted by the Proponent to operate and maintain a transmission line across NPS-administered lands (TUSK) designated to conserve and protect unique and nationally important paleontological resources. The need for this action is to fulfill the NPS responsibility under NPS ROW regulations to manage TUSK in compliance with the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 113-291) enabling legislation and the NPS 2006 Management Policies. The NPS ROW permits are discretionary and revocable and do not convey an interest in land. All NPS ROW permit applications will be processed in accordance with the NPS ROW permitting guidance document, Reference Manual 53-B (RM-53B), and all other applicable regulations and policies, including special use permits for construction and decommissioning (36 CFR 1). Proposed uses of NPS-administered lands and waters may not be incompatible with the public interest or the NPS responsibilities under 54 USC 100101 (the 1916 Organic Act and expanded upon in 36 CFR 14). Under 54 USC 100902, the NPS has the authority to issue a ROW permit for utilities. A Special Use Permit (SUP) will be required for construction per the Office of Management Budget Control Number 1024-0026, 54 USC 100751(a) Regulations; 54 USC 103104 (Cost Recovery).

#### **1.4.5 Decisions to be Made**

The federal ROW agencies decisions to be made for the GLWP are as follows:

- BLM: Approve, approve with modification, or deny the application for a ROW under Title V of FLPMA to use BLM-administered lands for the construction, O&M, and decommissioning of the GLWP transmission line and associated facilities. The BLM will also decide whether to amend its approved land use plans to allow for the proposed ROW, as described in section 1.5 below.
- BIA: Deny, grant, or grant with modifications the ROW applications for portions of the GLWP located on the Las Vegas Paiute Reservation – Snow Mountain and the Walker River Indian Reservation.

- DOE/NNSA: Approve or deny the application for an easement to authorize use of NNSA-administered lands for GLWP construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of an approximately 2-mile -long distribution line and associated existing access roads that traverse a portion of the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS). The Proponent would utilize existing infrastructure on NNSS to the greatest extent practicable. No new access roads on NNSS are proposed as part of the project however, some road upgrades may be necessary.
- NPS: Approve or deny the application requesting a ROW permit to authorize use of NPS--administered lands for GLWP O&M. Approve or deny the special use permit for construction.

## **1.5 BLM Land Use Plan Amendments Decision**

The BLM's land use planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-3) require that project-specific decisions, including authorized uses of land, conform to its approved land use plans. If a proposed decision would not conform to the approved plan, the BLM may modify the proposed decision so that it conforms to the plan, reject the proposal, or amend the plan to achieve plan conformance.

Based on the analysis in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, the BLM amends portions of the following BLM RMPs to adjust the designated West-wide Energy Corridors (WVEC) 18-224, 223-224, and 37-223(S) in the Tonopah and Las Vegas RMPs (BLM 1997) and (BLM 1998, respectively) and WVEC Approved RMPA/ROD (BLM 2009), and reclassify VRM Class II and VRM Class III to Class IV in the Tonopah, Las Vegas, and Carson City Field Office Consolidated RMPs (BLM 1997, 1998; 2001, respectively). The BLM analyzed these plan amendments simultaneously as part of the EIS process for GLWP and provided the public notice and an opportunity to comment on the proposal to amend these plans during the scoping and public availability periods for the EIS. The BLM is approving these plan amendments to ensure that the Selected Alternative conforms to the applicable BLM RMPs consistent with 43 CFR 1610.5-3.

## **1.6 Overview of Alternatives**

A reasonable range of transmission, substation, and microwave site alternatives were analyzed in the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. Potential transmission alternatives were grouped into smaller geographic areas, referred to as route groups, to allow for localized comparisons among the various alternative routes (Table ROD-1). The Action Alternatives were developed based on input from the public, Cooperating Agencies, the BLM, Native American Tribes, and the Proponent and were focused on nine geographic areas of transmission line route adjustments. The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA analyzed 12 transmission, 5 substation, and 2 microwave facility alternatives in detail in addition to the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA included the rationale on an additional 22 transmission alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis. A complete description of the Proposed Action and all the alternatives analyzed in detail can be found in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, which included maps and the alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis.

**Table ROD-1. Transmission Line Route Group Action Alternatives Considered**

Route Group	Transmission Line Route Alternatives
Losee	Alternative A
TUSK	Alternatives A, B, D, E, F, G, and Initial Proposed Action <sup>a</sup>
Beatty	Alternatives A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, and L
Scotty's Junction	Alternatives A and B
Goldfield-Tonopah	Alternative A, B, C, and D
Walker River	Alternative A
Mason Valley WMA	Alternatives A, B, and C
Carson River	Alternatives A, B, and C
Underground Fort Churchill to Harry Allen	Alternative A

*Table Acronym(s):* TUSK – Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument; WMA – Wildlife Management Area

*Table Note(s):* <sup>a</sup>TUSK Initial Proposed Action Transmission Alternative was identified as the Proposed Action in the Proponent's Preliminary Plan of Development (POD) provided with the submittal of the GLWP Standard Form (SF-299). In subsequent revisions to the GLWP Preliminary POD, the Proponent changed their Proposed Action to TUSK Transmission Alternative C because it would have less of a footprint within the TUSK.

## 1.7 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Specific Action Alternatives were eliminated from detailed analysis because they would be ineffective in responding to the purpose and need, technically or economically infeasible, substantially similar in design to an alternative analyzed, or substantially similar to alternative(s) analyzed in terms of effects (BLM 2008). Refer to Appendix AA of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA for the rationale used to eliminate the Action Alternatives from detailed evaluation and for figures illustrating the location of these alternatives.

**Table ROD-2. Transmission Line Route Group Action Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis**

Route Group	Transmission Line Route Alternatives
TUSK	Alternatives A, D, E, F, G, and Initial Proposed Action <sup>a</sup>
Beatty	Alternatives B, D, E, F, H, I, and J
Goldfield-Tonopah	Alternative A, B, C, and D
Walker River	Alternative A
Mason Valley WMA	Alternatives B and C
Carson River	Alternatives B
Underground Fort Churchill to Harry Allen	Alternative A

*Table Acronym(s):* TUSK – Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument; WMA – Wildlife Management Area

*Table Note(s):* <sup>a</sup>TUSK Initial Proposed Action Transmission Alternative was identified as the Proposed Action in the Proponent's Preliminary Plan of Development (POD) provided with the submittal of the GLWP Standard Form (SF-299). In subsequent revisions to the GLWP Preliminary POD, the Proponent changed their Proposed Action to TUSK Transmission Alternative C because it would have less of a footprint within the TUSK.

## 1.8 Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Analysis in the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA

The Action and No Action Alternatives carried forward in the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA are briefly discussed below. A detailed analysis of these alternatives by resource/use was provided in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIS/RMPA and in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, which included a comparison table in Section 3.20. The transmission line route group alternatives carried forward for detailed analysis are listed in Table ROD-3 and figures of these alternatives were in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. The substation location alternatives were grouped into smaller geographic areas to allow for localized comparisons among the substation alternatives. In addition, the Amargosa microwave radio facility was evaluated at two different locations. All of the substation and microwave alternatives were analyzed in detail in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.



**Table ROD-3. Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives to be Fully Analyzed**

<b>Transmission Line Route Group</b>	<b>Alternative(s)</b>
Losee	Alternative A
TUSK	Alternative B
Beatty	Alternatives A, C, G, K, and L
Scotty's Junction	Alternatives A and B
Mason Valley WMA	Alternative A
Carson River	Alternatives A and C

*Table Acronym(s):* TUSK – Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument; WMA – Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area

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## **CHAPTER 2. ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, the federal ROW agencies would not grant or permit a ROW for construction, O&M, and decommissioning of the GLWP, and the BLM would not amend the relevant RMPs. The GLWP facilities would not be built and existing land uses and present activities in the GLWP area would continue. The land on which the GLWP would be located would be available to other uses that are consistent with the applicable land use plans.

### **2.2 Losee Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives**

The Losee Transmission Line Route Group considered two different routes between North Lamb Boulevard and the Losee Road alignment extension. From east to west, the Proposed Action would be located along the extension of Grand Teton Drive and turn to travel north for approximately two miles along North Lamb Boulevard adjacent to the Nellis Air Force Base (AFB) Small Arms Range. The Proposed Action would then turn west at the boundary of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Losee Transmission Alternative A would travel along the extension of Grand Teton Drive for an additional two miles before turning north on Losee Road.

### **2.3 TUSK Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives**

The TUSK Transmission Line Route Group included two alternatives, both generally located along the TUSK boundary adjacent to Moccasin Road (extension of El Capitan Way to the east for approximately 1.5 miles). The Proposed Action would consist of 11 180-foot-tall vertical monopoles with only a portion of the structures constructed within TUSK and require approximately 19.8 acres of permanent ROW. The TUSK Transmission Alternative B would consist of 6 150-foot-tall guyed-V wire-frame towers entirely constructed within TUSK and require approximately 36.4 acres of permanent ROW.

### **2.4 Beatty Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives**

The Beatty Transmission Line Route Group included six alternatives ranging from approximately 25.4 miles to 27.5 miles in length. Collectively, the alternatives would cross United States Highway 95 (US 95), proceed through Crater Flat, run east of Bare Mountain, cross Beatty Wash, and turn northwest before connecting back to the US 95 corridor south of Scotty's Junction. The Proposed Action and Beatty Transmission Alternatives A, K, and L would cross The Nature Conservancy's Gary and Lajetta Atwood Preserve (Atwood Preserve). These alternatives would either have physical structures within or spanning the Atwood Preserve; all would require permanent ROW area for O&M. Beatty Transmission Alternatives C and G would avoid the Atwood Preserve. The Proposed Action and Beatty Transmission Alternatives A, and C would cross the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) federal land transfer area. Beatty Transmission Alternatives K, G, and L would avoid the NTTR federal land transfer area. The Proposed Action and Beatty Transmission Alternatives A, C, K, and L would cross the NTTR Range 77A restricted military airspace. Beatty Transmission Alternative G would avoid the Range 77A restricted military airspace.

### **2.5 Scotty's Junction Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives**

The Scotty's Junction Transmission Route Group included three alternative routes that would begin approximately 11 miles south of Scotty's Junction along the US 95 and extend approximately 4 miles north

of Scotty's Junction at the intersection of US 95 and State Route (SR) 267. Scotty's Junction Transmission Alternative A would run southwest around Scotty's Junction approximately three miles from the US 95 alignment, Scotty's Junction Transmission Alternative B would stay directly adjacent to US 95, and the Proposed Action would extend northeast around Scotty's Junction approximately one mile from US 95 alignment. The Proposed Action and Scotty's Junction Transmission Alternative A would avoid the Timbisha Shoshone Reservation. Scotty's Junction Transmission Alternative B would cross the Timbisha Shoshone Reservation.

## **2.6 Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives**

The Mason Valley WMA Transmission Line Route Group included two alternative alignments. Approximately 4.9 miles of the Proposed Action would cross the Mason Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA) just north of the existing railroad line as it enters the new Fort Churchill Substation. The approximately 7.0-mile-long Mason Valley WMA Transmission Alternative A would diverge from the Proposed Action alignment at the railroad that runs along the northern boundary of the Mason Valley WMA before entering the new Fort Churchill Substation. This alternative would cross approximately 1,140 feet through the Mason Valley WMA and would require one turning structure in the WMA before connecting to the new substation.

## **2.7 Carson River Transmission Line Route Group Alternatives**

The Carson River Transmission Line Route Group included three alternatives between the new Fort Churchill Substation and Comstock Meadows and Mira Loma substations. The approximate 75.8-mile-long Carson River Alternative A would keep the three 345-kV transmission lines together (Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #1 and #2 and Fort Churchill to Mira Loma) after leaving the Fort Churchill Substation until after the lines cross the Carson River. After crossing the Carson River, Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #2 transmission line would turn east around Table Mountain before rejoining the Proposed Action alignment. The Proposed Action would be approximately 71.8-miles-long and would generally have the same route as Carson River Alternative A except where the Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #2 transmission line crosses the Carson River. With the Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #2 would cross downstream of the other two 345-kV transmission lines.

Carson River Alternative C would be approximately 82.5 miles and was developed to reduce impacts to roads and lands used for testing military equipment and to avoid Churchill Narrows buckwheat habitat, a proposed federally listed plant species. As part of Carson River Transmission Alternative C, the Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #2 transmission line would generally follow the other two 345-kV lines before turning northeast and crossing the Carson River. The Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #1 and the Fort Churchill to Mira Loma transmission line would largely follow a similar alignment as the Proposed Action and would cross the Carson River downstream of the Fort Churchill to Comstock Meadows #2 transmission line.

## **2.8 Substation Group Alternatives**

The Esmeralda Substation (ES) Group Alternatives considered three different locations over a range of approximately 30 miles for an approximately 109-acre substation. The ES-1 substation would be located approximately 8.4 miles south of Mina in Mineral County. The ES-2 (Proposed Action) would be approximately 4.4 miles southeast of the US 95/US 6) junction in Esmeralda County, adjacent to SR 265, and

along the east side of the transmission line alignment. The ES-3 would be approximately 10.3 miles southeast of the US 95/US 6 junction in Esmeralda County along the west side of the transmission line alignment.

The Amargosa Substation (AS) Group Alternatives consider two different locations for an approximately 109-acre substation over a range of approximately 6.7 miles in Nye County. The AS-1 substation location would be approximately 12.2 miles west of the US 95/SR 373 junction. The AS-2 (Proposed Action) would be approximately 6.1 miles west of the US 95/SR 373 junction along the south side of the transmission line alignment.

**2.9 Microwave Facility Alternatives**

The Amargosa Microwave (AM) Site Alternatives consisted of two different locations for a new approximately two-acre microwave facility. Both microwave alternatives would be located along SR 373 in Nye County, approximately 0.5 mile north of the Nevada-California state line. The AM-1 would be located on private lands on the east side of SR 373. The AM-2 (Proposed Action) would be located west of SR 373 approximately 700 feet southeast of AM-1 on BLM-administered lands.

**2.10 Selected and Environmentally Preferred Alternatives**

**2.10.1 Selected Alternative**

Under NEPA, the “preferred alternative” is a preliminary indication of the lead agency’s preference of action among the No Action and Action Alternatives. The lead agency selects a preferred alternative for a variety of reasons including its priorities and environmental considerations discussed in an EIS. In accordance with NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14(d)), the BLM has identified the Preferred Alternative to be the Proposed Action as modified with the inclusion of specific transmission line and substation alternatives (Table ROD-4). The BLM Preferred Alternative is the Selected Alternative (Figure ROD-3).

**Table ROD-4. BLM Preferred Alternative/Selected**

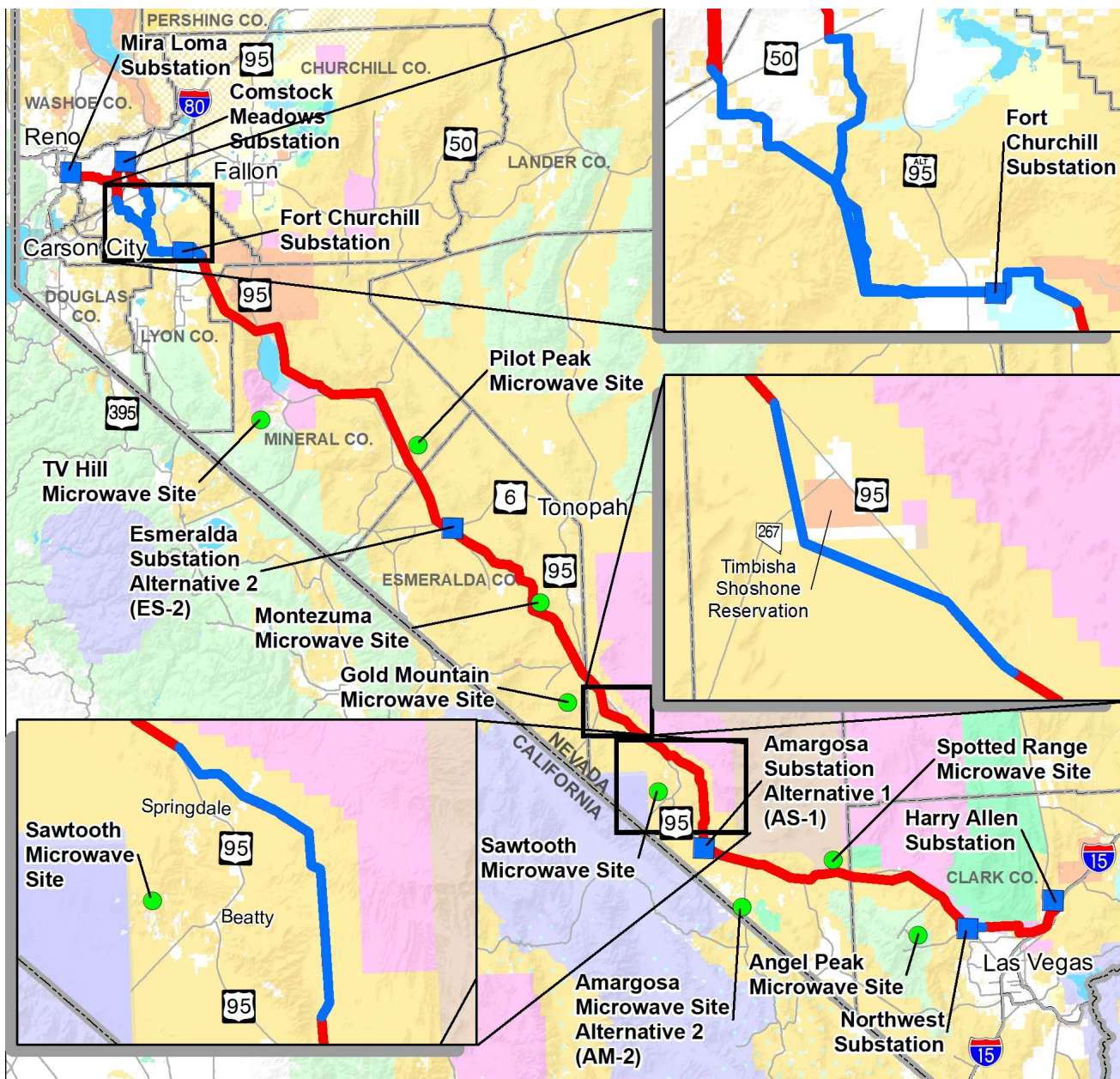
Action Alternative
Proposed Action modified with:
Beatty Transmission Alternative L
Scotty’s Junction Transmission Alternative A
Mason Valley WMA Transmission Alternative A
Carson River Transmission Alternative C
Amargosa Substation – 1

*Table Acronym(s):* BLM – Bureau of Land Management; WMA – Wildlife Management Area

**2.10.2 Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

The NEPA regulations require an agency to specify in the ROD one or more alternatives considered environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(a)(2)). An environmentally preferable alternative is an alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources. Because it would cause the least damage to the biological and physical environment, the BLM has determined that the No Action Alternative is the environmentally preferable alternative. However, the No Action Alternative would not achieve the Proponent’s requirement to meet the Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards and criteria, which require transmission systems be planned and constructed with sufficient levels of redundancy to maintain reliable operation in the event of a loss or outage of system elements.





### Legend

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Microwave Site  | <span style="background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Bureau of Reclamation            |
| <span style="background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span> Substation                  | <span style="background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Department of Defense              |
| <span style="color: red;">—</span> Proposed Action Incorporated as Part of the Selected Alternative  | <span style="background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> US Fish and Wildlife Service |
| <span style="color: blue;">—</span> Specific Transmission Line Alternative Incorporated as Part of the Selected Alternative                          | <span style="background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> US Forest Service            |
| <span style="background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Bureau of Land Management | <span style="background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Indian Reservation               |
| <span style="background-color: brown; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Department of Energy       | <span style="background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> National Park Service         |
|  | <span style="background-color: white; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> State                             |
|  | <span style="background-color: white; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Private                           |
|  | <span style="background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Water                         |



Scale: 1:3,000,000

0 10 20 30 40 mi

No warranty is made as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

**Figure ROD-3. Selected Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proponent would also not meet the electrical demand of the end users and respond to electrical service requests, improve overall system reliability, or provide regional redundancy. The No Action Alternative would not meet the BLM and the other federal ROW agencies' purpose and need. For these reasons, the BLM has not selected the No Action Alternative.

Identifying the environmentally preferable alternative among the Action Alternatives involves balancing relevant factors, including tradeoffs between different natural and cultural resources, social, and economic impacts and values. In consideration of the balance between these factors, the BLM has determined that the approximately 488-mile long Selected Alternative<sup>4</sup> is the environmentally preferable action alternative. The rationale for this decision includes the following:

- The Selected Alternative meets the Proponent's need to address energy transmission reliability, redundancy, and resiliency between Las Vegas and Reno, Nevada.
- The ROW agencies also fulfill their obligations under FLMPA to approve environmentally responsible energy transmission on federal lands.
- The Selected Alternative minimizes impacts to Bi-state sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and its habitat. The Selected Alternative minimizes impacts to the California National Historic Trail (NHT) Walker River – Sonora Route.
- The Selected Alternative avoids the Timbisha Shoshone Reservation at their request.
- The Selected Alternative maximizes use of existing utility corridors and collocation with existing transmission to the extent practicable.
- The Selected Alternative avoids impacting sand transport and deposition patterns to Big Dune and Lava Dune. These dunes provide habitat for five endemic sensitive species.
- The Selected Alternative minimizes resource impacts to the TUSK and to the Mason Valley WMA.

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<sup>4</sup> The Proponent's Proposed Action was approximately 472 miles long and the Selected Alternative will be slightly longer at 488 miles.

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## **CHAPTER 3. DECISION AND DECISION RATIONALE**

### **3.1 Authorization of Rights-of-Way/Special Use Permit, Approval of Resource Management Plan Amendments, and Selected Alternative Decision**

This decision authorizes the federal ROW agencies to issue their respective ROWs/SUP for the purpose of constructing, operating, maintaining, and decommissioning the GLWP as identified in the Preferred Alternative (Selected Alternative) (Figure ROD-3) considered in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. My decision also approves the amendments to BLM RMPs as follows: adjusting the designated West-wide Energy Corridors (WVEC) 18-224, 223-224, and 37-223(S) in the Tonopah and Las Vegas RMPs (BLM 1997) and (BLM 1998, respectively) and WVEC Approved RMPA/ROD (BLM 2009), and reclassifying VRM Class II and VRM Class III to Class IV in the Tonopah, Las Vegas, and Carson City Field Office Consolidated RMPs (BLM 1997, 1998; 2001, respectively). As described below, this decision is consistent with the applicable laws, policies, and guidance, and is informed by the environmental analysis in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

The Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA identified the impacts of the Proposed Action and the other Action Alternative considered in detail to the environment and provided a sound basis for this decision. As described in Section 2.10.2 above, there was no Action Alternative identified that would cause substantially less impact than the Selected Alternative while still meeting the federal agencies' purpose and need of the GLWP. Consistent with 40 CFR 1505.2(a)(3) and as described in Sections 3.3 through 3.5 below, the BLM has adopted and incorporated through this ROD all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

Construction may not begin until the Proponent receives the agency-specific authorizations for their segments within their jurisdiction for the construction, O&M, and decommissioning of the GLWP. This decision does not create any right or easement, nor establish eminent domain, across such state or local agencies or private lands. The legal description for the Selected Alternative is included in Appendix E of this ROD. This ROD also prescribes additional requirements to be met prior to issuing notices to proceed (NTP) (or approved ROW documents). The Proponent anticipates that construction of the GLWP will occur over a three-year period and will occur in segments along the alignment. The BLM will issue limited NTP for each segment based on the respective COM Plan, which will be the final design for that segment. The federal ROW agencies'-specific authorizations are conditioned on the acceptance of mitigation plans and monitoring programs outlined in this ROD including, but not limited to, an updated and federal ROW agency-accepted Construction, Operation, and Maintenance Plan (COM Plan). The COM Plan will include final engineering and design drawings for the GLWP and any site-specific actions necessary to implement specific requirements of this ROD. The Proponent's complete COM Plan is subject to review and acceptance by the federal ROW agencies and other agencies with regulatory authority over impacted resources. The COM Plan must demonstrate compliance with the required mitigation and measure to minimize impacts as identified in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA and included in ROD Appendices C, D, F, G, and H.

### **3.2 Mitigation and Environmental Management Measures**

To reduce impacts to resources from the GLWP, the Proponent has committed to Environmental Protection Measures which are also referred to as project design features as part of the Preliminary POD (NV Energy 2023). These measures, along with relevant Best Management Practices, Standard Operating

Procedures, Interagency Operating Procedures (IOPs)<sup>5</sup>, conservation and prevention measures, and applicable requirements from the BLM's applicable RMPs and manuals—collectively referred to as Environmental Management Measures (EMMs)—were considered in the impact analysis for each resource/use. The EMMs are provided in Appendix F of this ROD. The BLM will ensure compliance with the measures described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 are met as a part of the ROW terms and conditions found in 43 CFR 2805.12.

Mitigation measures identified in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA are listed below:

- **Anti-perching/Nesting Mitigation.** The anti-perching/nesting mitigation measure will reduce impacts on Bi-State sage-grouse and Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) associated with potential increase in raven predation from the introduction of guyed lattice structures. Tubular tower designs (i.e., H-Frame, three-pole dead-end, and monopole structures) with pointed tops rather than lattice tower designs will be constructed in the entire Pine Nut PMU and within approximately two miles of designated Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs) in the Mount Grant PMU. Perch and nesting deterrents will be installed on all transmission towers and distribution poles within approximately two miles of PACs and within approximately six miles of leks. The anti-perching/nesting mitigation measure will also apply to all transmission line structures for the GLWP located in Mojave desert tortoise Eastern and Northeastern Mojave Recovery Units (United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 2011).
- **Weathered-finish Structures.** The BLM has specified a mitigation measure to reduce the color contrast of the GLWP structures that will be visible from Ice Age Fossils State Park. Brown, self-weathering (also known as Corten) finish structures will be used between the crossing of the proposed transmission line over Decatur Road near the Desert NWR boundary east, approximately 7.1 miles, to where the GLWP will turn south near the extension of Lamb Boulevard and the Desert NWR boundary.
- **National Historic Trails Inventory.** Where historic trail traces will be visible within approximately three miles of the GLWP (NHT inventory area) on BLM-administered land and have not been subject to a Class III cultural resources survey within the last 20 years, the Proponent will provide for a Class II or targeted Class III pedestrian inventory in accordance with BLM Manual 8110 (2004) to field verify historic trail traces per BLM Manual 6280 (2012). The Proponent will provide documentation of the presence (integrity and trail condition) or absence of historic trail traces within the three-mile viewshed of the GLWP to the BLM prior to ground disturbance occurring within the NHT inventory area. The Proponent is encouraged to obtain authorization from private landowners to complete the Class II or targeted Class III pedestrian inventory.

### **3.3 Compensatory Mitigation**

#### **3.3.1 Bi-State Sage Grouse**

The BLM has coordinated with the USFWS and Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) on the impacts of the GLWP to the Bi-State sage-grouse to develop a framework for compensatory mitigation to offset the identified residual effects. Compensatory mitigation ratios for permanent disturbances within Bi-State sage-grouse habitat include 2:1 for acres of permanent disturbance associated with upgrading existing access roads for the proposed transmission line and distribution lines. The compensatory mitigation ratio

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<sup>5</sup> The IOPs were adopted to apply for project sited with designated WVEC in the January 2009 Approved RMPA/ROD for Designation of Energy Corridors on Bureau of Land Management-Administered Lands in the 11 Western States prepared by the DOE and the BLM for the DOI.

associated with the proposed transmission line in areas of collocation is also 2:1. The ratio for permanent disturbance associated with areas of new transmission line not collocated with existing lines is 4:1.

Table ROD-5 presents the estimated acres of permanent disturbance and associated ratios that will be offset through compensatory mitigation funded by the Proponent.

**Table ROD-5. Summary of Bi-State Sage-grouse  
Estimated Compensatory Mitigation Acres and Proposed Ratios**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Permanent Disturbance (acres)</b>	<b>Proposed Ratio</b>	<b>Compensatory Mitigation (acres)</b>
Existing Access Road Requiring Improvement	13.4	2:1	26.8
New Access Road	2.7	4:1	10.8
TV Hill Microwave Station Existing Distribution Line	9.0	2:1	18.0
Transmission Line Permanent ROW - Collocated with Existing Transmission	33.9	2:1	67.8
Transmission Line Permanent ROW - Not Collocated	17.6	4:1	70.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>193.8</b>

*Table Acronym(s): ROW – Right-of-way*

Compensatory mitigation funding provided by the Proponent will be placed into a mitigation fund administered by NDOW, when work is to be undertaken within the applicable segments within Bi-State sage grouse habitats . Potential Bi-State sage-grouse conservation projects could include but are not limited to habitat restoration efforts, threat mitigation through wildfire fuels reduction projects, and acquisition of conservation easements in valuable Bi-State sage-grouse habitat areas.

### **3.3.2 Mojave Desert Tortoise**

As required by the FWS’s Biological Opinion (BO) for the project to offset residual impacts to Mojave desert tortoises, the BLM will collect remuneration fees from the Proponent for the total disturbance across all land ownerships located within the Mojave desert tortoise habitat as compensatory mitigation. Compensatory mitigation funding provided by the Proponent will be placed into a mitigation fund administered by NDOW, when work is to be undertaken within the applicable segments within Mojave desert tortoise habitats. The remuneration fees will provide funding for Mojave desert tortoise mitigation as outlined in the terms and conditions of the BO and incorporated into this ROD (ROD Appendix H). Remuneration fees will be used for actions expected to promote management and recovery of the Mojave desert tortoise over time (Hastey et al. 1991). Actions may involve habitat acquisition, population or habitat enhancement, increasing knowledge of the species’ biological requirements, reducing loss of individual animals, documenting the species status and trend, and preserving distinct population attributes.

### **3.3.3 Inventoried Lands with Wilderness Characteristics**

The BLM considers wilderness characteristics to be both an important and sensitive resource. The BLM requires the Proponent provide compensatory mitigation for those inventoried lands with wilderness characteristics (LWC) units in which the BLM has not yet considered and decided whether to manage for protection as an LWC through a land use planning process that will be impacted by the GLWP. The BLM will not require compensatory mitigation for impacts to inventoried LWC units that were identified as part

of a land use planning process wherein the BLM has made an affirmative management decision not to protect wilderness characteristics. The BLM will calculate the final number of inventoried LWC acres that no longer qualify as an LWC due to the Project's impacts at the time the limited NTP is to be issued. The Proponent will provide the funding prior to the BLM's issuance of the segment specific ROW NTP. Compensatory mitigation funding provided by the Proponent will be placed into a mitigation fund administered by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

### **3.4 Statement of All Practicable Mitigation Adopted**

Based on the foregoing and consistent with 40 CFR 1505.2(a)(3), the BLM has determined that all practicable mitigation measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the Selected Alternative for the GLWP have been adopted by this ROD.

### **3.5 BLM Management Considerations**

The Selected Alternative also advances the BLM's statutory direction to designate and utilize right-of-way corridors in order to "minimize adverse environmental impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way," 43 U.S.C. § 1763, and the direction to expedite applications to construct electricity transmission and distribution facilities within energy corridors designated on federal lands pursuant to Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, 42 U.S.C. § 15926(c)(2). Upon review of the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, the Selected Alternative will allow for development opportunities and minimize resource conflicts and impacts across the landscape by utilizing existing designated corridors and collocating with existing infrastructure.

The Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA adequately disclosed the impacts of the Selected Alternative and the other Action Alternatives considered in detail to the human environment. As described in this ROD and consistent with 40 CFR 1505.2(a)(3), practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted. Additionally, authorization of the GLWP will not cause unnecessary or undue degradation of the public lands and is in the public interest.



## CHAPTER 4. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Agencies and organizations that have jurisdiction and/or special expertise in the GLWP were contacted prior to scoping, at the start of scoping, during resource inventory, and before the publication of the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

### 4.1 Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

Section 7 of the ESA requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction of designated critical habitat. It also requires consultation with the USFWS if an action may affect listed species. As part of formal and informal consultation under Section 7 of the ESA, the BLM submitted an initial Biological Assessment (BA) to the USFWS to address species with the potential to occur in the area of the BLM Preferred Alternative for the GLWP. The USFWS requested that additional species be addressed in the BA and the BLM submitted a revised BA on February 6, 2024, when formal consultation under Section 7 of the ESA with the USFWS was initiated. Consultation was initiated then amended in February 2024 for the threatened Ash Meadows blazingstar (*Mentzelia leucophylla*), the threatened Ash Meadows sunray (*Enceliopsis nudicaulis* var. *Corrugate*), the threatened Ash Meadows ivesia (*Ivesia kingii* var. *eremica*), the threatened Ash Meadows milkvetch (*Astragalus phoenix*), the proposed threatened Bi-State sage-grouse, the threatened Mojave desert tortoise, the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), the threatened spring-loving centaury (*Zeltnera [Centaurium] namophilum*), and the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). The USFWS has completed formal and informal ESA Section 7 consultation with the BLM in the BO (reference number 2024-0070122), which is provided in Appendix H of this ROD.

### 4.2 NHPA Section 106 Consultation/NEPA Substitution Process 36 CFR 800.8(c)

In accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA, federal agencies are required to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP. The regulations also specify the need for meaningful consultation with State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), Native American Tribes, and other interested parties during all phases of Section 106 compliance.

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) implementing regulations for Section 106 of the NHPA (36 CFR Part 800) encourage federal agencies to coordinate compliance with the procedural requirements of Section 106 of the NHPA with the NEPA requirements. Consistent with the Section 106 regulations, the BLM, as the lead federal agency chose to fulfill its obligations under Section 106 by using the process outlined in 36 CFR 800.8(c), otherwise known as “NEPA Substitution.” This substitution process allows a federal agency officials to use the process and documentation required for the preparation of an environmental assessment or an EIS to comply with Section 106 in lieu of procedures set forth in 36 CFR 800.3 through 36 CFR 800.6 (36 CFR 800.8(c)). Federal agencies’ statutory obligations under NEPA and NHPA are independent, but integrating the processes creates efficiencies and supports a broad discussion of effects to the human environment. For the GLWP, the BLM complied with the standards set forth in 36 CFR 800.8(c)(1)(i)-(iv) following the advanced notification to the SHPO/THPO and ACHP of its intention to use NEPA Substitution.

Consultation was conducted under the NHPA Substitution regulations located at 36 CFR 800.8(c). Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800 and as the lead federal agency for the undertaking, the BLM initiated Section 106

consultation and participated in ongoing consultation throughout the project. The BLM is committed to continued consultation during implementation of the HPTP until all adverse effects are resolved. The Section 106 consultation letters and meeting materials were included in Appendix V of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA with additional details about how the BLM has met its obligations under the 36 CFR 800.8(c) process, which are summarized below.

*Notification.* The BLM sent notifications of its intent to use NEPA Substitution to the Nevada SHPO, THPOs, ACHP, and Native American Tribes in May 2021 and February 2022 consistent with 36 CFR 800.8(c). Notification correspondence is included in Appendix V of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

*Identification of Consulting Parties.* The effort to identify consulting parties was consistent with 36 CFR 800.3(f) and the list of consulting parties are provided in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. Consulting parties include Native American Tribes, ACHP, other federal and state land managers, trails interest groups, and the Proponent. The BLM has reviewed and responded to all requests to be consulting parties, the exchange of which is documented in the Administrative Record.

*Identification of Historic Properties and Assessment of Effects.* The effort to identify historic properties of all types (buildings, structures, objects, districts, and sites) within the defined APE and evaluate historic significance was consistent with 36 CFR 800.4 and is described in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. All work was completed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the standards found within BLM Manual 8110, and the BLM Nevada State Office's Guidelines and Standards for Archaeological Inventory (Sixth Edition) and was commensurate with the level of effort put forth to assess other environmental factors. Evaluations of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are clearly stated, in a manner that a layman could understand, in the Class III cultural resources inventory reports for the undertaking (Schwartz, Ermish, Lloyd, Ligman, et al. 2024; Schwartz, Ermish, Lloyd, Sainz, Butero, et al. 2024; Schwartz, Ermish, Lloyd, Sainz, Morris-Larsen, et al. 2024). As assessment of effects was completed pursuant to 36 CFR 800.5. There is potential for 313 historic properties to be adversely affected by the undertaking, which is described in the HPTP (ROD Appendix C).

*Consultation and Public Involvement.* The BLM consulted on the effects of the undertaking on historic properties. A series of Class III cultural resources inventory reports, a visual effects assessment report, and the HPTP underwent consultation as stand-alone documents prior to publication of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. All consulting parties received adequate opportunity to consult on all Section 106 documents and review the Draft EIS/RMPA. Documentation of consultation is included in the Administrative Record. Any substantive cultural resources concerns expressed by the consulting parties and the public have been addressed. All concerns expressed by the public are documented in the Administrative Record. All comments received on the Draft EIS/RMPA are included in Appendix Z of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

The results of the inventory reports, visual assessment, and treatment measures were described in the Draft EIS/RMPA and the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, which was available to the public. Information about cultural resources and Section 106 were presented to the public as part of the NEPA public scoping and public comment meetings.

The BLM consulted with the Nevada SHPO regarding the eligibility and effect determinations for cultural resources. Correspondence of the BLM to the SHPO is documented in the Administrative Record. Because the SHPO did not provide a response to the BLM regarding determination of eligibility and effect for cultural resources, the BLM proceeded by incorporating comments from other consulting parties and

moved forward with final determinations for cultural resources in compliance with the procedures described in 36 CFR 800.3(c)(4).

*Development of Alternatives or Measures to Avoid, Minimize, or Mitigate Adverse Effects.* The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA clearly discusses the development and evaluation of alternatives and measures to avoid or minimize adverse effects to historic properties. Beatty Transmission Alternative L was developed in response to cultural resources concerns expressed by Tribes. The HPTP (ROD Appendix C) provides measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse effects.

*Review of Environmental Documents.* During the preparation of the Draft EIS/RMPA, the BLM provided information to the public during public scoping meetings and public comment meetings, identified historic properties and assessed effects, and identified and consulted with consulting parties via consultation letters and meetings. The BLM submitted the Draft EIS/RMPA to Section 106 consulting parties when it was made available for public comment and provided 90 days for comments and opportunity for any consulting party to file an objection with the BLM. There were no objections received attesting that the Draft EIS/RMPA did not meet the standards set forth in 36 CFR 800.8(c)(1) or that the resolution of adverse effects is inadequate. The BLM also provided the SHPO, Indian tribes, ACHP, and other consulting parties with the opportunity to review and object to the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA consistent with the requirements in 36 CFR 800.8(c)(2)-(3).

In terms of analysis in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA, the Selected Alternative has the potential to physically and/or visually adversely affected 131 historic properties. The HPTP outlines treatment measures for each site which may be adversely affected by the undertaking. Treatment measures include avoidance, archaeological and Tribal monitoring, survey of National Historic Trails as they cross private lands, subsurface testing and excavation limited to the construction footprint of the undertaking, ethnographic studies, archival research, non-invasive cadaver dog investigations (if needed), interpretive signage, and/or intensive mapping and in-field artifact documentation. Treatment measures are to be applied as appropriate for each adversely effected site in the manner described in the HPTP (ROD Appendix C). The BLM will continue Section 106 consultation throughout the implementation of the HPTP, inclusive of all reporting associated with the HPTP (Button et al. 2024:192). All historic properties that may be adversely affected by the GLWP are located on lands administered by the BLM and BIA and the Walker River Paiute Tribe. The BLM is the lead agency responsible for compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA on all non-private lands in the area of potential effects (APE).

Consistent with 36 CFR 800.8(c)(4), this ROD incorporates a binding commitment to a treatment plan for historic properties determined to be adversely affected by the GLWP as provided in the Historic Properties Treatment Plan (HPTP) (ROD Appendix C) and analyzed in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA (Appendix K of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA). This ROD serves as the federal agencies' binding commitments to impose treatments to resolve adverse effects and neither a memorandum of agreement nor programmatic is required for the undertaking (36 CFR 800.8(c)(4)(i)(A)).

If the BLM or other agencies bound by signature to the ROD fail to carry out the measures agreed to within the HPTP, the agency official shall notify the ACHP and all consulting parties that the procedures in 36 CFR 800.3 through 800.6 will be carried out as necessary, pursuant to 36 CFR 800.8(c)(5). As articulated in 36 CFR 800.9(d), the ACHP may evaluate compliance with NHPA Section 106 using periodic reviews of how participants have fulfilled their legal obligations and the effectiveness of the outcomes. The ACHP is authorized to obtain information from the federal agencies, and can request information from other participants, to assess compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

If modifications to the undertaking occur, such as major design changes, a supplemental EIS will be prepared and provided, and the BLM will notify the ACHP and all consulting parties of the supplemental EIS (36 CFR 800.8(c)(5)).

### **4.3 Government-to-Government Consultation with Tribes**

Government-to-government consultation involves the process of seeking, discussing, and considering Native American Tribes' views on policies, undertakings, and decisions such as the environmental review of the proposed GLWP. The venue for government-to-government consultation for the GLWP has followed the established form of contact preferred by each Tribe. Consultation has generally involved formal letters and submission of material via US Postal Service Certified Mail with follow-up telephone contact and a series of meetings.

In May 2021 and February 2022, the BLM formally initiated consultation with Native American Tribes that had previously expressed claims to cultural affiliation with the GLWP area to inform them of the project and to inquire about their interest in continuing government-to-government consultation. Three formal government-to-government virtual meetings with BLM Nevada State Director Jon K. Raby were conducted with representatives from Native American Tribes. The BLM will continue to consult and coordinate with the Tribes and any additional Native American Tribes who request government-to-government consultation for the GLWP.

### **4.4 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act**

Federal agencies have to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) for planned activities on their administered lands. Through consultation with Tribes as required by NEPA, the NHPA, and government-to-government Tribal relationships, the BLM has determined that implementation of the GLWP may result in discovery or excavation of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and/or objects of cultural patrimony (cultural items) on federal lands. Native American human remains and cultural items are subject to the provisions of NAGPRA and implementing regulations per 43 CFR 10. The BLM prepared a NAGPRA Plan of Action (POA) pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(b) and in consultation with Tribes (ROD Appendix D). This POA describes Tribal preferences for the treatment and disposition of cultural items that may be identified during construction of the GLWP on federally administered lands in Nevada. The POA complies with the requirements of NAGPRA (Public Law 101-601; 25 USC 3001 et seq.) and its implementing regulations as set forth in 43 CFR Part 10 (specifically §10.4). The regulations require an approved and signed POA prior to any ground disturbing activities on federal or Tribal lands.

### **4.5 Other Tribal Coordination**

The Native American Tribes most actively involved in the GLWP include the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, Walker River Paiute Tribe, Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, and Moapa Band of Paiute Indians. The Hopi Tribe, Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, and the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California have also expressed interest in the GLWP. The BLM also coordinated with Native American Tribes to provide archaeological fieldwork monitors and facilitate field visits to archaeological sites.

In June 2021, the BLM invited Native American Tribes and other stakeholders to a series of public input workshops on the GLWP. In August 2023, the BLM hosted a virtual Tribal listening session to provide the Native American Tribes an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments about the GLWP. These input workshops, individual Tribal virtual meetings, and listening sessions were not considered formal

government-to-government consultation and were not conducted for the purposes of Section 106 consultation. Rather, they were information sharing and gathering sessions to provide an opportunity for Native American Tribes to ask questions or provide feedback about the GLWP. Individual meetings with the Native American Tribes were held throughout the NEPA process.

#### **4.6 Cooperating Agency Coordination**

The BLM is the lead federal agency responsible for the preparation of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA under NEPA. The BLM invited 24 federal agencies, state agencies, county agencies, and Tribal governments to participate as Cooperating Agencies beginning in March and June of 2021. The Cooperating Agency relationship ensured that the BLM engaged and considered these agencies' comments when making project decisions and included information required to satisfy the associated environmental and public review processes. The Cooperating Agencies were responsible for assisting the BLM with identifying issues to be addressed, providing associated data, assisting with development of alternatives, and providing review and feedback on the NEPA document.

#### **4.7 NEPA Amendments in the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023**

The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (Public Law No. 118-5, Section 321(e)(1)(B), 137 Stat. 10 and 41-42) amended several NEPA provisions. The NEPA amendments included a maximum page limits and review timelines for EISs. In particular, the maximum page limits to 150 pages unless an agency's action is of "extraordinary complexity," in which case the maximum limits are 300 pages of text. The 2020 NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1508.1(v) define a "page" as 500 words, not including "explanatory maps, diagrams, graphs, tables, and other means of graphically displaying quantitative or geospatial information." The BLM determined between the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA that the GLWP is of "extraordinary complexity," thus warranting an EIS of not more than 300-pages of text, not including citations or appendices. The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA is less than 300 pages of text, exclusive of maps, diagrams, graphs and tables. The BLM in evaluating the need for utility corridor modifications, reviewed the 2009 WVEC Approved RMPA and supplemented it with site-specific analysis for the effects of the modified corridors, consistent with 42 U.S.C. § 4336b. While utilizing the 2009 WVEC analysis, the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA took into account the site-specific environmental setting and impacts where the modifications would occur which included the incorporating relevant Interagency Operating Procedures into the EMMs (ROD Appendix F).

#### **4.8 Conservation and Landscape Health Final Rule**

##### **4.8.1 Considering Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)**

On June 10, 2024, the BLM's Conservation and Landscape Health final rule (rule) (also referred to as the "Public Lands Rule") (89 FR 40308) went into effect. The GLWP Notice of Intent for public scoping was published in the Federal Register on May 2, 2022 (87 FR 25658); Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Resource Management Plan Amendment was published in the Federal Register on May 26, 2023 (88 FR 34180); and Notice of Availability for the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendments was published in the Federal Register on June 14, 2024 (89 FR 50629).

Between the Notice of Intent (May 2, 2022) and Notice of Availability for the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA (June 14, 2024), the BLM received two Area of Critical Environmental (ACEC) nominations within the GWLP

project area, the 58,000 acre Cactus Springs ACEC which was nominated in the course of the variance process for the Bonanza Solar Project on September 22, 2022, and the 849,170 acre Esmeralda/Fish Lake ACEC which was nominated in a public comment to the GLWP Draft EIS/RMPA submitted on August 23, 2023. During public scoping in 2022, the BLM did not announce that it was accepting ACEC nominations. The limited plan amendments that were announced in the scoping period were those necessary to meet the project's purpose and need. The evaluation and designation of ACECs, on the other hand, was outside the scope of this planning process (43 CFR 1610.4-1 to 1610.4-9).

The new rule codified existing policies regarding the identification and consideration of areas nominated for an ACEC designation. The BLM evaluates ACEC nominations through the land use planning process, including land use plan amendments for which ACEC evaluation and designation are within the scope of the amendment (43 CFR 1610.7-2(b)). Although ACEC evaluation and designation are not within the scope of the land use plan amendments associated with this decision, the rule provides for consideration of ACEC nominations received outside of the planning process (43 CFR 1610.7-2(i)). Under that provision of the rule, the BLM has discretion to determine when it will evaluate whether the area has relevant and important values, and needs special management attention, including by deferring the evaluation to an upcoming planning process (43 CFR 1610.7-2(i)). Once the BLM undertakes that evaluation, and if the area has relevant and important values and needs special management attention, the State Director shall, at their discretion, either initiate the planning process, or provide appropriate temporary management consistent with the applicable resource management plan (43 CFR 1610.7-2(i)(1)(i)-(ii)).

The policies that were in place at the time the ACEC nominations were received were BLM Manual 1613, 1988 and Instruction Memorandum IM-2023-013. The BLM's review was also consistent with the rule's provision for responding to ACEC nominations made outside the planning process even though the rule was promulgated after the ACEC nominations were received and evaluated. Similarly, the BLM's process was consistent with the updates to BLM Manual 1613 which was published on August 8, 2024, and that revised manual provisions for evaluating ACEC nominations outside the planning process, even though the updated manual was published after the ACEC nominations were received and evaluated.

The BLM has prepared relevance and importance values reports for both the Cactus Springs and Esmeralda/Fish Lake ACEC nominations, and as part of those reports has reviewed whether and what temporary special management attention is needed. In the case of the Cactus Springs ACEC nomination, the relevance & importance values report (BLM 2024a) identified interim special management attention specific to solar energy development (e.g., vegetation retention requirements, grading limitation requirements), which does not apply to the GLWP. In the case of the Esmeralda/Fish Lake ACEC nomination, the relevance and important values report (BLM 2024d) concluded that no interim special management attention was needed.

In the case of both ACEC nominations, the State Director has determined to defer any further evaluation of the presence of relevant and important values and the need for special management attention associated with these ACEC nominations to a future resource management plan revision process (43 CFR 1610.7-2(i)).

#### **4.8.2 Considering Ecosystem Resilience**

The purpose of 43 CFR Part 6100 is to promote the use of conservation to ensure ecosystem resilience and prevent permanent impairment or unnecessary or undue degradation of public lands (43 CFR 6101.1). It defines ecosystem resilience as "the capacity of ecosystems (e.g., old-growth forests and woodlands, sagebrush core areas) to maintain or regain their fundamental composition, structure, and function

(including maintaining habitat connectivity and providing ecosystem services) when affected by disturbances such as drought, wildfire, and nonnative invasive species" (43 CFR 6101.4(d)). According to the rule, "unnecessary or undue degradation means harm to resources or values that is not necessary to accomplish a use's stated goals or is excessive or disproportionate to the proposed action or an existing disturbance" (43 CFR 6101.4(aa)). The rule's definition of sustained yield provides that preventing permanent impairment means that renewable resources are not permanently depleted (43 CFR 6101.4(z)). As the term is used in this ROD, "permanent" means lasting or intended to last indefinitely without change.

To support ecosystem health and resilience, the rule provides the BLM with tools to help it protect intact landscapes, restore degraded habitat, and make informed management decisions. An intact landscape is "a relatively unfragmented landscape free of local conditions that could permanently or significantly disrupt, impair, or degrade the landscape's composition, structure, or function." (43 CFR 6101.4(j)). An intact landscape is not necessarily a pristine landscape without any built features or other land uses. The rule allows for active management or other uses consistent with multiple use and sustained yield principles. In other words, the rule does not prohibit land uses that impair ecosystem resilience; it encourages avoidance as a general matter and requires an explanation if impairment cannot be avoided (43 CFR 6102.5(b)(1) and (b)(8)). The rule clarifies throughout that its provisions should be implemented in a manner that supports land use planning decisions and objectives that emphasize specific uses in specific areas. For example, designated West-wide Energy Corridors (WWEC) were identified by the BLM as areas that are suitable for large transmission lines or pipelines, subject to site-specific analysis of proposed projects and required conditions to avoid or minimize adverse impacts.

The Selected Alternative will construct, operate, maintain, and decommission an approximately 488-mile system of new 525 kilovolt (kV), 345-kV, 230-kV, and 120-kV overhead electric transmission facilities, substations, and ancillary project components between Las Vegas and Reno. Because of the linear nature of the Selected Alternative, the resources and ecosystems potentially affected by the Selected Alternative are diverse. Vegetation landcover types that the Selected Alternative crosses include scrubland/shrubland (approximately 94 percent), conifer forest and woodland (approximately three percent), and playa, riparian, and wetland areas (approximately one percent). The remaining area is made up of several land cover types including cliff/rock outcrops, urban areas, mining areas, desert pavement, barren lands, and recently burned areas. There are 17 movement/migration corridors for big game species, three wintering ranges for bighorn sheep, and two wintering ranges for mule deer. Populations of general wildlife are considered stable and well-distributed and show a high resiliency to habitat disturbance.

The Selected Alternative may impact wildlife species proposed for federal listing and federally listed wildlife and plant species under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, the effects to special status species that may occur within the analysis area were evaluated in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. The construction of the Selected Alternative may impact these federally listed and proposed species and special status species. These impacts would include habitat removal, increased noise and human presence, the introduction and spread of invasive plant species and noxious weeds, collisions with vehicles and powerlines, and increases in local anthropogenic disturbance, which may result in physiological and behavioral changes, including avoidance of affected areas, throughout the construction phase. The addition of transmission line structures to the landscape may increase predation on federally listed, federally proposed, and special status species by creating nesting and foraging opportunities for species that hunt from perches. During operation and maintenance activities, habitat loss from the Selected Alternative, when added to existing anthropogenic barriers (e.g., human activities, built environments),

would result in species continuing to stay away from the Selected Alternative ROW area, which could reduce genetic connectivity between species populations. However, where existing anthropogenic barriers are not prevalent and with the implementation of EMMs and restoration of disturbed areas following construction, it is anticipated that sufficient intact habitat would remain within and adjacent to the GLWP, and plant and wildlife species would reinhabit the ROW area. Therefore, the Selected Alternative would not result in unnecessary or undue degradation of federally listed and special status species plant and wildlife habitat.

Based on the BO rendered by the USFWS, with the implementation of the EMMs (ROD Appendix F), the compensatory mitigation for the Bi-State sage-grouse and Mojave desert tortoise, the anti-perching/nesting mitigation measures, and the terms and conditions and reasonable and prudent measures of the BO, the Selected Alternative is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any federally listed or proposed species. With respect to the special status species, the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA determination is that the Selected Alternative is not likely to result in a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability of any of the special status species within the ROW areas.

Approximately 219 miles of the Selected Alternative ROW will be within 600 feet of the Proponent's existing transmission lines, approximately 281 miles of the Selected Alternative ROW will be within designated WVECs, and approximately 99 miles will be within 0.5 mile of highways (US and Nevada State highways). Approximately 28 miles will cross recently burned areas (wildfires since 2004 to the present) and approximately 94 miles of the Selected Alternative will traverse privately owned land, Census Designated Places, and incorporated municipalities. In total, approximately 440 miles of the approximately 488 miles of the Selected Alternative will pass through landscapes with these types of activities, land uses, and conditions that currently exist, and which have already served to disrupt the landscape's composition, structure, and/or function. Other activities and conditions also occur within or adjacent to the Selected Alternative ROW such as mineral exploration and mining operations, livestock grazing, vegetation management, and recreation (e.g., hunting, OHV use). Ongoing activities to help to maintain or restore ecosystem resilience include range improvements, wildland fire management activities, stream restoration, and programs to minimize the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plant species.

The implementation of the Selected Alternative will disrupt, impair, or degrade some of the GLPW area landscapes' composition, structure, or function. However, development under the Selected Alternative includes avoidance and minimization measures, interim and final reclamation of disturbed areas, and compensatory mitigation. With these requirements, the Selected Alternative will not result in permanent impairment of ecosystem resilience or otherwise cause unnecessary or undue degradation of public lands. As previously noted in Section 1.6, a reasonable range of transmission, substation, and microwave site alternatives were analyzed in the Draft EIS/RMPA and Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. The Final EIS/Proposed RMPA analyzed 12 transmission, 5 substation, and 2 microwave facility alternatives in detail in addition to the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. An additional 22 transmission alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis for the reasons described in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. The development, evaluation, and ultimate decision to approve the Selected Alternative involved balancing the tradeoffs between different natural and cultural resources, social, and economic impacts and values and preventing to the extent practical any unnecessary or undue degradation to land resources and values. The decision also reflects the previous consideration already given to the potential for impacts weighed against the benefits of facilitating electric transmission facilities when designating the WVECs.

By implementing comprehensive avoidance, minimization, reclamation, and compensatory mitigation measures, the Selected Alternative aims to prevent further degradation of the ecosystems within the



GLWP area. Moreover, compensatory mitigation has the potential to conserve fragmented areas of quality habitat or contribute to the improvement of better-quality habitat outside of the project boundaries. The combination of these efforts ensures that the GLWP will not interfere with the natural processes needed to regain ecosystem resilience, resulting in a net neutral effect on the overall ecological integrity of the region. I conclude that the avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation measures incorporated into this ROD comports with the direction in the rule that the BLM consider opportunities to improve and avoid making decisions that will impair ecosystem resilience.

The rule also reiterates the importance and need for meaningful consultation with Native American Tribes during the decision-making process, including by allowing them to serve as cooperating agencies (43 CFR 6102.5(b)(4)-(5)). For the GLWP, government-to-government consultation between the BLM and federally recognized Native American Tribes is ongoing. The BLM invited Native American Tribes to public workshops, facilitated government-to-government consultation, coordinated GLWP meetings with Native American Tribes, and presented GLWP updates to Tribal Councils. Additionally, the BLM has engaged with Native American Tribes through the NHPA Section 106 process, including consultation, use of Tribal monitors during fieldwork, and archaeological site visits with Tribal representatives. Three of the Tribes participated as Cooperating Agencies on the GLWP. Although consultation and coordination continue with Native American Tribes, a historic context was developed based on the Class I existing information inventory to identify archaeological/historical sites, ethnographic overviews, and TCP studies. This effort identified places significant to Tribes as reported in ethnographic literature and provides a background and a historic setting for Native American religious concerns identified during this process.

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## **CHAPTER 5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **5.1 Pre-NOI Public Workshops**

The BLM determined that local community outreach prior to the publishing of the NOI would provide opportunities for the public to learn about the proposed GLWP and to ask the BLM and the Proponent questions early in the planning process. A series of in-person and virtual public input workshops were held in June 2021, November 2021, and February 2022. The workshop format was designed to promote informal conversations about the GLWP and encourage the public to have their concerns considered prior to the EIS scoping comment period. In total, 151 people signed in at the three public input workshops. Many of the participants expressed concerns regarding potential impacts to the TUSK, the Mojave desert tortoise and other sensitives species, socioeconomic impacts to rural communities (specifically Beatty), NHTs, and impacts to scenic/visual quality. Additional concerns were related to the amount of public lands with current renewable energy applications and the effect that the GLWP would have on supporting those developments.

### **5.2 Public Scoping**

Public scoping notifications were sent to 298 individuals, organizations, agency representatives, Native American Tribes, and posted on the BLM National NEPA Register website. The scoping comment period was held from May 2, 2022, through June 2, 2022. In-person public scoping meetings were held in North Las Vegas, Beatty, Tonopah, and Reno. In total, 97 people signed in at the four public scoping meetings. Many of the comments were similar to the input received during the earlier public input workshops (refer to Section 5.1).

### **5.3 Draft EIS/RMPA Comment Meetings**

During the 90-day comment period for the Draft EIS/RMPA, the BLM held in-person public comment meetings in North Las Vegas, Beatty, and Reno as well as two virtual meetings to accept comments on the Draft EIS/RMPA. Email notices were also sent to participants who provided their contact information at the public input workshops and the public scoping meetings. In total, 194 people signed in at the five public meetings. Comments received on the Draft EIS/RMPA and from the public comment meetings have been compiled and responses have been provided in Appendix Z of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

### **5.4 Governor's Consistency Review**

The FLPMA requires the Secretary of the Interior to:

. . . coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use planning and management programs of other federal departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the lands are located (43 USC § 1712(c)(9)).

It further directs the Secretary of the Interior to "assure that consideration is given to those state, local and tribal plans that are germane in the development of land use plans for public lands" and "assist in resolving, to the extent practical, inconsistencies between federal and non-federal Government plans." Regulations implementing FLPMA, 43 CFR § 1610.3-2(e), generally require a 60-day period for Governor's consistency review. The purpose of the review is to identify inconsistencies of the RMPA with state and

local plans, programs, and policies. On June 14, 2024, the BLM initiated the period of Governor's consistency review for the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA in accordance with FLPMA. On July 25, 2024, the BLM received a written response from the Governor's office and no inconsistencies were identified (ROD Appendix A).

## CHAPTER 6. PROTESTS AND COMMENTS ON THE FINAL EIS/PROPOSED RMPA

Pursuant to the BLM's land use planning regulations in 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the proposed resource management plan amendment planning process for the GLWP and who has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the planning decision may protest the approval of the proposed RMPA analyzed in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA within 30 days from date the NOA of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA in the *Federal Register*.

The BLM Nevada State Office released the GLWP Final EIS/Proposed RMPAs on June 17, 2024. The BLM received six unique protest letter submissions during the subsequent 30-day protest period. The planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2 outline the requirements for filing a valid protest. The BLM evaluated all protest letters to determine which protest letters were complete and timely, and which persons have standing to protest. All six letters were complete, timely, and were from parties who had standing to protest. Four of the protest letters contained valid protest issues. The BLM reviewed the letters and identified the valid protest issues. The BLM has resolved all protest issues and responded to each protesting party for each protest issue that was timely raised by a party that had standing to protest, had been previously raised in comments during the planning process to the extent it was possible to do so, and was germane to the planning process. Further, the BLM has determined the Proposed RMPA complies with applicable law, regulation, and policy. The BLM has prepared a Protest Resolution Report which analyzes each unique or summarized protest issue statement. The Director's Protest Resolution Report is available on the BLM website at:

[http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning\\_overview/protest\\_resolution/protestreports.html](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution/protestreports.html).

The BLM published the NOA for the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA in the *Federal Register* on June 14, 2024, which initiated a 30-day public protest period for the Proposed RMPA and a 30-day availability period for the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. Although the availability period is not a formal comment period, the BLM received 9 submissions providing input. These comments were generally similar to and consistent with the comments received during the development of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. Some comment submissions were substantive and provided specific input, including concerns regarding specific impacts, preference for various transmission alternatives, and perceived deficiencies of the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. The comments were considered to determine if they have merit, such as if they identify significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bear upon the BLM Preferred Alternative consistent with 40 CFR 1502.9 (d) (ii). The BLM considered the comments prior to executing this ROD and they have been added to the Administrative Record for the GLWP. No new issues were raised in the comments that were not already addressed in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA.

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## **CHAPTER 7. AVAILABILITY OF THE ROD**

Electronic copies of this ROD are available on the BLM's National NEPA Register at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2017391/510>. Paper and electronic copies may be viewed at the following location:

BLM Nevada State Office  
1340 Financial Boulevard  
Reno, Nevada 89502-7147

## FINAL DOI ACTION

It is my decision to approve issuance of ROWs<sup>6</sup> by the DOI federal ROW agencies to the Proponent for the Selected Alternative, subject to terms, conditions, stipulations, mitigation and compensatory mitigation, HPTP, NAGPRA POA, EMMs, BO, and the Paleontological Resources Mitigation Plan provided in this ROD. My approval of this decision constitutes the final decision of the DOI federal ROW agencies, which consists of the BLM, BIA, and NPS and, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR § 4.410(a)(3), is not subject to appeal under DOI regulations at 43 CFR Part 4, allowing the federal ROW agencies to issue their respective authorizations.

This decision also approves the RMP amendments included in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA on BLM-administered lands.

This decision constitutes the final decision of the DOI and is effective immediately.

Approved by:



Laura Daniel-Davis

Acting Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Date: SEP 09 2024

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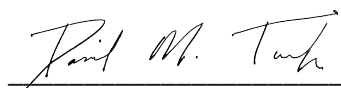
<sup>6</sup> As noted previously in this ROD, NV Energy has received the consent of the Walker River Paiute Tribe to a right-of-way across a portion of the Walker River Indian Reservation, but NV Energy has yet to receive consent for the remaining portion of the right-of-way. Consistent with 25 C.F.R. § 169.124(d), my decision authorizes the BIA to grant the right-of-way for the portion of the Walker River Indian Reservation that the Tribe has consented to. Once Tribal consent to the right-of-way across the rest of the Reservation is granted, the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs will issue a separate decision based on this ROD authorizing the right-of-way across the rest of the Walker River Indian Reservation.



## FINAL DOE/NNSA ACTION

The DOE/NNSA has approved an easement for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of the Selected Alternative as described in the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. This decision is subject to the associated mitigation measures adopted by this ROD. This decision to grant an easement only applies to NNSA-administered lands and does not authorize construction to begin and does not create any right or easement, nor establish eminent domain, across any non-NNSA-administered lands. The NNSA is adopting the Final EIS/Proposed RMPA and will ensure implementation of applicable mitigation measures for GLWP actions on NNSA-administered lands.

Approved By:



David M. Turk  
Deputy Secretary of Energy

Date: September 9, 2024

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