

APPENDIX K1

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COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F1 Department of Defense – Department of the Air Force

comment@boardmantoemingway.com

From: Envirolytical - B2H <info@enviroltical.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2015 5:07 PM
To: comment@boardmantoemingway.com
Subject: New Communication: Pursuant to 32 CFR 989.3, this office has conducted a review of the subject DEIS. The Air Force Civil Engineering Center (AFCEC) is pleased that the Bureau of Land Management, the project proponents,

Gary Munsterman <gary.munsterman@us.af.mil>
https://el2.enviroltical.com/communication/view/103180
Pursuant to 32 CFR 989.3, this office has conducted a review of the subject DEIS. The Air Force Civil Engineering Center (AFCEC) is pleased that the Bureau of Land Management, the project proponents, and agents have addressed potential impacts on military training which occurs within the region of influence. As indicated on page 3-390-391, the preferred and proposed alternatives intersect a number of military training routes which transit the area. Many of the subject routes are authorized for military use by the Federal Aviation Administration from 100 above ground level (AGL). Because of the low visibility provided by transmission lines, the proposed mitigation identified in Section 3.2.6.6 (page 3-424) is appropriate in order to address the safety hazard to both military as well potentially fire management and wildlife survey aviators transiting the region. The identified mitigation would require towers and/or conductors and/or shield wires be marked with high visibility devices (marker balls) where required by government agencies with jurisdiction (i.e. FAA).
The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) (14 CFR Part 77) and the Oregon Department of Aviation (OAR 738-070-60) have jurisdictional authority over any construction or alteration that is more than 200 AGL at the site, requiring the submission of a notice to the FAA and Oregon Aviation. FAA may also request notification. Section 3.2.6.6 suggests that all project towers would be less than 200 AGL. FAA Advisory Circular AC 70-7460-2K clarifies that the filing requirement also applies to transmission lines with a catenary greater than 200 AGL above low water such as canyon crossings along the project corridor.
AFCEC suggest that the proposed mitigation measure be modified to require the proponent submit transmission line construction plans for corridor segments which intersect with military training routes to the FAA for an aeronautical evaluation and determination of appropriate marking requirements. Such a modified mitigation measure would assure that the FAA makes an appropriate determination, with Air Force participation in the standard FAA obstruction evaluation process.
This evaluation applies to primarily to MTRs assigned to Air Force units and not to affected routes assigned to the Department of Navy in the vicinity of NWS Boardman. Thank you for the opportunity to comment

F1a

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F1a

F1b

F1c

Comment noted.
For both municipal and private air facilities, the FAA requires utility line separation from runways and horizontal and conical zones for the safety of the planes and helicopters using the airports. To determine if the B2H Project would be a hazard to these operations, the Applicant would conduct an obstruction evaluation/airport airspace analysis in coordination with the FAA. Refer to Section 3.2.9 for further detail.
See response to Comment F1b.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F2

Department of Defense – Department of the Navy

300461

comment@boardmantoehemingway.com

From: MCARDLE, Richard L NAVFAC NW, AM <rick.mcardle@navy.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2015 12:11 PM
To: comment@boardmantoehemingway.com; Tamara Gertsch
Cc: Nortier, Michael K CAPT CO NAS Whidbey Is, N00; Tickle, Ronald E CIV OASN (EI&E), OPDASN EI&E; Senska, Matthew C CTR OPNAV, N45; Foskey, Karen CIV OPNAV, N45; Taplin, Aundrea E CIV OASN (EI&E), OAGC EI&E; Bishop, Laura E LCDR RLISO NW, BANGOR; Malik, Joan M CDR COMPACFLT, N465JMM; Burt, Amy E CIV NAVFAC NW, OP3E21; Mosher, John G CIV COMPACFLT, N465JM; Bianchi, Michael C NAVFAC NW, PRW4; Phillips, John R CIV NAVFAC NW, PRW4; Campbell, Kendall CIV NAVFAC NW, PRW4; Stanton, Angela M CIV NAVFAC NW, OP3B; Sodano, Gerald T CTR NAS Whidbey Is, N32; lolavera, Patricia R CIV NAVFAC NW, AM; rick.mcardle@gmail.com; MacDowell, Ken CONT COMPACFLT, N77/N465KM; Mathes, Kent R CIV NAS Whidbey Is., N00RM; Glazier, Nancy D CIV NAVFAC NW OGC, 09C; Conlow, Judy A CIV NAVFAC NW, 09C; Kirby, Tracy D LCDR COMPACFLT, N465TK
Subject: U.S. Navy Comments to B2H Draft EIS
Attachments: Navy Comments B2H DEIS w Attachments 150319.pdf

Tamara:

Attached are the Navy's comments on BLM's Draft EIS for the B2H transmission project. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the DEIS process and to provide these comments. Please contact me anytime if you have questions or would like to discuss Navy-related aspects of the B2H proposal.

Respectfully,
 Rick

Rick McArdle
 Community Planning Liaison Officer
 Northwest Training Range Complex
 (360) 257-1413
 rick.mcardle@navy.mil

NAS Whidbey Island
 3730 Charles Porter Ave.
 Bldg 385, Room 127
 Oak Harbor, WA 98278-5000

COMMENT(S)**RESPONSE(S)****F2****Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)**

300461

U.S. Navy Comments

on

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

for

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project

19 March 2015

Introduction:

These comments are provided to the U. S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as NEPA lead federal agency for the Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) transmission line project proposed by Idaho Power Company (IPC), in response to BLM's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) issued 19 December 2014. The Navy is a major landowner in Morrow County, Oregon, near the north terminus of the proposed transmission line. Authorization from the U.S. Navy would be required for project features that would be located on or cross over lands that are under its jurisdiction or that underlay designated military airspace. The Navy's Purpose and Need for action on IPC's proposal is described in the DEIS Section 1.2.4.

Navy Mission Background:

The Navy owns the approximately 47,000-acre Navy Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) located just south of the town of Boardman, in Morrow County, Oregon. Associated with this land asset is a much larger area of Restricted Airspace (R-5701), Military Operations Area (R-5706), and Military Training Routes (MTR's) designated by the FAA for military training. This combination of land asset and airspace co-located with and surrounding NWSTF Boardman represents a unique and strategically important training venue for the Department of Defense (DoD). Administered by Naval Air Station Whidbey Island as part of the Northwest Training Range Complex (NWTRC), NWSTF Boardman and the associated airspace provide air and land-related training opportunities to a wide range of DoD entities. It is the only safe low altitude tactical training (LATT) area available for junior naval aviators flying out of Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island. It is used for training by Oregon National Guard (ORNG) air and ground units from throughout the state of Oregon. NWSTF Boardman also supports training requirements of the U.S. Air Force Reserve (Washington-based units) and the restricted airspace is used by DoD contractors to conduct Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) testing and ORNG UAS training.

Navy Comments to B2H DEIS
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Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

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Navy Position on Proposed B2H Route Alternatives

The DEIS describes three route alternatives for the Morrow-Umatilla segment of the B2H project: Horn Butte Alternative, Longhorn Alternative, and Longhorn Variation Alternative. All three of these alternatives occur in the immediate vicinity of NWSTF Boardman. During BLM’s preparation of the DEIS, the Navy evaluated those alternatives for potential impacts to the air and ground training activities at NWSTF Boardman and provided to BLM and IPC its concerns and preferences with regard to those alternatives. The Navy’s position, including general evaluation criteria, was provided in a letter dated 23 April 2013 from CAPT Nortier, Commanding Officer NAS Whidbey Island, to BLM (attached). Additional clarity of the Navy’s position on an “East of Bombing Range Road” (EBRR) route was provided in a letter dated 21 June 2013 from CAPT Nortier to IPC (attached). That position can be summarized as follows:

Proposed Action / Horn Butte Alternative (“Southern Option”): Least operational impact to training; acceptable to Navy.

Longhorn Alternative (“Eastern Option”): Greatest operational impact; unacceptable to Navy.

Longhorn Variation (“East of Bombing Range Road Option”): Assuming the height and locational constraints described in the 21 June 2013 letter can be met, operational impacts would be mitigated to a level acceptable to the Navy.

With regard to these three alternatives, the Navy’s position is unchanged and we have no additional comments to provide on the DEIS.

In addition to the Navy’s input, DoD provided its position on routing alternatives in a 20 November 2014 letter to BLM from Mr. Michael Aimone, Executive Director of the DoD Siting Clearinghouse (attached). DoD’s position is consistent with the Navy’s.

West of Bombing Range Road (WBRR) Potential Alternative Route

During the course of discussions in public venues and in direct discussions with IPC representatives over the past several months, the Navy has learned of an additional potential route alternative that has not yet been formally proposed and is therefore not addressed in the DEIS. The so-called West of Bombing Range Road (WBRR) route would parallel the Longhorn Variation Alternative, with at least a portion being located wholly on Navy-owned NWSTF land west of Bombing Range Road.

In February 2014 the Navy granted IPC a Right of Entry to its property along Bombing Range Road to assess the feasibility of a “possible route” (IPC letter dated 13 December 2013) for the B2H project. Land, topography, and biological and cultural resource surveys were completed, and on 12 January 2015 IPC submitted to the Navy a formal request for a utility easement 10 miles long by 200 feet wide.

Navy Comments to B2H DEIS
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F2a

F2a [Comment noted.

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F2 Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

F2b The exact route location, tower height, easement width, and relationship to existing utilities are still unclear. However, it is apparent from information received to date that the WBRR route would require an easement on Navy land, including land currently unencumbered by existing utilities. The full effects of the easement, particularly the degradation of the military training mission at NWSTF, are currently being analyzed. Beyond those mission impacts, a number of unresolved concerns/issues have been identified:

F2c 1. Reasonable Alternatives Test (SECNAVINST 11011.47C) Three alternative routes and one route variant are described in the DEIS, none of which would be included unless they were considered generally viable to meet the B2H project objectives. Until/unless it is demonstrated that all of those alternatives are not "reasonable", and that the WBRR is the only alternative that is "reasonable", encumbering Navy land with a new B2H easement would be inconsistent with this SECNAV instruction. This is particularly true for the Proposed Action and the Horn Butte (Southern) Alternative, the routes preferred by the Navy and a number of local Ag landowners and Morrow County officials. No compelling arguments have been provided for not choosing one of those southern routes. They appear viable, reasonable, and would cause the least impact to the military training mission.

F2d 2. Washington Ground Squirrel ESA Listing NWSTF Boardman represents the largest remaining contiguous area of shrub-steppe habitat in the region, which supports a number of special status wildlife species. Most prominent of those is the Washington Ground Squirrel (WGS), which is a candidate for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Through the course of planning for future training activities and preparation of the Boardman EIS, the Navy has consulted extensively with USFWS regarding impacts to and protection of the WGS on NWSTF. A WBRR route for B2H would introduce additional habitat disturbance and WGS impact that would need to be fully described and analyzed in the B2H DEIS Section 3.2.4.6 Environmental Consequences, including the effects on the USFWS consultations with the Navy with regard to possible ESA listing. If the B2H project triggers an ESA listing, future training activities on NWSTF could be further constrained.

F2e 3. Cumulative Impacts A key concern of the Navy and other local stakeholders is the continuing introduction of transmission corridors to accommodate requirements of power generators, consumers, and overall grid functionality. Specifically in the Morrow/Umatilla area, proposed wind energy projects will ultimately require transmission to the existing grid beyond what can be accommodated by the B2H project. These future needs should be anticipated and described in the Cumulative Effects section of the B2H EIS so the impacts of various routing options can be fully determined. Without this "bigger picture" look at transmission needs, incremental consideration of individual transmission projects will likely result in continued pressure to create new corridors, with greater overall impacts to property owners.

F2f 4. Weapons Danger Zones (WDZ) and Surface Danger Zones (SDZ) For military training facilities such as NWSTF Boardman, WDZ's and SDZ's are mathematically predicted, three-dimensional areas where projectiles from ground-delivered or aircraft-delivered

Navy Comments to B2H DEIS Page 3 of 5

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F2b Comments on the Draft EIS expressed that not enough information was provided in the Draft EIS to enable the reviewers to understand where impacts would occur and where mitigation would be applied to reduce impacts. Chapter 2 has been revised to clarify the B2H Project description as relates to NWSTF Boardman and to reflect ongoing coordination with the Navy. Chapter 3 has been expanded to provide more information about the resources, mitigation applied to reduce impacts, and residual impacts on resources along each alternative route by segment. More specifically, Sections 3.2.6 and 3.2.9 have been expanded to include discussion of potential effects of the easement on Navy land.

F2c Comment noted. Refer to the discussion of routing options in Sections 2.1.1.3 and 2.5.2 of the Final EIS.

F2d Comment noted. Section 3.2.4.6 has been revised to include analysis and discussion of the impacts of the West of Bombing Range Road Alternative Route on Washington ground squirrel and its habitat and discussion of the USFWS consultation with the Navy regarding Washington ground squirrel on NWSTF Boardman.

F2e The Final EIS has been revised to expand discussion of ongoing coordination with NWSTF Boardman and the design modifications being incorporated in to the B2H Project to accommodate Navy and FAA regulations. See Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1.3 (Recommended Route-Variation Options) for further detail regarding the proposed alternative routes along Bombing Range Road. In addition, Sections 3.2.6, 3.2.9, and 3.3 have been expanded to include discussion of potential impact to NWSTF Boardman.

F2f See response to Comment F2b.

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F2 Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

F2f ordnance could be encountered. They are essentially danger zones established to protect the safety of training participants and the public at large. Extensive portions of NWSTF are mapped as WDZ's and SDZ's, including areas along the east property perimeter that could conflict with a WBRR transmission route. If that route is added as an alternative, Section 3.2.12 Public Health and Safety of the DEIS should be expanded to address this issue.

F2g **5. Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)**
As a result of decades of military training on NWSTF, unexploded ordnance is routinely encountered on the property. The Navy has strict protocols for locating and disposing of UXO, as well as safety briefings and warning signage for range users and visitors. Any ground activity, particularly construction activities such as a WBRR transmission project, would require an extensive UXO clearance and disposal effort. If that route is added as an alternative, Section 3.2.12 Public Health and Safety of the DEIS should be expanded to address this issue.

F2h **6. Research Natural Areas**
The Navy and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have a cooperative agreement for over 5,000 acres on NWSTF Boardman to be managed as Research Natural Areas (RNAs). The RNAs are focused primarily on the conservation of relic populations of native grasslands and are used for ecological studies. A WBRR route would potentially cause ground disturbance and/or conflict with the management objectives in those areas. If that route is added as an alternative, Chapter 3.2.6 Land Use, Agriculture, Recreation, Transportation of the DEIS should be expanded to address this issue.

F2i **7. Conflicts with Existing Utilities**
Both the Longhorn Variant and potential WBRR Alternative would be located in the Bombing Range Road corridor. In addition to the road itself a number of overhead and underground utilities already exist within approximately 200 feet of each other in that area: BPA transmission lines, UEC transmission and distribution lines, natural gas transmission pipeline, fiber optics cable, and irrigation water main. Depending on the details of the B2H design, either The Longhorn Variant (east of the road) or WBRR would likely require lateral separation, relocation, or reconstruction of existing facilities. This is particularly true if the BRR corridor is to accommodate the additional transmission needs of proposed wind energy projects proposed to the south (see above discussion of Cumulative Impacts). The B2H EIS should address potential conflicts with existing utilities, including the secondary impacts of relocation/reconstruction.

F2j **8. Historical, Cultural, Archaeological Resources**
The Boardman EIS prepared for military training activities at NWSTF Boardman includes a description of significant historical, cultural, and archaeological resources unique to the property. A WBRR route would potentially impact these resources. If that route is added as an alternative, Chapter 3.2.8 Cultural Resources of the B2H DEIS should be expanded to address this issue.

F2g [See response to Comment F2b.

F2h [See responses to Comments F2b and F2d.

F2i [See response to Comment F2b.

F2j [These data have been obtained and integrated into the Final EIS.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F2 Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

F2k

9. Native American Resources

Preparation of the Boardman EIS included consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and the Nez Perce Tribe. CTUIR conducted a traditional properties survey on NWSTF, and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between CTUIR and the Navy is being prepared to address potential impacts and mitigation measures related to future military training activities on the property. If WBRR route is added as an alternative route for B2H, Chapter 3.2.8 Cultural Resources of the B2H DEIS should be expanded to address this issue, including consistency of the project with the MOA.

Though not yet formally proposed, the prospect of a WBRR route alternative was addressed in DoD's 20 November 2014 letter to BLM. In recognition of the issues described above, that letter stated in part, "... for a number of significant operational and environmental concerns, DoD considers this alternative [WBRR] to be unacceptable and would likely not support an easement request by IPC to cross Navy property."

F2l

Summary:

For the WBRR potential alternative route the B2H DEIS is insufficient to meet NEPA compliance and satisfy the Navy's requirements for consideration of an easement. If IPC chooses to formally introduce this new alternative, a number of additional issues (see above) would need to be addressed and fully analyzed, either in the Final EIS or in a separate NEPA document.

Attachments (3)

Navy Comments to B2H DEIS
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F2k

This alternative route is being analyzed for the Final EIS. Additional cultural resources information from the traditional cultural properties survey has been incorporated to the extent the information is made available.

F2l

Based on comments received by the BLM on the Draft EIS, collaboration with the counties, and on further discussion between the Applicant and landowners, a number of recommended routing options were incorporated into the network of alternative routes analyzed for the Final EIS. Refer to Sections 2.1.1.3 and 2.5.2. Analysis of the alternative routes is reported throughout Chapter 3 and summarized in Tables 2-18 through 2-35. Refer also to the response to comment F2b.

ATTACHMENT

F2

Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
 NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND
 3730 NORTH CHARLES PORTER AVENUE
 OAK HARBOR, WASHINGTON 98278-5000

300461

IN REPLY REFER TO :
 3700
 Ser N00/0503
 23 Apr 13

Ms. Natalie Cooper
 Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
 Interim National Project Manager
 Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Project
 1387 S. Vinnell Way
 Boise, ID 83709

Dear Ms. Cooper:

SUBJECT: OPERATIONAL INPUT AND PREFERENCE REGARDING B2H PROPOSED
 ROUTES IVO NAVAL WEAPONS SYSTEMS TRAINING FACILITY
 (NWSTF) BOARDMAN AND SURROUNDING SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE
 (SUA)

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island and the Northwest Training Range Complex appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Bureau of Land Management on the proposed Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) transmission line project. This submission summarizes the results of an analysis that examined the operational impacts of the B2H transmission line project on Naval Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman and associated Special Use Airspace (SUA). The analysis examined multiple transmission-line project route options and rated their operational impacts to training and readiness activities conducted at and around NWSTF Boardman.

The following decision considerations and constraints for power transmission line route options were established and shared with power companies to assist in maximizing the continued utilization of, while minimizing the impact to Low Altitude Training (LAT) capability within, NWSTF Boardman and surrounding established and proposed SUA:

- a. Minimize new power transmission lines and tower obstructions to the greatest extent possible.
- b. In instances where new power transmission lines are proposed, have them parallel existing lines to the greatest extent possible, to minimize new obstructions, and build them no higher than the height of established towers and lines.
- c. In instances where new lines are proposed within R-5701 or the proposed NE MOA that do not parallel existing lines, limit tower and line heights to no higher than 100 feet Above Ground Level (AGL).

ATTACHMENT

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Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

3700
Ser N00/0503
23 Apr 13

d. In instances where new lines are proposed on the perimeter or along the border of R-5701 or the proposed NE MOA, limit tower and line heights to no higher than 170 feet AGL.

e. In instances where new lines are proposed that will cross existing aviation easements, comply with easement requirements of no higher than 35 feet AGL.

Resulting analysis of B2H proposed power transmission route options utilizing the above decision matrix constraints and in consultation with this installation, the Oregon National Guard Aviation Officer, and the Idaho Power B2H Project Leader, Mr. Mike Vaughn, yielded the following hierarchy of preference based on minimizing adverse operational impacts:

a. Joint transmission line up Bombing Range Road. Although this option entails construction of new line, it would replace or parallel existing line and minimize total new line required inside of restricted airspace R-5701. Potential drawbacks include meeting height constraints due to span requirements and unacceptable compromises inherent in any joint endeavor.

b. The route option with the least operational impact is the Idaho Power/B2H proposed route or "Southern Option." Although this route would entail construction of a large amount of new transmission line, most of it would be outside of R-5701 and, where inside of R-5701, the line would be built within the 100' AGL height constraint. Remaining line to reach the Grassland sub-station would parallel and be no higher than existing line in the area.

c. The route option with the greatest operational impact, and, therefore, the least favorable in consideration of range activities, is the Idaho Power/B2H alternate route or "Eastern Option." This proposed route would introduce new transmission line inside of R-5701 in the middle of critical maneuvering area used for high-speed and abrupt LAT as low as 200' AGL. Due to conflicts with existing crop circles, habitat and infrastructure, Mr. Vaughn indicated it is unlikely that the project design could meet the 100' height constraint. Additionally, at least five miles of this route option would fall under existing Navy aviation easements where transmission lines are restricted to 35' AGL.

Aircraft operators have stressed that building power transmission lines and towers in excess of the parameters established in paragraph 2 within the Boardman Complex would negatively impact Training and Readiness for EA-6B and EA-18G Operational Squadrons and the Fleet

ATTACHMENT

F2

Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

3700
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23 Apr 13

Replacement Squadron (FRS). Currently the Boardman Range is the only local airspace that begins at the surface and where the FRS can complete the student/instructor under training (IUT) LAT syllabus.

Based on the findings of the operational analysis and for the reasons summarized above, I strongly recommend against selection of the Idaho Power/B2H alternate route or "Eastern Option." I also request consideration be given to requiring transmission lines be buried where feasible to further reduce the footprint of vertical obstructions.

My point of contact for this issue is: Mr. Kent Mathes, commercial (360) 257-3315, DSN 820-3315 or email kent.mathes@navy.mil.

Sincerely,



M. K. NORTIER
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer

Enclosure 1: Joint Transmission Projects - Boardman Vicinity Map

Copy to: Assistant Secretary of the Navy (EI&E)
Chief of Naval Operations (N45)
Commander, Navy Region Northwest
Commander, Navy Facility Northwest
Commander, Electronic Attack Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Aviation Officer, Oregon National Guard

Don Gonzalez
Vale District Manager (BLM)
100 Oregon St.
Vale, OR 97918-9629

ATTACHMENT

F2

Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
 NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND
 OAK HARBOR, WASHINGTON 98276-5000

300461

3700
 Ser N00/0902
 June 21, 2013

Mr. Doug Dockter
 Manager, 500kV Projects
 Idaho Power Corporation
 P.O. Box 70
 Boise, ID 83707

SUBJECT: CONCURRENCE ON PRELIMINARY DESIGN/ROUTE FOR THE
 BOARDMAN TO HEMMINGWAY (B2H) PROJECT EAST OF BOMBING
 RANGE ROAD ALTERNATIVE

Dear Mr. Dockter,

The Northwest Training Range Complex (NWTRC) and Naval Air Station Whidbey Island appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to Idaho Power on the proposed Boardman to Hemmingway (B2H) transmission line project. As requested in the email from Mr. reviewed the "Preliminary design for an alternate B2H route down the east side of Bombing Range Road (BRR)" maps, and submit the following assurance:

While this design does not meet all of our operational constraints as outlined in the email from Mr. Kent Mathes to Mr. Mike Vaughn dated February 23, 2012, specifically: the 35' Above Ground Level (AGL) height within Navy held aviation easements; and, remaining equal to or lower than existing parallel line pole heights; it is preferred over the "eastern route" (Longhorn Alternative) currently under Environmental Impact Study (EIS) consideration. The route alternative with the least operational impact remains the "southern route" (Horn Butte Alternative) because of the design's ability to meet all of our operational constraints.

If obstructions cannot otherwise be mitigated within the R-5701 restricted area, we prefer having obstructions co-located to facilitate operator recognition and minimize operator accommodations vice having them spread throughout the operating area. For this reason, we would be willing to relax height restrictions along the western boundary of our eastern aviation run-in easement with the understanding that the maximum pole height there and within the R-5701 boundaries would be limited to no higher than 100' AGL as shown in the "Preliminary design

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June 21, 2013

for an alternate B2H route down the east side of Bombing Range Road (BRR) maps in order to have this route introduced as a B2H alternative for the Boardman area. Furthermore, we would request that, if this proposal is accepted, power lines and towers exceeding existing obstruction heights within R-5701 be marked and painted to facilitate operator recognition as new obstructions.

We understand that, ultimately, this proposal is contingent on EIS considerations, easement acquisition and potential agreements with Umatilla Electric Co-op and the "2Morrow" wind project.

My point of contact for this issue is: Mr. Kent Mathes, commercial (360) 257-3315, DSN 820-3315 or email kent.mathes@navy.mil.

Sincerely,



M. K. NORTIER
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer

- Enclosures: 1. Email from Mr. Mike Vaughn to Mr. Kent Mathes dated June 7, 2013
2. PDF File (B2H.TD08.EoBRR_P&P.rev2.2013.05.14)
3. Email from Mr. Kent Mathes to Mr. Mike Vaughn dated 23Feb2012

Copy to:
Commander, Navy Region Northwest
Commander, Navy Facility Northwest
Commander, Electronic Attack Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Aviation Officer, Oregon National Guard

2

ATTACHMENT

F2

Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
3400 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3400

300461

NOV 20 2014

Tamara Gertsch
Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management
5353 Yellowstone Road
Cheyenne, WY 82009

Dear Ms. Gertsch:

This letter responds to a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) request for a Department of Defense (DoD) review of the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Project Administrative Draft Environmental Impact Statement (ADEIS). After review, the DoD has no objection to the Agency Preferred Alternative Route (PAR) (East of Bombing Range Road) for the transmission line as it traverses under Restricted Airspace # R-5701, assuming the specific tower height constraints described below are met. However, as detailed in the enclosure, this route is not DoD's most preferred alternative. Therefore, should the PAR be modified during the remaining NEPA process, DoD will urge further discussion of the DoD preferred alternative route outlined in the enclosure.

The airspace in and around R-5701 provides a relatively unobstructed environment to conduct Low Altitude Tactical Training for Navy Airborne Electronic Warfare aircraft stationed at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, WA (NASWI). To preserve the long-term viability of flight testing, training and operational missions that transit into R-5701 on a nearly daily basis, our first preference would be that no new obstructions be constructed under the R-5701 designated airspace. That said, if new obstructions are proposed to be constructed under the R-5701 designated airspace, we request they not exceed 100 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) in height within R-5701, or 35 feet AGL in height within existing aviation easements east and west of Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman, without specific approval of Commanding Officer, NASWI. Furthermore, we request a height limit of 170 feet AGL in height in areas outside and immediately adjacent to the perimeter of R-5701. In all instances we plan to continue to work with the proponent on appropriate markings for any transmission lines within and near the restricted airspace.

In addition to the route alternatives outlined in the enclosure, Idaho Power Company (IPC) representatives have recently indicated the possibility of another route alternative, paralleling the Longhorn Variation Alternative, but located West of Bombing Range Road and on Navy-owned NWSTF Boardman property. It is unclear to us when/if this additional alternative will be addressed in the NEPA process, but for a number of significant operational and environmental concerns, DoD considers this alternative to be unacceptable and would likely not support an easement request by IPC to cross Navy property.

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ATTACHMENT

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Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Boardman to Hemingway NEPA process. We look forward to continued engagement with you in completion of the EIS and associated Record of Decision reflecting DoD's concerns. Should you have any questions concerning our stipulations, please contact Mr. William Van Houten, at (703) 571-9068 or william.van.houten@doe.doe.

Sincerely,


Michael A. Airone, PE
Executive Director
DoD Siting Clearinghouse

Enclosures:
As Stated

cc:
BLM-Main
PDASN (EE&I)
Region 10. REC
PACFLT
NASWI
CNRNW

ATTACHMENT

F2

Department of Defense – Department of the Navy (cont.)

300461

Enclosure
Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Transmission Project

Two alternatives offered by the proponent are generally compatible with Navy mission requirements. One of the proposed alternatives, number 3 below, is unacceptable.

- *Proponent proposed Alternative Route #1:* The Horn Butte/Southern Alternative layout largely avoids building the transmission line inside R-5701, avoiding impacts to LAT. This proposed route is acceptable to DoD, and poses the least operational impact
- *Proponent proposed Alternative Route #2:* The Longhorn Variation/East Bombing Range Road alternative co-locates the transmission line with an existing obstruction along Bombing Range Road. If height is restricted (<100' AGL), the layout would be in an area that is already known as an obstruction to aviators and would not result in additional impact to LAT. This proposed route is acceptable to DoD, although poses some operational impact which can be mitigated
- *Proponent proposed Alternative Route #3:* The Longhorn Alternative/Eastern Alternative proposal presents a new obstruction for LAT inside R-5701 and is inconsistent with Navy previously articulated positions. This alternative would require height restrictions <100' AGL in R-5701 and <35' AGL inside the Navy aviation easement to the east of NWSTF Boardman, and the proponent has indicated to Navy staff they are unable to meet these height restrictions. Without these height restrictions the Navy and DoD oppose this alternative.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F3

Department of Energy – Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

comment@boardmantohemingway.com

From: Grange, Katey C (BPA) - KEC-4 <kcgrange@bpa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2015 3:40 PM
To: comment@boardmantohemingway.com
Subject: BPA Comments on Boardman to Hemingway DEIS
Attachments: B2H_DEIS_BPAComments_to_BLM_19March2015.xls

I have attached a comment matrix that contains BPA's consolidated comments on the Boardman to Hemingway DEIS. The spreadsheet contains two tabs- substantive comments and editorial comments – for consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or needed clarifications.

Thank you.

Katey Grange
Environmental Protection Specialist | KEC-4
BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
kcgrange@bpa.gov | 503.230.4047
Please consider the environment before printing this email.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F3 Department of Energy – BPA (cont.)

Boardman to Hemingway 500-kV Transmission Line					
Comments on December 2014 Draft EIS					
Section #	Page #	Line #	Table or Figure #	Reviewer Name/ Agency/ Program	Comment
F3a				BPA	Overall, the B2H EIS presents a good overview discussion of the affected environment (with a few notable exceptions). That being said, the environmental consequences analysis was not as robust as the affected environment and the extensive presentation of data without accompanying analysis is difficult for the reader. It would be helpful for the reader to have summary tables that support a discussion of the key impacts in the EIS itself, with more of the details (and extensive tables) included in the appendices.
F3b				BPA	At this time, there are many information gaps in the DEIS that are needed to fully analyze the project's environmental impacts. For example, the DEIS mentions ongoing ethnographic studies (3-197) and BLM's efforts to consult with tribes to "better identify the nature and location" of impacts. Also, on 3-803 (line 24), the EIS mentions that BLM needs to complete the "evaluation of indirect impacts to resources identified in the reconnaissance level survey." These information gaps and others (as described in the next comment regarding substations) make issuing a FEIS with the new information/analysis without allowing a public comment opportunity on the new information problematic for BPA.
F3c				BPA	There is a general lack of information or conflicting information (where there is information) regarding substation alternatives. For example, the Abstract refers to a "connection to the Grassland Substation". The Summary (page 1-1) refers to the "Grassland Substation, that is currently under construction by Portland General Electric" and depicts a Grassland Substation on Figures S-1 and S-2 (and also later in Figure 2.1). The Summary then notes (page S-1 and S-2) that the northern terminus would connect to PGE's Grassland Substation, or one of two alternative substation sites near Boardman, Oregon." These two alternative substation sites are finally identified as Horn Butte and Longhorn (pages S-6 and S-7). The DEIS includes a limited description of the "new Horn Butte Substation" on 2-50 (line 5) and a similar description of "BPA's proposed Long Horn Substation" on 2-54 (line 16). Yet, on page 1-3 and again on page 2-1 (line 30) and page 2-3 (line 5), the DEIS announces that the line "would begin at the existing Grassland Substation." On page 2-18 (line 26), the DEIS refers to the northern terminus as the Grassland Substation "currently under construction" and notes that the Proposed Action would cause no additional ground disturbance and no new access roads. There is simply not enough information about the Boardman area substation and the information that is present is inconsistent and confusing. All substation site alternatives need to be analyzed in the EIS and the status of each substation needs to be correct and consistent. As a Cooperating Agency, BPA needs additional information in the EIS to support our decision. Including the substation alternative evaluation in a FEIS, without a public input process would be unacceptable to BPA. BPA would like to work closely with BLM to make sure the EIS can support a BPA decision.

F3a Summary tables and discussions between alternatives and segments have been added.

F3b The results of the analysis for direct and indirect impacts on cultural resources have been clarified in the Final EIS. Reconnaissance level survey is part of the Section 106 process for the B2H Project and is documented in the Programmatic Agreement.

The NEPA process relies on review and analysis of existing data for the comparison of alternatives. Completion of Class III cultural resources inventories is not required under NEPA in order to prepare an EIS. All cultural resources will be evaluated and analyzed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act after the Record(s) of Decision and prior to any notice to proceed.

F3c Comments on the Draft EIS expressed that not enough information was provided in the Draft EIS to enable the reviewers to understand where impacts would occur and where mitigation would be applied to reduce impacts. Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1 of the Final EIS presents an explanation of the study and analysis approach employed for the B2H Project. Chapter 3 has been expanded to provide more description of the methods for used for analyzing effects associated with each resource (tiered to the overall approach). Chapter 3 also provides more information about the resources, mitigation applied to reduce impacts, and residual impacts on resources along each alternative route by segment. In addition, a map volume of large-scale maps is provided to present resource data and to show the level of residual impact on the resources along all of the alternative routes.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F3 Department of Energy – BPA (cont.)

Boardman to Hemingway 500-kV Transmission Line						
Comments on December 2014 Draft EIS						
	Section #	Page #	Line #	Table or Figure #	Reviewer Name/ Agency/ Program	Comment
F3d	Summary	Multiple	Multiple		BPA	The summary often uses future tense (“will”) instead of future conditional (“would”) to describe the project and project effects. Please correct the text so that future conditional is consistently used throughout the summary (and the rest of the document).
F3e	Summary	S-1	7		BPA	The text states “IPC proposes to construct, operate and maintain...”. This project description language is not consistent throughout the EIS and related project documents (specifically the Cultural Programmatic Agreement). In the Programmatic Agreement, project decommissioning is considered as a part of the project, but decommissioning is not listed in the summary (or in other parts of the EIS). We suggest that the EIS consistently describe the project phases being considered in the EIS body and all appendices.
F3f	Summary	S-17	2-3 and 6-7		BPA	The text states that construction impacts to wetlands would be short-term and therefore “moderate” and the operation impacts would be long-term and therefore “moderate”. Additional information supporting the reasoning behind these same impact ratings would be helpful.
F3g	Summary	S-22	36-39		BPA	Regarding the text “...introduction of electric fields in areas where power lines would be constructed could impact the ability of tribal members to use these areas for traditional cultural and religious practices...”. BPA can provide references that review the effects of electric fields in transmission rights-of-ways. We suggest clarifying the statement to say that the line itself, not the EMF, would impact tribal member’s ability to use the area for traditional uses.
F3h	Summary (and throughout document)	S-25 and multiple other locations	34		BPA	The text refers to the “environmentally preferred” alternative. We suggest the use of the term ‘environmentally preferable’ alternative throughout as this is the correct term under NEPA.
F3i	1.1	1-3	16		BPA	Please add that BPA is part of DOE. Suggested change: Federal cooperating agencies for the B2H Project, in addition to the USFS Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, include the U.S. Navy, Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility, Boardman; U.S. 13 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 10; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Region 1; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Portland District; Reclamation; and U.S. Department of Energy, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).
F3j	1.9.1	1-28	5		BPA	Please clarify that EFSEC would site non-federal energy project developers. We suggest changing “energy project developer” to “non-federal energy project developer” in this sentence.
F3k	1.10 (throughout EIS)	1-36	Building Codes Division’ row	Table 1-4	BPA	The text describes building permits required for construction of a substation at the Boardman Switching Yard. More information is needed throughout the EIS about this construction and the potential environmental impacts of the substation alternatives (please see the general’ comment in row 6 above).
F3l	2.3.6	2-66	7-15		BPA	Please include BPA in the discussion of the No Action Alternative.
F3m	3.1.2.1	3-6	19		BPA	Please clarify how “low-intensity impact” is equal to “no identifiable impact.” If there is no identifiable impact, wouldn’t ano impact determination be warranted?

F3d Revised as suggested.

F3e Comment noted. Chapter 2 of the document has been updated. Decommissioning is discussed as part of the project but separate analysis would be completed for decommissioning and thus has not been considered in the impact analysis.

F3f Comment noted. Text in the Final EIS has been revised to include a table describing “Criteria for Assessing Intensity of Impacts on Water Resources” (Table 3-57). References to specific design features and selective mitigation measures used to reduce impacts to wetlands have also been added to Section 3.2.2.

F3g Comment noted. Though the line itself is viewed as an effect, tribal representatives have indicated during consultation that the effects of electromagnetic fields (EMF) on sites are irreversible and unmitigatable. From a tribal perspective, area exposed to EMF may be unsuitable for traditional use.

F3h Edited as suggested.

F3i Revised as suggested.

F3j Revised as suggested.

F3k See response to Comment F3c.

F3l The BLM requests that BPA please provide the language they would like to be included for the No Action Alternative.

F3m Comments on the Draft EIS expressed that not enough information was provided in the Draft EIS to enable the reviewers to understand where impacts would occur and where mitigation would be applied to reduce impacts. Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1 of the Final EIS presents an explanation of the study and analysis approach employed for the B2H Project, Chapter 3 has been expanded to provide more description of the methods used for analyzing effects associated with each resource (tiered to the overall approach) and to provide more information about the resources, mitigation applied to reduce impacts, and residual impacts on resources along each alternative route by segment. In addition, a map volume of large-scale maps is provided to present resource data and to show the level of residual impact on the resources along all of the alternative routes.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F3 Department of Energy – BPA (cont.)

Boardman to Hemingway 500-kV Transmission Line						
Comments on December 2014 Draft EIS						
	Section #	Page #	Line #	Table or Figure #	Reviewer Name/ Agency/ Program	Comment
F3n	3.2.1.5	3-25	3-8	Table 3-3	BPA	We suggest including additional information addressing the instabilities in Idaho as well as Oregon. Although Oregon's DOGAMI database does not extend to Owyhee County, ID, is there any information from Idaho or other sources that would address landform instabilities in the project area?
F3o	3.2.3.5 and 3.2.4.5	3-116 and 3-211		3-35 and 3-54	BPA	Please revise the footnote definitions on these 2 tables to use consistent terminology. For example "N= Not known to occur" in one table, while "N= Does not occur" in the other.
F3p	3.2.4.2	3-197	12-16		BPA	If BLM is still engaging in ethnographic studies and consulting with the tribes to better understand the nature and location of wildlife impacts, is this impact sufficiently considered in the wildlife analysis?
F3q	3.2.4.6	3-273	1-40		BPA	The text seems to spend a disproportionate time discussing the negative edge effects without much detail on the beneficial edge effects for some species. We suggest inclusion of some additional description of the potential beneficial effects.
F3r	3.2.8.1	3-737	24		BPA	"issued" seems like the wrong word in this sentence. We suggest replacing "issued" with 'used'
F3s	3.2.8.1	3-738	2		BPA	We suggest that the sentence be corrected to state: "...products" or "work" to human beings...
F3t	3.2.8.4	3-742	13		BPA	Please clarify that the 'site' referenced in the text is pulling/tensioning and boring sites, not cultural sites.
F3u	3.2.8.4	3-742 and 3-745	21 (3-742), 4 (3- 745), and 14 (3-74500)		BPA	The methodology text states that the intensive level survey (ILS) and Class III surveys (i.e. Phase II) will be completed and presented in the FEIS. However, BLM has indicated in cultural consultation meetings that the Phase II reports would be complete after the FEIS. We suggest that the survey timelines discussed in the EIS be consistent with the schedule discussed during cultural consultation meetings.
F3v	3.2.8.4	3-742	14-15		BPA	It is unclear what the text "...adjusted to include the areas of land within this corridor from which the project would be visible." is describing. We suggest that the text be clarified to indicate if the APE for indirect effects is entirely within the 10-mile-wide corridor, or if the indirect effects APE may extend beyond the 10-mile-wide corridor in certain places.
F3w	3.2.8.6	3-786	19	Table 3-219	BPA	We suggest adding a footnote in the table describing what the 'unknown' resources include/mean in the context of the literature search conducted.
F3x	3.2.8.6	3-786	19	Table 3-219	BPA	The category of "ineligible sites" and "NRHP-listed sites/historic districts" are very broad and are not a resource type (as suggested by the heading and the other table entries). We suggest incorporating the ineligible sites and NRHP-listed sites/historic districts into the listed resources by types. Classifying some of the resources by eligibility status in this table seems duplicative to the information contained in the next table (Table 3-220).
F3y	3.2.8.7	3-803	24		BPA	It would be helpful if the date of anticipated evaluation completion were disclosed.

F3n	The landslide hazard ranking provided by OPS was used in the effects analysis in the Final EIS.
F3o	Tables revised to be consistent.
F3p	Because of the sensitivity of information and sites derived from the ethnographic studies, such information is referred to generally for each alternative route in the cultural resources section of Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.13).
F3q	Text has been edited as requested to expand on the potential benefits of edge effects.
F3r	This error has been corrected.
F3s	This error has been corrected.
F3t	The text has been clarified.
F3u	Results of Class III inventories will not be presented in the Final EIS; these inventories will not be completed until after the selection of a route and the issuance of the Record(s) of Decision for the B2H Project. Text has been edited as requested: "Cultural resource inventories for the B2H Project have been divided into two phases. Phase I has been completed for the EIS and Phase II will be completed for the Selected Route, per Section 106 requirements and the Programmatic Agreement (Appendix I) for the B2H Project."
F3v	The text has been modified to reflect the language in the current Programmatic Agreement: "The indirect effects APE for cultural resources that may be subject to visual effects will extend generally for 5 miles (10-mile-wide study corridor) or to the visual horizon, whichever is closer, on either side of the reference centerline. Where the indirect APE includes TCPs, NHTs, and other visually sensitive historic properties, additional analyses may be required and the indirect APE may need to be modified accordingly. These areas will require analysis on a case by case basis."
F3w	Comment noted. This table has been revised to reflect the modifications to the methodology and additional Class I data (additional alternative routes and route variations). The following text has been added: Cultural resources categorized as "unknown" are those for which incomplete site records were found, and consequently could not be assigned to a particular time period (temporal affiliation). A footnote also has been added to clarify the use of the term "unknown."
F3x	Comment noted. This table has been revised to reflect the modifications to the methodology and additional Class I data (additional alternative routes and route variations). For the purpose of the Final EIS, sites have been identified by site theme (e.g., Non-Residential) and site type (e.g., Lithic Scatter, Campsite, Artifact Scatter). List of site types by segments, alternative routes, and route variations are provided in the Final EIS.
F3y	The anticipated date is after the Record(s) of Decision and prior to any notice to proceed.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F3 Department of Energy – BPA (cont.)

Boardman to Hemingway 500-kV Transmission Line					
Comments on December 2014 Draft EIS					
Section #	Page #	Line #	Table or Figure #	Reviewer Name/ Agency/ Program	Comment
F3z	Appendix D	General		BPA	Upon review of this public version Draft Framework for Mitigation, it appears that no comments on previous drafts provided by BPA as a cooperating agency are included. On 2/26/2015, BLM confirmed to cooperating agencies an intent to integrate previously submitted cooperating agency comments as the document continues to be restructured between the DEIS and FEIS. It was also stated that previously submitted comments need not be resubmitted through this DEIS comment process to be considered. Thank you for continuing to refine the Framework with cooperating agency assistance as there are factually inaccurate statements which should be clarified and have been noted in comments you possess.
F3aa	Appendix D	General		BPA	During this comment period, cooperating agencies heard from BLM their intention to rectify mitigation methodologies between federal and state environmental compliance processes. The FEIS should document the actions BLM takes to align state and federal mitigation processes with explanations why processes do or do not align.
F3ab	Appendix D	1	2nd paragraph	BPA	"Accordingly, IPC has submitted applications to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Bureau of Reclamation (hereafter decision making agencies) to obtain authorization to cross lands managed by those agencies." This is an inaccurate statement as IPC did not submit application to BPA to obtain access to cross lands managed by BPA. Please coordinate with BPA to correct this sentence so that it reads accurately in the FEIS.
F3ac	Appendix E	General		BPA	We encourage BLM to revisit this document and include in the FEIS updated literature, methodologies, evolving state regulations/rule making, and lessons learned by other implementing projects. Also, coordinate with state biologists in Idaho and Oregon to align this project's actions with the state's sage grouse conservation planning efforts. Document in the FEIS the actions BLM takes to align state and federal processes for conserving sage grouse with explanations why processes do or do not align.
F3ad	Summary			BPA	The summary uses acronyms without first spelling out the name. We suggest consistently defining acronyms with first use.
F3ae	Summary	S-22	17	BPA	Suggest inserting 'project'. "...used to analyze and compare project impacts across segments and alternatives..."
F3af	3.1.1.2	3-3		BPA	As Umatilla is an important reference site mentioned throughout the text, it would be helpful to have the city of Umatilla depicted on Figure 3-1.
F3ag	3.2.1.5	3-33	3	BPA	We suggest correcting the text to reflect that squirrels are rodents.
F3ah	3.2.4.5	3-210	14	BPA	It appears that a word is missing between "fiscal year" and "detailed information."
F3ai	3.2.8.5	3-751	1-3	BPA	The text is confusing with the current punctuation. We suggest splitting the sentence and correcting the punctuation to say: "...refused to enter into this treaty. The band led by Chief Joseph, the elder, remained in the Wallowa Valley. By 1877, the Nez Perce had been pushed out of the Wallowa Valley. Displaced and beleaguered by internal and external conflict, the Wallowa..."
F3aj	3.2.8.5	3-778	30-31	BPA	It appears that a word was incorrectly inserted into the text "which gave rise to not the area's current name and the Virtue Mine.". We suggest eliminating 'not' in the sentence.

- F3z Comment noted. Please note that Appendix D, Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources, in the Draft EIS was revised for the Final EIS as Appendix C to provide additional information about BLM's requirements and a framework for compensatory mitigation for all resources.
- F3z Appendix C in the Final EIS is a Mitigation Framework. As the name suggests, the Mitigation Framework is intended to be a detailed framework, not a site-specific mitigation plan. The Mitigation Framework (1) establishes how avoidance and minimization have eliminated and/or reduced impacts; (2) identifies residual resource effects that meet criteria for warranting compensatory mitigation; and (3) provides a framework for how the appropriate level and type of compensatory mitigation will be determined for those resource effects. The BLM has established a mitigation standard, through application of the mitigation hierarchy, of a no net loss outcome for affected resources and their values, services, and functions, or, as required or appropriate, a net benefit (or gain, if appropriate) in outcomes where it has determined that compensatory mitigation is warranted.
- F3aa Upon selection of the final route in the Record of Decision and following final engineering and design, the Compensatory Mitigation Plan will be prepared using the Mitigation Framework as a guide in assessing the direct and indirect impacts based on an engineered and designed alignment, and will identify a suite of site-specific compensatory mitigation options for selection and implementation under the review and guidance of the cooperating agencies. The final detailed Compensatory Mitigation Plan must be reviewed by the cooperating agencies and a recommendation will be made to the Authorized Officer for approval prior to any issuance of Notices to Proceed.
- F3aa Any necessary modifications to the Mitigation Framework will be addressed in the Record of Decision.
- F3aa Comment noted. Chapters 1 and 2 of the document have been revised to reflect this comment.
- F3ab The text has been clarified.
- F3ac See next page for response to F3ac.
- F3ad Revised as suggested.
- F3ae This error has been corrected.
- F3af Revised as suggested.
- F3ag This error has been corrected.
- F3ah This error has been corrected.
- F3ai Text has been edited as requested.
- F3aj Text has been edited as requested.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S) - CONTINUED

F3

Department of Energy – BPA (cont.)

F3ac

Comments on the Draft EIS expressed that not enough information was provided in the Draft EIS to enable the reviewers to understand where impacts would occur and where mitigation would be applied to reduce impacts. Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1 of the Final EIS presents an explanation of the study and analysis approach employed for the B2H Project, Chapter 3 has been expanded to provide more description of the methods for used for analyzing effects associated with each resource (tiered to the overall approach) and to provide more information about the resources, mitigation applied to reduce impacts, and residual impacts on resources along each alternative route by segment. In addition, a map volume of large-scale maps is provided to present resource data and to show the level of residual impact on the resources along all of the alternative routes.

In October 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the listing the Greater Sage-Grouse was not warranted. Potential effects of the B2H Project on Greater Sage-Grouse are discussed in Section 3.2.4.5.

The Applicant has committed to design features and site-specific selective mitigation measures designed to minimize anticipated B2H Project effects to Greater Sage-Grouse, including preconstruction surveys for sensitive species, seasonal and spatial restrictions, and avian-safe design standards that are consistent with BLM's Greater Sage-Grouse ARMPAs for Oregon and Idaho. The B2H Project will be designed, sited, and implemented to adhere to a mitigation hierarchy that will result in a net conservation gain for Greater Sage-Grouse.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F4

Department of the Interior – National Park Service

comment@boardmantohemingway.com

From: karen_washington@nps.gov on behalf of PWR Regional Director, NPS
<pwr_regional_director@nps.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2015 6:43 PM
To: comment@boardmantohemingway.com
Subject: Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
Attachments: 20150319172651587.pdf; 20150319172601996.pdf

Please see the subject letter and attachment. If you have any questions please contact Tonnie Cummings at 360-816-6201.

Christine S. Lehnertz
Regional Director, Pacific West Region



COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F4

Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 Pacific West Region
 333 Bush Street, Suite 500
 San Francisco, California, 94104-2828

In reply refer to:
 1.A.2. (PWR-NR)

March 19, 2015

Tamara Gertsch, BLM National Project Manager
 Bureau of Land Management
 Vale District Office
 100 Oregon Street
 Vale, OR 97918

Re: Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project

Dear Ms. Gertsch:

The National Park Service (NPS) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Transmission Line Project. According to the DEIS, Idaho Power Company is proposing to construct and operate a 300 mile, 500-kilovolt single-circuit, alternating-current transmission line and ancillary facilities between a new or existing substation near Boardman, Oregon, and the Hemingway Substation near Melba, Idaho. The B2H Project would cross federal, state, and private lands in five counties in Oregon and one county in Idaho. Approximately 93 miles of the proposed project would cross lands administered by federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Reclamation.

It is the responsibility of the NPS, federal administering agency for the Oregon and Lewis & Clark National Historic Trails (NHT) and the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail, to identify and protect the routes, remnants, and artifacts of these nationally significant resources as required by the National Trails System Act. Our review of the B2H DEIS has identified substantial concerns relative to potential project impacts on the NHTs. These concerns are summarized below and discussed in detail in the enclosure.

First, we found the organization of the DEIS to be very confusing, which made it difficult to assess project impacts. Impact analyses are spread across several sections of the DEIS, results are presented by route analysis component rather than comprehensively, and there is no concluding section or table that synthesizes impacts to trails. We recommend the B2H Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) adopt the organizational style of BLM's recently

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F4

Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)

approved Gateway West FEIS, where each resource is given a separate chapter and all potential effects on that resource are described therein.

Second, we are concerned about how impacts to the NHTs were evaluated. It appears the DEIS only considered impacts to the Washington portion of the Lewis & Clark NHT. This is an incomplete and inaccurate depiction of what constitutes the trail. National Park Service staff has previously raised concerns with BLM about the need to address impacts on the auto route and associated recreation and historic sites of the Lewis & Clark NHT in Oregon. We recommend these analyses be completed for the FEIS. Equally concerning, the DEIS analyzed individual sites and segments of the NHTs as if they are discrete units, not part of a greater whole. While certain sites and segments of NHTs are of particular significance, and of priority for impact avoidance, the NHTs are continuous, linear historical and recreational resources of national significance, not sequences of independent sites. An adverse effect or impact at one locale is an effect or impact on the entire NHT and the analysis should reflect this.

Finally, we are concerned about the DEIS's conclusions regarding the importance of the project's effects on trails. In each instance where BLM has selected a preferred route segment that will have serious adverse impacts to the Oregon NHT, that decision is explained by a stated preference for diminishing or avoiding impacts on natural resources such as winter range, fish, riparian vegetation, etc. In the case of some preferred route alternatives, the natural resources that purportedly are being protected would be impacted to about the same or possibly a greater extent as they would be if a more NHT-friendly route were selected. In this decision-making process, the NHTs and other cultural resources seem to be treated as low value, low priority resources that can be sacrificed to protect other values. We ask that BLM reconsider some of its route recommendations with a view to protecting more of the important NHT properties.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the B2H DEIS. We recognize the B2H transmission line will adversely impact the Oregon NHT and that some of those impacts are unavoidable. Compensatory mitigation for those impacts needs to be commensurate to those specific impacts and to the cumulative impacts to the Oregon and Lewis & Clark NHTs. We look forward to continuing consultation about mitigation options with BLM, the Oregon and Idaho State Historic Preservation Offices, and trails organizations. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Tonnie Cummings at 360-816-6201 or Tonnie_Cummings@nps.gov.

Sincerely,



Christine S. Lehnertz
Regional Director, Pacific West Region

Enclosure

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F4 Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)

National Park Service (NPS) Detailed Comments on the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) December 19, 2014, Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Organization of the DEIS

F4a First, different kinds of impacts to the Oregon and Lewis & Clark National Historic Trails (NHT) are examined in Section 3.2.7 (Visual Resources), Section 3.2.8 (Cultural Resources), Section 3.2.9 (National Historic Trails), and subsection 3.2.9.8 (Compliance with BLM Manual 6280) of the B2H DEIS. In each of these analyses, results are presented by route analysis component, e.g., the proponent’s proposed route as a whole is an alternative, the Longhorn Variation is an alternative, the Longhorn Alternative is an alternative, the proposed route segment lying between those two is another alternative, and so on. Consequently, readers interested in national historic trails must look through four sections of the DEIS and examine in each a menu of 17 analysis component alternatives, which in turn usually present two or more individual analyses of potential impacts to NHTs. This organization is frustrating and confusing to readers, who must page through and try to retrieve the relevant information piecemeal. We believe the organization of BLM’s recently approved Gateway West Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is a superior approach that better serves the public. Also, in the Gateway West FEIS, national historic trails are not called out as a visual resource or identified as “viewing platforms;” instead, indirect effects to NHT settings are evaluated and results are presented as a single visual contrast rating of No Contrast (No Historic Properties Affected), Weak Contrast (No Historic Properties Adversely Affected), or Moderate or Strong Contrast (Historic Properties Adversely Affected). The B2H DEIS, in comparison, provides multi-page tables (e.g., 3-152, 3-169) with individual ratings for up to 21 different analytical variables. The complexity of that presentation is overwhelming. Readers just want to know where and how the NHTs may be adversely affected, and the Gateway West FEIS presents that information in a concise and comprehensible manner, unlike the B2H DEIS. Also, we recommend including a map that shows both the Oregon and the Lewis & Clark NHTs in the trails section of the DEIS so readers do not have to refer to an appendix to find a map.

F4b Second, in the B2H DEIS, the BLM has identified an agency-preferred alternative, which selects among the various analysis components to create a whole, end-to-end route comparable to the proponent’s proposed route. This agency-preferred alternative is described in narrative fashion but, so far as we are able to determine, the impacts of implementing the route in its entirety are never synthesized. Again, readers of the DEIS must look up the impacts to the NHTs by analysis topic and by analysis component and then must create their own table of impacts that will occur to understand impacts to the NHTs if the agency’s preferred alternative is selected. Readers would benefit from some means of identifying or flagging those preferred components throughout the multitude of analyses across the 3,000-odd pages of the DEIS and from inclusion of the agency-preferred alternative in Table 2-12, Summary of Effects by Alternative, and probably in other tables as well.

F4c Analysis of Impacts to NHTs As mentioned above, the DEIS does not address overall effects of B2H on the NHTs. Similarly, the analysis of cumulative effects to NHTs (pages 3-1107 to 3-1110) is partitioned by project segment, such that only the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions

F4a All discussions relating to the assessment of impacts on National Historic Trails are now presented in one section, National Trails System (Section 3.2.15), in the Final EIS to reduce the complexity of review of impacts on these resources. Additionally, more direct route comparisons are made to allow for the differences between routes to be highlighted.

F4b A map was added into this section (Section 3.2.15) displaying the location of the B2H Project in relation to the designated NHTs and those trails under feasibility study. Impacts on trails is more clearly described by forming a single impact level, relying upon the different criteria, to describe direct and indirect impacts on the trails and associated settings.

F4c Comments on the Draft EIS expressed that not enough information was provided in the Draft EIS to enable the reviewers to understand where impacts would occur and where mitigation would be applied to reduce impacts. Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1 of the Final EIS presents an explanation of the study and analysis approach employed for the B2H Project, Chapter 3 has been expanded to provide more description of the methods for used for analyzing effects associated with each resource (tiered to the overall approach) and to provide more information about the resources, mitigation applied to reduce impacts, and residual impacts on resources along each alternative route by segment. In addition, a map volume of large-scale maps is provided to present resource data and to show the level of residual impact on the resources along all of the alternative routes.

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F4 Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)

F4d along that segment are considered. Moreover, the approach taken by BLM for B2H minimizes cumulative effects on the national historic trails by failing to take into consideration other big projects with multiple and significant adverse impacts on the NHTs in Idaho and Oregon. Major foreseeable projects that should be considered in the cumulative effects analysis include the Gateway West transmission line project, which ties into the Boardman project at Hemingway and which, like B2H, is also an Idaho Power project; the Hemingway to Captain Jack transmission line project, and Southwest Intertie. Existing transmission lines and proposed and existing pipeline and hydroelectric projects affecting NHTs in Oregon and Idaho should be identified and taken into consideration. Given the interest in wind energy in Oregon, there likely are numerous existing and reasonably foreseeable wind turbine projects that will affect the Oregon and Lewis & Clark NHTs in that state.

F4e The only acknowledgement in the DEIS of the NHTs as continuous, linear resources extending beyond the project Area of Potential Effect is this statement on page 3-729: “The influence of the alternatives under consideration would have minimal impact [to the Oregon National Historic Trail] when compared to the qualities of the entire 2,170-mile long congressionally designated trail, the 529.2 miles of trail in Idaho, or the 519.5 miles of trail in Oregon.” This remark suggests the adverse impacts of the B2H project are of little concern because thousands of miles of Oregon NHT exist; the statement is inaccurate and unsubstantiated by data or thorough analysis in the document. The NPS recommends the BLM clarify those specific qualities being referenced: how many miles of “undiminished” Oregon Trail (“located in a pristine wilderness area with no visible modern intrusions,” per BLM’s definition on page 3-843) yet remain along those 2,170 miles, or the 529.2 miles in Idaho and 519.5 miles in Oregon; how many miles of National Register-listed or formally determined eligible Oregon NHT on BLM land are documented; the past, existing, and reasonably foreseeable future effects along those 2,170 miles of Oregon NHT; and how many fewer miles of “pristine” resources will remain after the B2H transmission line is developed. Similarly, the DEIS acknowledges direct, long-term, adverse visual impacts would occur on 23.9 miles of the Oregon NHT for the Proposed Action and various amounts for the alternatives, but concludes the influence of the alternatives would be minimal. To adequately compare the effect of alternatives on visual resources, the NPS recommends the DEIS state what percentage of the 2,170 miles of trail already has direct, adverse impacts from other development and what percentage has equivalent scenic qualities to the section at risk from this project.

F4g We are concerned about the DEIS’s interpretation of National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) eligibility as it relates to impact analysis. On pages 3-846 (lines 32-35) and 3-847 (lines 19-21 and 28-30) in the Manual 6280 analysis, BLM states that impacts on trail traces between Bodie and Hilgard, Quartz and Huntington, in the vicinity of Adrian, and possibly elsewhere, could not be determined “as the National Register of Historic Places eligibility of the trail traces” in those areas has not been evaluated. The NPS reviewers note that eligibility recommendations are customarily made in the field during inventory and documentation; but since recommendations were not made, and since the DEIS identifies these as actual trail traces, then those sites or segments must be presumed eligible until such time as they might be more fully documented and determined ineligible, and therefore they must be evaluated in both the Manual 6280 and Section 106 sections of the DEIS. Further, the DEIS is not clear as to whether high potential historic sites and high potential trail segments that occur in some of those areas are

F4d The assessment of the B2H Project’s contribution to cumulative effects on NHTs from these past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects is presented in Section 3.3. Part of this assessment is the cumulative effect of these projects on the trail setting and their visual influence.

F4e This statement was removed as it inaccurately states the intactness of the remaining portions of the Oregon NHT, reducing the effect of the B2H Project on the trail and trail setting. The Cumulative Effects section (Section 3.3) also has been expanded to include effects from the B2H Project in consideration with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects along the high potential historic sites and segments to facilitate a more accurate acknowledgment of effects on the Oregon NHT.

F4f The assessment of the B2H Project’s contribution to cumulative effects on the high potential historic sites and segments from these past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects is presented in Section 3.3. Impacts on the entire Oregon NHT would be beyond the scope of the B2H Project and the area impacts by the B2H Project.

F4f Impacts associated with the National Historic Trails have been re-analyzed using techniques that more effectively disclose potential impacts to the trails. The results of these impacts are located within the Section 3.2.15.

F4g The distinction between the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15) (BLM Manual 6280) and the Cultural Resources section (Section 3.2.13) was made more clear and references between the sections added. Also, BLM contributing trail trace data was used in the assessment of impacts on the Oregon NHT.

F4g BLM contributing trail segment, high potential historic sites, and high potential trail segment data were added to the analysis.

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F4g among the sites that are not evaluated for NRHP eligibility. The decision not to evaluate impacts to these trail traces also contradicts the declaration on page 3-737 (lines 19-23) of the DEIS, which states, “For the B2H Project, as well as other actions requiring NEPA analysis, the BLM has broadened its consideration of impacts to encompass all cultural resources, regardless of NRHP eligibility. BLM Manual 8100.03 (BLM 2004a) states that “[c]ultural resources need not be determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places...to receive consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act.” Finally, BLM has explained to the NPS in other contexts that Manual 6280 is intended not to duplicate analyses already required under Section 106 (where NRHP eligibility is key), but to provide a more comprehensive, landscape-scale analysis that is not contingent on NRHP eligibility. While landscape-scale analysis and mitigation are required under Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3330, Improving Mitigation Policies and Practices of the Department of the Interior, and supporting documents, they cannot take the place of the site-specific determinations required under the National Historic Preservation Act. For all of these reasons, the NPS disagrees with BLM’s decision to skip over analyses of impacts on trail remnants, especially those on BLM lands, for which NRHP eligibility has not been determined.

F4h Specific comments are enumerated below.

1. The NPS is currently engaged with BLM in developing BLM’s Birch Creek Interpretive Site and helping to replace exhibits at BLM’s Baker City Oregon Trail Center, both on the Oregon NHT. The NPS also is considering supporting other proposed projects related to the trail center and to Alkali Springs High Potential Route segment of the Oregon NHT. All of these properties would likely suffer adverse effects from implementation of BLM’s agency-preferred action alternative. As the NHT’s administering agency, the NPS encourages BLM to reconsider its preferred selection of project routing (namely, the Flagstaff and Tub Mountain South alternatives) in order to protect these important Oregon NHT locales.

F4i 2. National Park Service reviewers were unable to find any complete listing, description, or map of Oregon NHT high potential historic sites and route segments that occur in the Area of Potential Effect. BLM Manual 6280 (1-10) identifies high potential historic sites and route segments as Federal Protection Segments and says they should be managed “in a manner which protects the historic significance of the trail and the identified values.” The NPS recommends this information be included in the document in a readily accessible format.

F4j 3. Table 3-245 identifies “Historic trails lacking integrity of physical features or trail segments deemed noncontributing” as moderate in sensitivity. “Historic trails retaining integrity of physical features or trail segments deemed contributing” are not given a weight in this sensitivity scheme; the NPS recommends they be included.

F4k 4. The Historic Trails section on page 3-473 fails to identify the Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail as one of two NHTs located within the project area. The text incorrectly states that there is only one designated NHT across the project area, the Oregon NHT. The Lewis & Clark NHT is recognized elsewhere in the DEIS, such as in Chapter 3.2.9. Also on page 3-473, the list of historic trail segments in the project area that may not be

F4h Impacts on these sites, including effects on interpretive opportunities, were added to allow for a consideration of these effects as well as the application of mitigation measures to reduce those effects.

F4i A list of Oregon NHT high potential historic sites and segments was added, by alternative, to present this information clearly in the Final EIS.

F4j Contributing trail segments were given more weight in the updated NHT impact assessment including impacts on their setting.

F4k The references to NHTs (and trails under feasibility study) in the Land Use sections have been removed and readers are directed to the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15).

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F4 Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)

- F4k designated as a NHT should include the Goodale’s Cutoff study trail. Please correct for accuracy.
- F4l 5. On page 3-570, Table 3-1512, for the Lewis & Clark NHT, only the Lewis & Clark Trail Scenic Byway/NHT in Benton County, Washington, is listed under Linear Sensitive Viewing Platforms. The Columbia River segment of the Lewis & Clark NHT has marked auto routes for visitor retracement on both sides of the river, as well as recreation and historic sites in both Washington and Oregon. The historic route includes the Expedition’s outbound water route via the Columbia River and their return route via land north of the Columbia River in Washington. Please correct for accuracy.
- F4m 6. On page 3-732, Table 3-218, there is, again, lack of recognition that the Lewis & Clark NHT corridor extends into Oregon; the table only lists the “Lewis and Clark Trail Scenic Byway (570 total miles in Washington; *none in Oregon or Idaho* [emphasis added])”. As proposed, the B2H project will cross the Lewis & Clark NHT auto route in Oregon. The lack of recognition of the Lewis & Clark NHT in Oregon means that the conclusions drawn in the DEIS on visual impacts need to be reconsidered. For example, the table indicates impacts in the foreground from the Longhorn alternatives will be ‘none’ for the Lewis & Clark NHT when, in fact, the transmission line would cross the trail auto route in both Longhorn alternatives. Please revise the analysis to reflect impacts on the Lewis & Clark NHT in Oregon.
- F4n 7. Pages 3-788 and 3-789 state the Lewis & Clark NHT runs perpendicular several miles north of the Longhorn alignment in Washington. This statement is incorrect as it is based on the NHT consisting of only the Lewis & Clark Scenic Byway in Washington. In fact, the Longhorn alignment crosses the Lewis & Clark NHT auto route near Boardman, Oregon. Please correct for accuracy.
- F4o 8. Page 3-817 says there are 20 National Trails in the National Trails System. That is incorrect; currently, there are 30 trails.
- F4p 9. On page 3-823, the description of the Lewis & Clark NHT is incomplete. As presented, there is no mention of the historic outbound route on the Columbia River, which is also a developed water trail for visitor retracement as was recommended in the 1982 Lewis & Clark NHT Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use, and there is no mention of the auto route that the proposed B2H Longhorn alternatives would cross near Boardman. In addition, the Lewis & Clark NHT also links recreation and historic sites along the Columbia River in the project area in both Washington and Oregon where visitors can learn about the Expedition and associated history. This aspect of the trail is mentioned under “primary uses,” on page 3-824 but no specific recreation or historic sites in the project area that might be impacted are discussed.
- F4q 10. On page 3-829, Table 3-249 indicates that each Longhorn alternative will not cross the Lewis & Clark NHT. In fact, each Longhorn alternative would cross the trail at one location (auto route in Oregon). This state-selected motor route is utilized by trail visitors to follow the trail and access trail recreation and historic sites in Oregon. It is

- F4l This table is associated with assessing impacts on roads included in the Scenic Byway program and not necessarily associated with NHTs. All discussions related to NHTs have been moved to the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15) to reduce duplication of efforts and allow this section to focus on the impacts on this road as associated with its designation as a scenic byway.
- F4m This table is associated with assessing impacts on roads included in the Scenic Byway program and not necessarily associated with NHTs. All discussions related to NHTs have been moved to the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15) to reduce duplication of efforts and allow this section to focus on the impacts on this road as associated with its designation as a scenic byway. The assessment of impacts on the NPS auto tour route is in the NHT section.
- F4n All discussions associated with impacts on NHTs have been moved to the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15) except for general cultural resources discussions related to trails in the Cultural Resources section of the document (Section 3.2.13). The National Trails System section was expanded to consider all components of the Lewis and Clark NHT including the auto tour route crossed by the B2H Project.
- F4o Text updated.
- F4p The other components of the Lewis and Clark NHT including the outbound water route, auto tour route, and any recreation/historic sites on the Oregon-side of the river have been added to the analysis contained in the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15).
- F4q The auto tour route for the Lewis and Clark NHT has been added to the analysis in the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15).

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F4 Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)

F4q unclear if the analysis of miles viewable is accurate since it appears the Oregon portion of trail was not considered. Please revise to include the trail crossing and clarify the accuracy of the miles viewable analysis.

F4r 11. On page 3-833, line 14 is an incomplete sentence that needs to be resolved.

F4s 12. On page 3-837, statements regarding the degree of impacts on the Lewis & Clark NHT are confusing and may need to be revisited given lack of consideration for the water route and Oregon auto route. Providing maps showing areas and the degree of impact along the NHTs would help readers understand where the impacts occur and for how long. Full disclosure of the impacts is necessary to inform potential mitigation proposals. Table 3-252 is complex and disjointed, and it is difficult to get a true sense of impact unless one is very familiar with the entire project area and each alternative. The NPS recommends this section be revised for clarity.

F4t 13. Page 3-852 reports that the section of Proposed Action compared to Glass Hill Alternative would have “four high adverse impacts associated with this alignment, for a total of one adverse impact on the nature and purpose and primary uses of the Oregon NHT.” It is unclear how four “high” adverse impacts equate with one adverse impact on the NHT’s nature, purpose, and primary use. The NPS recommends this be further explained or refined accordingly. Table 2-12 (page 2-78) states that this Proposed Action section would have “five impacts ‘adverse to the nature and purpose and primary uses’ of the Oregon NHT on BLM-administered lands,” not one as stated on p. 3-852; the NPS recommends the BLM edit to ensure consistency.

F4u 14. Page 3-855 reads, “The compared-to [Timber Canyon Alternative] section of the Proposed Action would have more high and moderate impacts than the Timber Canyon alternative.” Table 2-12 (page 2-79) specifies that there would be “25 impacts ‘adverse to the nature and purpose and primary uses’ of the Oregon NHT on BLM-administered lands.” The NPS advises that it would be useful to provide the same number of impacts in both the table and the narrative on page 3-855. Also, it is sometimes unclear to the reader how these counts are derived, since the discussion can be fairly general; the NPS recommends this section be revised for clarity and accuracy.

F4v 15. Page 3-863 does not provide a total number of impacts adverse to the nature and purpose and primary uses of the Oregon NHT for the section of the proposed action compared to the Burnt River Mountain Alternative, although Table 2-12 says there are 12. Again, the NPS recommends the numbers be provided in both places and the narrative should clarify how these were counted.

F4w 16. In Appendix B.7, Part 5, page 3, the Lewis & Clark NHT is not depicted on the map, only the Lewis & Clark Scenic Byway is labeled. The Lewis & Clark historic route includes the Columbia River in addition to the overland route north of the river in Washington (coincides with the scenic byway) and the Oregon auto route. Please revise for accuracy.

F4x 17. The NPS recommends a map showing the locations of the Key Observation Points (KOP) be included in the simulations document for easier reference. It would be useful on the

F4r The text in this portion of the document has been revised.

F4s Impacts on NHTs, including the Lewis and Clark NHT, were simplified and given a single impact level which is also shown graphically on the maps contained in the Final EIS. Additionally, the application of mitigation measures to reduce these effects has been expanded.

F4t The quantification of adverse impacts on trail nature and purpose has been removed and instead, a narrative has been drafted for each alternative describing the effects on this component of trail management.

F4u The quantification of adverse impacts on trail nature and purpose has been removed and instead, a narrative has been drafted for each alternative describing the effects on this component of trail management.

F4v The quantification of adverse impacts on trail nature and purpose has been removed and instead, a narrative has been drafted for each alternative describing the effects on this component of trail management.

F4w This map is associated with assessing impacts on roads included in the Scenic Byway program and not necessarily associated with NHTs. All discussions related to NHTs have been moved to the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15) to reduce duplication of efforts and allow this section to focus on the impacts on this road as associated with its designation as a scenic byway.

F4x The KOP locations have been added to the visual resources large-format maps focused on “Viewers.” KOPs that include simulations have also been noted on this map. A location map has been added to the visual simulations to show their relative location as well as the route they are depicting. In some areas where KOPs or IOPs are associated with particular trail viewing locations, such as the Baker City trail center, they have been moved into the National Trails System section (Section 3.2.15) as part of the assessment on NHTs and references noted in the section.

No IOPs from the BLM Visual Resource Inventories were used as KOPs, if that’s what the comment is referring to. The IOPs that had been established for the BLM Manual 6280 National Historic Trails Inventory are, however, discussed in the National Trails Section (Section 3.2.15).

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F4 Department of the Interior – National Park Service (cont.)

F4x

simulation pages to note on which routing segment the photo point is located; it also would be helpful to clarify if any of the Inventory Observation Points were ultimately used as KOPs.

F4y

18. Consider showing the KOPs identified in Table 3-150 that relate to NHTs on the maps in Appendix. B.7, Part 5, for better understanding of the KOPs in relation to the trails.

F4z

19. The Duration of View impacts in Table 3-218 (page 3-731) and Table 3-252 (page 3-838) do not appear to match if the impacts were meant to be carried into the trails section; please revise for accuracy. Examples: Goodale’s Cut-off Study Trail, Proposed Action, Table 3-218 shows FG = N and MG = L, Table 3-252 shows FG = L and MG = M; Oregon Trail Proposed Action, Table 3-218 shows FG = L and MG = M while Table 3-252 shows FG = N and MG = H.

F4aa

20. On page 3-837, lines 11-21, a better explanation is needed to understand the impacts and how they relate to the thresholds shown in Table 3-252. The narrative says that the Proposed Action and several alternatives would be visible from greater than 80% of the portion of the Oregon NHT within the analysis area of the alternative, yet the table shows a “high” level of impact only for the FG of the Scale/Spatial Relationship factor. It is unclear why this does not translate to some level of impact for the Duration of View factor which shows either a “none” or “negligible” level of impact for many of the same alternatives. Perhaps relating some of the impacts by miles back to Table 3-251 (if that is the source) would be helpful. All the information may be correct but it is difficult to tell.

F4ab

21. Similar to above, page 3-838, lines 12-17, state that the Malheur A and S alternatives would not be visually evident in the landscape but still visible from 80 of the total miles of trail in the analysis area, and that the Proposed Action would create strong contrast in the foreground but would actually be seen less than either of the Malheur alternatives. The High level of impact in the foreground of the Proposed Action is shown in the Scale/Spatial Relationship factor in Table 3-252, but is low for duration, while the two Malheur alternatives show none to negligible impacts in the FG but are more visible than the Proposed Action. The NPS recommends this section be revised for clarity and possibly accuracy.

F4y

All NHT-related KOPs have been added to the appropriate NHT large-format map.

F4z

All discussion associated with National Trails have been moved into the National Trails section (Section 3.2.15) to avoid confusion and potential inconsistencies between sections. National Trails are only considered in the Visual Resources section (Section 3.2.12) if they are associated with determining compliance with BLM-VRM Class objectives.

F4aa

This table has been revised within Section 3.2.12, and analysis techniques have been revised to provide a more holistic and concise analysis of impacts. For further clarity, all analyses regarding National Trails have been moved to Section 3.2.15. KOPs related to National Trails are included within the Visual Resources Section for VRM Compliance reasons only.

F4ab

The reporting of impacts on National Historic Trails was updated in the Final EIS to display high, moderate, and low impacts by tenth mile increments to more granularly assess and display these impacts. Large format maps in the map volume display these impacts with narrations in the body of the Final EIS describing those effects.

The reporting of impacts on National Historic Trails was updated in the Final EIS to display high, moderate, and low impacts by tenth mile increments to more granularly assess and display these impacts. Large format maps in the map volume display these impacts with narrations in the body of the Final EIS describing those effects. These tables have been removed to reduce the complexity of trail impact conclusions.

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Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service

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From: Ted Buerger <ted_buerger@fws.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2015 4:06 PM
To: comment@boardmantohemingway.com
Cc: Doug Young
Subject: Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement - USFWS Comments
Attachments: B2H DEIS comments 3-19-15_TS15-397 final.pdf

Please see the attached comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service (cont.)



United States Department of the Interior

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Reply To: 7975 008
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MAR 19 2015

Memorandum

To: Don Gonzalez, District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Vale District
 Vale, Oregon

From: State Supervisor, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office
 Portland, Oregon

Subject: Comments on the Bureau of Land Management's Draft Environmental Impact
 Statement, Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) appreciates the opportunity to review and provide comments on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (Project). The Service has been actively involved with the BLM in all previous Project planning stages and has recently been a collaborative participant in the development of the DEIS.

The following Service comments continue to identify our concerns and recommendations associated with Project's direct and indirect effects on greater sage-grouse, migratory birds, and Washington ground squirrel. These Service comments are provided in accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), as amended; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*), as amended; the Endangered Species Act (ESA, 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), as amended; the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703-712); the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668c), as amended; and the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 791-828c *et seq.*), as amended. During the BLM's development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), we will continue to provide assistance in addressing the Project's impacts and offsets via our Cooperating Agency status.

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE

The greater sage-grouse is a candidate for listing under the ESA, and occupies habitats that will be crossed by the Project's transmission line and access roads. New transmission project developments, placed in or near sage-grouse habitats, will exist on the landscape for decades or longer and continually accrue significant direct and indirect impacts to sage-grouse and their habitats. These new and long-term, negative impacts can exacerbate other existing impacts and

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cause increased downward pressures on affected sage-grouse populations. Therefore, unless a new transmission line project's siting, construction, restoration, operations, maintenance, and compensatory mitigation result in a net conservation benefit to the species, a new transmission line project's new, long-term impacts may contribute to the need to list sage-grouse under the ESA.

To consistently evaluate new transmission project developments, such as the Project actions proposed in the DEIS, and provide conservation recommendations to address adverse project impacts to sage-grouse, the Service employs the recommendations and guiding concepts provided in the Conservation Opportunities Team Report (COT Report) (FWS 2013) and the Sage-grouse Range-wide Mitigation Framework (Mitigation Framework) (FWS 2014). The Service reviewed the DEIS in the context of the COT Report and Mitigation Framework and offers the following general sage-grouse comments to the BLM. The Service will continue to assist the BLM and others in addressing these Project recommendations, to ensure the FEIS describes a Project action that is as consistent as feasible with the COT Report and Mitigation Framework, and results in a net conservation benefit to sage-grouse.

Priority Sage-grouse Habitat

The COT Report stresses avoidance of new direct and indirect effects in Priority Areas of Conservation (PAC) habitats and other important sage-grouse habitats outside of PAC habitats. Additionally, Oregon's sage-grouse conservation plan does not currently accommodate new direct or indirect impacts to Category 1 habitats (Oregon's Category 1 habitats closely correspond to PAC habitats). The DEIS's Agency Preferred Alternative was based on long-term and difficult trade-offs between numerous competing resources (e.g., wildlife, visuals, land ownership, agriculture), but is commendable in avoiding much of Oregon's PAC habitat occurring along this linear project. However, according to the DEIS, the new transmission line and/or access roads will be sited in and/or adjacent to PACs in at least two Project segments in Oregon. Therefore, based on information in the DEIS, the Agency Preferred Alternative is not fully consistent with the COT Report's avoidance recommendations for PAC habitats, resulting in thousands of acres of new direct and indirect effects to sage-grouse PAC habitats. The Service recommends the FEIS evaluate additional opportunities to avoid any new impacts in PAC habitats, including rerouting Project features to locations outside of PAC habitats.

F5a

Minimization Measures

Where Project features cannot avoid new impacts to PAC habitats and other high quality sage-grouse habitats, the COT Report recommends applying protective minimization measures within PAC habitats and other high quality sage-grouse habitats. The FEIS should discuss any additional minimization measures that could be applied to reduce Project impacts to PAC habitats. These minimization measures in PAC habitats could include undergrounding discrete, limited distances of transmission line; co-locating the Project with existing transmission lines at narrowest allowable centerline-to-centerline separation distance; use of monopole tower structures to reduce risk of collision and avian predation; and providing key Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction and long-term maintenance activities, such as fire prevention and response, invasive plant management, and spatial and temporal buffers for sensitive sage-grouse habitats. The FEIS should describe how new Project minimization measures (undergrounding, co-location, monopole design, high priority BMPs) will be applied

F5b

F5a The analysis and avoidance and minimization measures are consistent with the BLM's Oregon Sub-regional Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment. The Applicant has committed to design measures and site-specific selective mitigation measures designed to avoid and minimize anticipated B2H Project effects to Greater Sage-Grouse, including preconstruction surveys for sensitive species, seasonal and spatial restrictions for B2H Project activities, flight diverters and perch deterrents, avian-safe design standards, and a Plan of Development that includes a Biological Resources Conservation Plan. The B2H Project will be designed, sited, and implemented to adhere to a mitigation hierarchy that will result in a net conservation gain for Greater Sage-Grouse.

F5b See response to Comment F5a.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F5 Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service (cont.)

3

F5c consistently across all land ownerships. The FEIS should clearly define the BLM’s long-term oversight responsibilities for long-term application, maintenance, and monitoring of minimization actions, especially minimization actions associated with sage-grouse habitats on non-Federal lands.

Assessing Impacts

F5d After exhausting and documenting all additional Project efforts to avoid and minimize new impacts to PACs and other important sage-grouse habitats, the FEIS should robustly assess any new Project direct and indirect impacts to sage-grouse habitats. The COT Report recommends assessing and quantifying a project’s direct and indirect impacts to sage-grouse using a scientifically defensible approach. Examples of a scientifically defensible approach include the State of Oregon’s sage-grouse conservation plan’s (Plan), and associated mitigation framework’s sage-grouse impact assessment guidance, and recent scientific literature on sage-grouse indirect effects associated with transmission line projects. The Service notes that the DEIS correctly applied the Plan’s sage-grouse impact assessment guidance for determining new Project access road and transmission line impacts to Low Density sage-grouse habitat, but failed to incorporate recent scientific literature on indirect effects of transmission line projects to sage-grouse. Because Oregon’s Plan stresses avoidance of new impacts to Category 1 sage-grouse habitat, the Plan and associated mitigation framework does not identify analytical methods for assessing direct or indirect impacts of transmission line and access roads to Category 1 and other priority habitats. Unfortunately, the DEIS incorrectly applied the Plan’s Low Density habitat impact analytical methods to elevated-priority Category 1 habitats. However, we understand the BLM has begun discussions of the need for developing a methodology for calculating impacts to these priority sage-grouse habitats. The FEIS therefore should apply a new, enhanced analysis methodology for calculating any residual direct and indirect effects that will occur to Category 1 and other priority habitats that accrue from the Project’s features and activities.

Compensatory Mitigation

F5e The Project’s proposed Habitat Mitigation Plan (HMP) was not included in the DEIS. The Service’s previous review of the HMP indicated it was inadequate to offset the Project direct and indirect impacts to sage-grouse, as it lacked full consideration of indirect effects, proposed minimal mitigation ratios, did not provide enhanced mitigation for Category 1 and PAC habitat impacts, and did not guarantee that proposed mitigation actions would be consistent with basic mitigation standards related to additionality, durability, and effectiveness. The DEIS addressed these HMP shortcomings by identifying a Sage-grouse Mitigation Blueprint (Blueprint) and associated Project Mitigation Framework (PMF) that collectively describe how the BLM expects the Project will assess and offset significant residual adverse impacts to sage-grouse due to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Project. The Blueprint and PMF provide guidance for impact assessment methodologies, mitigation Principles and Standards, and mitigation amounts, actions, and selection criteria. The DEIS indicated that the Project would use these two sage-grouse mitigation documents to guide its development of a new sage-grouse HMP, and the BLM would use the Blueprint and PMF documents to review and evaluate the adequacy of that updated HMP. The DEIS also indicated that the BLM would use these two documents, over the long term, to monitor and evaluate the Project’s consistency with this mitigation guidance. Unfortunately the DEIS was unclear how the BLM will ensure the

F5c Comment noted.

F5d Section 3.2.4.4 has been updated to include a new methodology for determining direct and indirect impacts to Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, and references to recent scientific literature on indirect effects of transmission line projects on Greater Sage-Grouse.

F5e Comment noted. The analysis for Greater Sage-Grouse has been revised for the Final EIS and addresses direct and indirect impacts to priority habitats, including Priority Habitat Management Areas, General Habitat Management Areas, and Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs). The analysis and avoidance and minimization measures are consistent with the BLM’s ARMPAs for Oregon and Idaho, and have been developed in coordination with ODWF and FWS.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F5 Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service (cont.)

4

Project's sage-grouse HMP will be enforceable and consistent, across all land ownerships, over the life of project effects.

F5f

The Service finds the Blueprint and PMF to be closely consistent with the Service's Range-wide Sage-grouse Mitigation Framework, and therefore supports use of these two documents in developing, evaluating, implementing, monitoring, and overseeing the Project's final sage-grouse HMP. The FEIS should use these two mitigation guidance documents to evaluate the adequacy of any updated sage-grouse HMP, and the FEIS should describe any additional HMP measures necessary to achieve full adequacy. The FEIS also should describe how the BLM will use these two documents to monitor, assess, and assure the adequacy of implementation of the final sage-grouse HMP over the Project's long-term Operations and Maintenance (O&M) phase, across all land ownerships. The FEIS also should identify measures that the BLM will take if unexpected deviations occur from the approved HMP.

State Sage-grouse Plan Update

F5g

The Service notes that the State of Oregon's ongoing SageCon process will likely define a new, Statewide sage-grouse conservation strategy that will include guidance for limiting new project impacts in Oregon's PAC habitats. If available in a timely fashion, any new Oregon sage-grouse conservation strategy should be considered and incorporated, as appropriate, into the FEIS.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

F5h

The DEIS often relied on Idaho Power Company's (IPC's) Avian Protection Plan (APP) standards for discussing the Project's siting, design, construction, maintenance, and monitoring. However, IPC's APP is generally written to discuss how IPC will manage their existing (not new) transmission infrastructure. The new Project will cross multiple, important migratory bird habitats, and will accrue significant adverse effects during construction and long-term O&M phases (e.g., permanent removal of more than 800 acres of forested habitat, plus additional danger trees removed outside of right-of-way, over the life of the Project), and therefore necessitates a Project-specific Migratory Bird Conservation Plan (Conservation Plan).

F5i

As noted in a July 23, 2013, letter to IPC, the BLM indicated it will comply with Executive Order (EO) 13186 and the MOU between the Service and the BLM for implementing EO 13186, and indicated to IPC that the company should provide an adequate assessment of migratory bird habitat loss and fragmentation due to Project impacts. The July 23, 2013, letter also indicated that the company should develop a unique Conservation Plan for the new Project, to be completed between the DEIS and FEIS, and include compensatory mitigation for the Project's direct and indirect impacts to various migratory bird habitats. Unfortunately, the DEIS did not discuss the July 23, 2013, BLM letter and its Conservation Plan-related guidance, and did not repeat the BLM's previous formal guidance that IPC should develop a Conservation Plan for inclusion in the FEIS. To the Service's knowledge, IPC has not started work on a Conservation Plan for the Project.

The Service has previously provided to IPC and the BLM an outline for an adequate Conservation Plan, with recommendations to address Project siting, design, impact assessments, monitoring, adaptive management, and compensatory mitigation. The BLM's PMF should be updated to incorporate this Service guidance for development of an adequate Conservation Plan. The FEIS should include the final Project Conservation Plan, and determine if it is adequate to

Appendix E, Greater Sage-Grouse Mitigation Blueprint is not included in the Final EIS. This appendix in the Draft EIS has evolved to include the direction in the Greater Sage-Grouse Range-wide Mitigation Framework and the Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments (ARMPAs) for Oregon and Idaho. The analysis for Greater Sage-Grouse was expanded in the Final EIS for consistency with the direction in the ARMPAs and the BLM's Draft – Regional Mitigation Strategy 1794 (both which reflect the strategy and objectives of the previous Blueprint document). The Applicant has committed to Design Features of the B2H Project for environmental protection and site-specific Selective Mitigation Measures that are similar with those included in the ARMPAs. The B2H Project will be designed, sited, and implemented to adhere to a mitigation hierarchy that will result in a net conservation gain for Greater Sage-Grouse.

Appendix D, Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources was revised for the Final EIS as Appendix C to provide additional information about BLM's requirements and a framework for compensatory mitigation for all resources.

F5f Appendix C in the Final EIS is a Mitigation Framework. As the name suggests, the Mitigation Framework is intended to be a detailed framework, not a site-specific mitigation plan. The Mitigation Framework (1) establishes how avoidance and minimization have eliminated and/or reduced impacts; (2) identifies residual resource effects that meet criteria for warranting compensatory mitigation; and (3) provides a framework for how the appropriate level and type of compensatory mitigation will be determined for those resource effects.

Upon selection of the final route in the Record of Decision and following final engineering and design. The Compensatory Mitigation Plan will be prepared using the Mitigation Framework as a guide in assessing the direct and indirect impacts based on an engineered and designed alignment, and will identify a suite of site-specific compensatory mitigation options for selection and implementation under the review and guidance of the cooperating agencies. The final detailed Compensatory Mitigation Plan must be reviewed by the cooperating agencies and a recommendation will be made to the Authorized Officer for approval prior to any issuance of Notices to Proceed.

Any necessary modifications to the Mitigation Framework will be addressed in the Record of Decision.

F5g Comment noted. The analysis for Greater Sage-Grouse has been revised for the Final EIS and addresses direct and indirect impacts to priority habitats, including Priority Habitat Management Areas, General Habitat Management Areas, and Priority Areas for Conservation (PACs). The analysis and avoidance and minimization measures are consistent with the BLM's ARMPAs for Oregon and Idaho, and have been developed in coordination with ODWF and FWS.

F5h See next page for response to F5h.

F5i See next page for response to F5i.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F5 Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service (cont.)

5

F5i

address the Project's unique impacts to migratory birds and their habitats, over the Project's life and across all land ownerships. The FEIS also should include information on how the BLM will ensure the implementation of the Conservation Plan, over the Project's life and across all land ownerships.

WASHINGTON GROUND SQUIRREL

F5j

The DEIS discussed the Project's direct and indirect effects on Washington ground squirrel, and correctly anticipated that these Project impacts will occur in currently occupied as well as suitable Washington ground squirrel habitat that may become occupied over the life of the Project. However, the DEIS did not fully assess or quantify the Project's indirect effects in currently occupied or suitable habitat. Additionally, while the DEIS indicated that compensatory mitigation would be necessary to offset the Project's indirect and direct effects in suitable Washington ground squirrel habitat, the DEIS did not identify the type and amount of compensatory mitigation necessary to offset these Project impacts. The FEIS should therefore define an analytical method for assessing indirect effects to occupied and suitable habitat, and include a compensatory mitigation plan to address all Project impacts to currently occupied and suitable Washington ground squirrel habitat, over the Project's life and across all land ownerships.

CONSISTENCY ACROSS ALL LAND OWNERSHIPS

F5k

The Project will have significant impacts on non-Federal lands, which comprise approximately two-thirds of the total Project miles. The DEIS did not clearly describe if Project actions such as design, BMPs, and compensatory mitigation were consistent between Federal and non-Federal lands, and how the BLM would ensure the Project's actions were implemented, over the Project's life, on all land ownerships. Any differing design, BMPs, and mitigations applied to different land ownerships, and any differing BLM oversight based on land ownership, will likely cause significant differences in Project impacts to occur among different landownerships.

The FEIS should explain if the Project's actions and BLM oversight will be consistently applied across all land ownerships. If Project actions and BLM oversight differ among land ownerships, the FEIS should describe these differing Project actions and BLM oversight, and provide separate impact analyses for Federal and non-Federal land impacts. The FEIS also should discuss how the BLM will manage its right-of-way authorization in future, across all land ownerships, to address any deviations from the FEIS' descriptions and commitments associated with Project actions and oversight.

PROJECT MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

The DEIS included a PMF to guide the assessment of impacts and development of adequate mitigation actions for impacted biological resources. The PMF anticipates the Project will develop compensatory mitigation plans for impacted biological resources; these mitigation plans will be consistent with the Mitigation Framework's Principles and Standards, and the PMF will be used in the FEIS to assess Project HMP adequacy. The Service supports the guidance in the PMF and anticipates it will assist in adequate impact assessment and compensatory mitigation planning. The Service also supports the DEIS statements that the BLM will use the PMF in the FEIS to assess adequacy of the Project's updated HMP, and will ensure the durability of these compensatory mitigation actions, across all land ownerships, via the BLM's Project right-of-way authorization.

F5h

The analysis for migratory birds has been revised for the Final EIS to include additional analysis and discussion of the direct and indirect effects to migratory birds. In addition, the Applicant has committed to project-specific design features and mitigation measures, including preconstruction surveys, seasonal and spatial restrictions, limited B2H Project activities during nesting season, and avian-safe design standards. Compensatory mitigation required for Greater Sage-Grouse will provide further mitigation for impacts to shrub-steppe obligate migratory bird species, as described in Appendix C.

F5i

See response to Comment F5h.

F5j

The EIS has been revised to include Washington ground squirrel indirect effects quantification and discussion. Additionally, Appendix D - Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources has been revised for the Final EIS as Appendix C to include details on compensatory mitigation requirements for Washington ground squirrel.

F5k

Comments on the Draft EIS expressed that not enough information was provided in the Draft EIS to enable the reviewers to understand where impacts would occur and where mitigation would be applied to reduce impacts. Chapter 2, Section 2.5.1 of the Final EIS presents an explanation of the study and analysis approach employed for the B2H Project. Chapter 3 has been expanded to provide more description of the methods for used for analyzing effects associated with each resource (tiered to the overall approach). Chapter 3 also provides more information about the resources, mitigation applied to reduce impacts, and residual impacts on resources along each alternative route by segment. In addition, a map volume of large-scale maps is provided to present resource data and to show the level of residual impact on the resources along all of the alternative routes.

While federal land-managing agencies do not have authority over nonfederal lands, federal agencies do have an obligation to disclose effects of its decisions on lands and resources affected by the decision. Therefore, the BLM uses the same systematic, defensible approach on all lands, regardless of jurisdiction, to analyze and compare the alternative routes, using consistent data and approach. In addition, as the lead federal agency for the EIS, the BLM is the federal steward for federally protected resources on all lands such as cultural resources (under Section 106 of the NHPA), biological resources (under Section 7 of the ESA), and paleontological resources (under the Paleontological Resources Protection Act). The BLM is addressing the protection and management of the federally protected resources (i.e., regardless of land jurisdiction) rather than management of the land. If, in negotiations with private landowners, a landowner's preference for mitigation measures differs, other than the federally protected resources, the BLM will respect that through its compliance inspection contractor and the landowner will negotiate its preferences with the Applicant. However, the BLM will ask for a signed statement to that effect to document the project record.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F5	Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service (cont.)
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F5i [The Service notes that DEIS Appendix D Table 2 does not identify compensatory mitigation for impacts to migratory bird habitats. Mitigation for migratory bird habitat impacts should be included in any updated PMF. Additionally, it is unclear if the reference in Table 2 to Washington ground squirrel mitigation was based on analysis and mitigation for impacts to Washington ground squirrel suitable habitat, as defined and discussed in Chapter 3 of the DEIS. The updated PMF should therefore indicate that these migratory bird and suitable Washington ground squirrel habitats should be addressed in the final Project HMP.

F5m [Finally, the DEIS indicates that compensatory mitigation is expected only for resources that experience “High” residual impacts. The Service recommends that any adverse residual impact to wildlife resources, from any Project phase and on any land ownership, should be subject to compensatory mitigation that is consistent with guidance in the PMF.

SUMMARY

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the DEIS. The DEIS provides an important review of this complex project. These Service comments, and the DEIS, identify significant work that needs to be accomplished prior to completion of the FEIS. The Service looks forward to continuing our partnership with the BLM, between now and the FEIS publication, in support of critical energy infrastructure development while ensuring conservation of important wildlife values.

Please contact Doug Young, Energy Program Manager, at 503-231-6179 if you have any questions on the Service’s comments.

cc:
 N. Seidel, ODFW, La Grande
 T. Rabot, S. Stavrakis, FWS Region 1
 K. Powell, FWS, Boise
 G. Miller, FWS, La Grande

LITERATURE CITED

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013. Greater Sage-grouse Conservation Opportunities Team: Final Report. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver, CO.
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2014. Greater Sage-grouse Range-wide Mitigation Framework. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Denver, CO.

F5i [See response to Comment F5h and F5i.

F5m [See response to Comment F5b. Refer to Appendix C for criteria for determining what residual effects require compensatory mitigation.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F6

Environmental Protection Agency



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
 REGION 10
 1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
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OFFICE OF
 ECOSYSTEMS,
 TRIBAL AND PUBLIC
 AFFAIRS

March 17, 2015

Tamara Gretsch, BLM National Project Manager
 Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
 PO Box 655
 Vale, Oregon 97918

Dear Ms. Gretsch:

We have reviewed the Bureau of Land Management’s December 2014 Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Land-use Plan Amendments for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project. (EPA Region 10 Project Number: 08-055-BLM).

Our review was conducted in accordance with the EPA’s responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Section 309 specifically directs the EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts associated with all major federal actions. Our review of the DEIS prepared for the proposed action considers expected environmental impacts and the adequacy of the EIS in meeting procedural and public disclosure requirements of the NEPA.

EPA DEIS rating

We are rating the DEIS Environmental Concerns – Adequate (EC-1). We are rating the DEIS EC-1 because we believe environmental impacts can be further avoided and minimized through the co-location of the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line with other transmission lines.

Project summary

The DEIS analyzes the impacts related to granting a right-of-way across federal land to the Idaho Power Company for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project. The B2H Project would include a single-circuit alternating-current, 500-kilovolt (kV) overhead electric transmission line with ancillary facilities. The transmission line would be approximately 305 miles long, and would connect the Grassland Substation located near the city of Boardman, Morrow County, Oregon, to the existing Hemingway Substation near the city of Melba, Owyhee County, Idaho.

Responsiveness to the EPA’s input

The EPA has provided written comments and participated in cooperating agency meetings for the B2H Project since 2008. Here we note several areas where your DEIS shows responsiveness to our input, which we appreciate.

Your information on “Alternatives to Transmission Line Construction” communicates important efforts to avoid the need for transmission lines. Efforts to avoid the need for transmission lines are important because transmission lines, such as the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line, will cause high,

F6a

F6a

Comment noted.

COMMENT(S)

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F6 Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

long-term adverse effects to wildlife; cultural and historic resources; and visual and vegetation resources.

Your decision to identify the environmentally preferred alternative in the DEIS goes above and beyond the requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the NEPA. We applaud this decision and believe identifying the environmentally preferred alternative as soon as possible helps to sharply define the issues and provide a clear basis for choice by the decision-makers and the public. We are also pleased to see that the Agency Preferred Alternative is the same as the Environmentally Preferred Alternative.

We also note our appreciation for the substantial efforts of the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, Idaho Governor's Office of Energy Resources, Idaho Fish and Game, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Idaho Power Company in the development of the Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources¹ and the Greater Sage-Grouse Mitigation Blueprint.² Information in the Framework and Blueprint will help guide effective mitigation planning.

Co-locating the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line

We are pleased to know that the BLM is engaged in a process to avoid and minimize adverse impacts through the co-location of the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line with other transmission lines; consistent with the Western Electricity Coordinating Council's newer 2012 250-foot separation distance guidance.

We strongly encourage the BLM to pursue this effort to the maximum extent possible because we believe meaningful environmental benefits would be a likely result. Environmental benefits from transmission line co-location appears to be the case for the Vantage to Pomona Heights Transmission Line and Gateway West Transmission Line Projects. For Vantage to Pomona Heights, the BLM's January 2015 Supplemental DEIS includes new alternatives which are 19-26 miles shorter than the DEIS's 66 mile Agency Preferred route. For Gateway West, the BLM's September 2014 Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental DEIS includes a new proposed route 250 feet from an existing line for 28.7 miles. This co-location will allow the Applicant to use existing roads beneath the existing 500 kV transmission line.

Constructing shorter transmission lines and using existing roads facilitates the avoidance and minimization of many typical effects of high-voltage transmission lines on lands and resources, including: displacement of some land uses, noise, electromagnetic and visual impacts, habitat fragmentation and displacement of wildlife, and effects to soil and water resources.

Mitigation

To help ensure the Final Compensatory Mitigation Plans adequately protects species and habitats, we recommend that the Final Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources include additional information detailing how the lead agencies intend to consider input on non-listed species from state and federal fish and wildlife agencies.

¹ DEIS, Appendix D
² DEIS, Appendix E

F6b [Comment noted.

F6c [Comment noted.

Appendix D, Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources, in the Draft EIS was revised for the Final EIS to provide additional information about BLM's requirements and a framework for compensatory mitigation for all resources.

Appendix C in the Final EIS is a Mitigation Framework; this appendix replaces Appendix D, Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources, and Appendix E, Greater Sage-Grouse Mitigation Blueprint in the Draft EIS. As the name suggests, the Mitigation Framework (Appendix C of the Final EIS) is intended to be a detailed framework, not a site-specific mitigation plan. The Mitigation Framework (1) establishes how avoidance and minimization have eliminated and/or reduced impacts; (2) identifies residual resource effects that meet criteria for warranting compensatory mitigation; and (3) provides a framework for how the appropriate level and type of compensatory mitigation will be determined for those resource effects. Many of the mitigation actions originated from elements in the Draft Framework for Development of Compensatory Mitigation Plans for Biological Resources and the Greater Sage-Grouse Mitigation Blueprint included as Appendix D and Appendix E, respectively, in the Draft EIS for the B2H Project and have been expanded or revised based on recent DOI and BLM policy and guidance and comments on the Draft EIS.

F6d

Upon selection of the final route in the Record of Decision and following final engineering and design, the Compensatory Mitigation Plan will be prepared using the Mitigation Framework as a guide in assessing the direct and indirect impacts based on an engineered and designed alignment, and will identify a suite of site-specific compensatory mitigation options for selection and implementation under the review and guidance of the cooperating agencies. The final detailed Compensatory Mitigation Plan must be reviewed by the cooperating agencies and a recommendation will be made to the Authorized Officer for approval prior to any issuance of Notices to Proceed.

Any necessary modifications to the Mitigation Framework will be addressed in the Record of Decision.

COMMENT(S)

RESPONSE(S)

F6	Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)
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F6e **Noxious weeds**
 To adequately protect the environment from the spread of noxious weeds which may occur in Idaho Power Company's right-of-way as a result of their activities, we recommend that the FEIS include additional information relating to Design Feature OM-8.

If noxious-weed species occur within IPC's right-of-way as a result of IPC activities, IPC would coordinate treatment with the BLM, USFS, or other land owners as applicable. Treatments would be in compliance with BLM and USFS land use plans and guidance. When determining whether treatment is necessary and whether it would produce the desired results, IPC would consider surrounding site conditions and whether weed-control activities would be conducted by other parties. IPC is only responsible for controlling noxious weeds to pre-disturbance levels.³

- F6f *Recommendations:*
- We recommend that the FEIS describe the meaning of "...result of IPC activities". We believe that IPC's responsibility for noxious weeds in the right-of-way should be interpreted broadly. IPC should consider, for example, that weeds spread by private citizens illegally using Project-related roads and ROW areas are indirect impacts of the Project; they are a result of IPC activities.
 - We recommend that the FEIS edit or explain what is meant by, "...IPC would consider...whether weed-control activities would be conducted by other parties." The Design Feature should be clear about IPC's responsibility to control noxious weeds. We are concerned that considering whether control activities would be conducted by others could be a means of postponing IPC efforts.
 - We recommend that the FEIS elaborate on pre-disturbance levels. When and how will pre-disturbance levels be determined by IPC? And, what is the post-disturbance monitoring process for ensuring that weeds are kept below pre-disturbance levels?
 - Given the Proposed Action's potential contribution to major long-term adverse cumulative effects of noxious weeds in the Project's geographic area of influence, we recommend that the FEIS delete the word "only" from OM-8. Simply stating that IPC is responsible for controlling noxious weeds to pre-disturbance levels is more in line with the spirit of environmental protection given the cumulative effect context for noxious weeds in the area.

³ DEIS, p. C-17

F6e The intent of the requested text edits are inherent in the requirements of mitigation measures set in Design Feature 1 (Table 2-7) which establishes the creation of a Noxious Weed Management Plan to be included in the Plan of Development. That will provide details of weed control thresholds, protocols, and management responsibilities. These mitigation measures have been considered as a requirement for construction, operation, and maintenance and will be transferred to the Plan of Development which will be a condition of the Record of Decision and a stipulation of the right-of-way grant.

F6f Weed control activities related to construction, operation and maintenance of the B2H Project would indeed be the responsibility of the Applicant, even if the work is completed by their subcontractors. The BLM expects that the weed control requirements specified in the POD (POD Appendix B2) will be applied to all lands in the B2H Project area regardless of jurisdiction unless requested otherwise by individual landowners.

F6f Weed control activities, Applicant responsibilities, and extent of areas requiring weed control will be identified in the in the Noxious Weed Management Plan and included in the Plan of Development. The Plan of Development must be approved by the BLM and cooperating agencies prior to the issuance of the Record of Decision and right-of-way grant. All cooperating agencies will have the opportunity to review the Noxious Weed Management Plan and help determine control responsibilities and extent of area requiring weed control.

F6g See response to Comment F6f.

F6h See response to Comment F6e.

F6i See response to Comment F6e.

COMMENT(S)

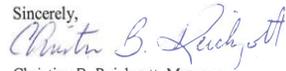
RESPONSE(S)

F6

Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and if you have any questions please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or by electronic mail at reichgott.christine@epa.gov, or you may contact Erik Peterson of my staff at (206) 553-6382 or by electronic mail at peterson.erik@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit

Enclosure:

1. EPA Rating System for Draft Environmental Impact Statements

ATTACHMENT**F6****Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)**

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for
Draft Environmental Impact Statements
Definitions and Follow-Up Action***

Environmental Impact of the Action

LO – Lack of Objections

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC – Environmental Concerns

EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce these impacts.

EO – Environmental Objections

EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no-action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU – Environmentally Unsatisfactory

EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1 – Adequate

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis of data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2 – Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3 – Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

* From EPA Manual 1640 Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment. February, 1987.