

Hooper Springs Transmission Project

Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

May 2014



Volume 2: Comments and Responses to the
Draft Environmental Impact Statement

DOE/EIS-0451



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1. Introduction

This volume of the Hooper Springs Transmission Project supplemental draft environmental impact statement (EIS) identifies comments received on the draft EIS, and provides BPA's responses to these comments. Section 2 of this volume provides an overview of the comments received on the draft EIS. Section 3 of this volume includes responses to the comments received on the draft EIS. The letters, e-mails, and forms received on the draft EIS, as well as the draft EIS public meeting notes, are provided in their entirety in Section 4 at the end of this volume.

2. Comment Overview

Comments on the draft EIS were submitted at the April 3, 2013 draft EIS public meeting, at two Caribou County Commissioners meetings, and in comment forms, emails, and letters received during and following the draft EIS public comment period. Comments were received from federal, state, tribes, and local agencies, as well as private citizens living in Caribou County. Comments were designated with an identifying number based on the order in which the letter, e-mail, or other item of correspondence was received. Table 2.1 identifies the comment number for each item of correspondence as well as its source.

BPA catalogued a total of 456 comments received on the draft EIS. Comments were primarily made on Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the draft EIS. Chapter 1, Purpose of Need for Action, received about 13 percent of the comments. Chapter 1 comments focused on the project need and public involvement. Chapter 2, Proposed Project and Alternatives, attracted about 26 percent of the comments. These comments focused largely on the transmission line alternatives and option routes including identification of a preferred alternative, easements, transmission line components, and estimated project cost.

Chapter 3, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures, received most of the comments (61 percent). Comments were in the following areas: land use (9 percent); recreation (0.4 percent); visual resources (9 percent); water resources, floodplains, and wetlands (3 percent); wildlife (48 percent); fish (0.8 percent); cultural resources (3 percent); socioeconomics (6 percent); transportation (3 percent); public health and safety (11 percent); greenhouse gases (0.8 percent); and cumulative impacts (4 percent).

The remaining comments consisted of comments made on the Appendices (CNF Plan Amendment) and other miscellaneous comments.

Table 2-1. List of Correspondence and Commenters

Log No.	Name	Affiliation/State
HSTP13 0001	Bruce Harris	Washington
HSTP13 0002	James Joyner	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
HSTP13 0003	Terry Hatch	Idaho
HSTP13 0004	R. Mitchell	Idaho
HSTP13 0005	Richard Steffens	Idaho
HSTP13 0006	Scott Brown	Idaho
HSTP13 0007	Chris Bauer	Idaho
HSTP13 0008	Jerry Eichhorst	Idaho Chapter Oregon-California Trails Association
HSTP13 0009	Byron Knutsen	Oregon-California Trails Association
HSTP13 0010	Alan Prouty	J.R. Simplot Company
HSTP13 0011	Gary Miller	Idaho
HSTP13 0012	Marie Miller	Idaho
HSTP13 0013	Ruth Shea	Trumpeter Swan Society
HSTP13 0014	Roderick Drewien	Idaho
HSTP13 0015	Theogene Mbabaliye	U.S. EPA, Region 10
HSTP13 0016	John Robison	Idaho Conservation League
HSTP13 0017	Adonia Henry	Idaho
HSTP13 0018	Al Kackley	Idaho
HSTP13 0020	Nisa Marks	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
HSTP13 0021	James Crawford	Idaho
HSTP13 0022	John Chatburn	Idaho Governor's Office of Energy Resources
HSTP13 0024	Ross Wilde	Idaho
HSTP13 0025		Varied
HSTP13 0026	Craig Christensen	Idaho
HSTP13 0027	Al and Ellis Kackley	Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands
HSTP13 0028	Caribou County Commissioner Meeting – 6/25-2012	Caribou County
HSTP13 0029	Caribou County Commissioner Meeting – 9-24-2012	Caribou County
HSTP13 0030	Randy Thompson	Bureau of Indian Affairs
HSTP13 0031	Andrea Santarsiere	Greater Yellowstone Coalition

3. Response to Comments on the Draft EIS

This section of Volume 2 provides BPA's responses to the comments received on the draft EIS. These comments, and responses to each comment, are organized by chapter/section generally in accordance with the table of contents of the draft and supplemental EISs.

Purpose of and Need for Action (Chapter 1)

Need for Action

Comment: *Please better define the purpose and need for the project. Please identify whether the proposed line is designed primarily to accommodate additional electrical demand, or to provide redundancy in the grid. If the latter, please explain how the proposed project accomplishes the goal of increased transmission system reliability (i.e. the relationship between redundancy and reliability). [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *It is incumbent on BPA to provide a thorough explanation of the need for this transmission line to the citizens in Caribou County.*

Response: Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for Action of the EIS, describes the need for the project. Additional information about the project need has been added to Chapter 1 to further explain the need for the project. As described in Section 1.1 of the EIS, a new 115-kV transmission line would primarily address the current voltage stability and reliability concerns while also accommodating additional electrical demand during peak system loads on the southern portion of LVE's transmission system. Voltage instability could occur if there is an outage on LVE's Palisades – Snake River transmission line during peak system loads in winter. This type of situation is typically described as a single contingency that BPA must account for when planning and operating the transmission grid to prevent violation of NERC Reliability Standards. If LVE's Palisades-Snake River transmission line did experience an outage, low voltage conditions would exist at Teton, Tincup and Snake River Substations if the problem is not fixed by January 2014. Additionally, LVE's Teton – Wilson and Palisades – Swan Valley transmission lines are expected to reach 101% of their thermal capacity by winter and summer 2015. If a line reaches its thermal capacity then it must be shut down possibly causing outages to customers. Shutting a line down may have ripple effects in the system that could increase loading on other lines that would require they also be shut down resulting in additional outages to customers.

A secondary need for the line is to provide redundancy in the transmission system in SE Idaho/NW Wyoming. Currently all of the transmission lines for the FREC and LVE service areas from West Yellowstone, Montana south to Afton, Wyoming originate from PacifiCorp's Goshen Substation. If a major power failure occurs at Goshen Substation, then a second transmission line into the SE Idaho area would help alleviate major outages to customers of FREC and LVE.

Comment: *When you talked about this is in response to a perceived instability in your grid, is this instability currently in your grid or is it a proposed or an expected instability that will arise in the future? And this is premised on population growth for this region? How big of a region are we talking about? Eastern Idaho, all of Idaho, part of Wyoming? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Why is it [the line] unreliable right now? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: As discussed in Chapter 1 of the EIS, the current transmission system is reliable and there is not a current instability issue on the grid. Based on system conditions, the first system instability could occur as early as January 2014, as described above.

Concerning the role of population growth in load growth, the transmission system planning studies that BPA performs take into account overall electrical use in the area. Electrical use in the area includes not only population growth but also other factors such as new generation projects and new industrial loads. In general, the area considered in the planning studies included southern Montana, eastern Idaho and Western Wyoming. The area spans approximately 13,000 square miles and includes Jackson, Wyoming and Driggs, Idaho as well as many small remote areas such as West Yellowstone, Montana and Afton, Wyoming.

Comment: *Well, have you ever had a collapse of it [the system]? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Has that ever happened that you have had to drop people off [the system]? Where at? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: To date, there has not been any instances of a collapse of the transmission system in the project area, and BPA has not had to drop customers off the system to maintain reliability. System instability has not occurred because WECC criteria mandates that BPA design and operate the system in a way that does not allow for collapse in case a critical outage occurs under peak loading. However, as discussed, in Chapter 1 of the EIS, stability and reliability problems are projected to occur in the near future without implementation of the proposed project.

Comment: *I'm wondering – I haven't studied the whole thing, but I'm wondering how much need there really is for this line? I mean, we've been getting along forever without this line. I just wonder how important it really is? If we're really short on power or if maybe Jackson out to quit heating \$7 million homes. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *So the perception of instability with this particular 32-mile line could potentially be something you are looking at 20, 25 years in the future? So it could be unnecessary if population were to decline or remain static? But didn't you say right now you're projecting the instability will start showing up about 2014?[HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Why has oil dropped down 8 percent just this week? I mean -- I mean energy costs are going down because there's no demand for 'em and you are telling us we're going up 3 percent. This does not make sense. [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *So then everything -- I mean, if everything were to stay constant, we'd be okay? Okay. So then why are we putting the new line in? So there is some growth then? Okay. But I haven't seen any of this growth. Where is it happening? Is it Jackson Hole? Due to the recession, this growth has not happened. So we're in a recession and you're saying your demand has gone up 3 percent? Does that make sense, really? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The reasons for why the project is needed are described in Chapter 1 of the EIS. As discussed in previous responses, BPA transmission planners study the entire transmission system in this area as a whole. The transmission system in this area covers all of SE Idaho and NW Wyoming. BPA studies the transmission system very closely at 5 and 10 year intervals to insure the system can handle any expected load growth. While expected electrical load growth in Jackson Hole is a factor, load growth has occurred and is expected to occur throughout the study area, regardless of variations over time in fuel prices. Chapter 1 of the EIS has been updated to better reflect the current expected range of load growth rate that could occur and to better explain when potential stability and reliability problems on the system could occur.

Comment: *So how far out do you project your -- your need to where it affects your infrastructure to stabilize your grid?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As discussed above, BPA transmission planning engineers study the transmission system at 5 and 10 year intervals to determine system stability and needs during times of peak loading. Any predictions further out than that would be difficult to determine and are considered speculative. However, it is expected that the proposed project would avoid the need for any further large transmission projects in the area for the foreseeable future.

Comment: *I'm sure you're aware that Simplot will be closing its Smoky Mine out there in Smoky Canon. That's where the line goes from the substation down Tenco. It goes south from there and it goes over to Smoky Canon and supplies Simplot's energy needs. And I'm a little bit curious as to why it can't be put off for another couple of years while they're closing that mine down and use that energy rather than create a new line through undisturbed property? Well, you mentioned that this new line is going to be hooked up to Lower Valley Energy, and I believe it's Lower Valley Energy that does supply the power to Simplot. And it looks like that would be an available resource rather than creating another one. [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *My first question is: What about the power that will be coming from the Simplot mine in two years when they close down that will no longer be used? Is that something that can go into the system and be distributed? They use an awful lot of power up there and they're going to be closing down. What will happen to the power wattage that was used at Simplot?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: As noted in Chapter 1 and in responses above, the proposed transmission line is needed for future peak demand based on projected load growth in the entire SE Idaho/NW Wyoming area. The reduction in power demand from the planned closure of Simplot's Smoky Mine does not have a large enough impact on overall expected peak loads within the southern portion of LVE's transmission system to change planning study results or the need for the proposed line.

Comment: *But that line is beyond where you are connecting in. If you lose that line on the other side, what difference does it make if you build this line at all? I'm not getting that.* [HSTP13 0025]

Comment: *If it's all coming from the Palisades, why do we need it to come through here?* [HSTP13 0025]

Comment: *It doesn't continue to loop the other way? Where it goes into Idaho Falls, is that where it's going? That loop doesn't continue back around to Palisades?* [HSTP13 0025]

Comment: *Wouldn't that feed if this line down on Palisades goes out?* [HSTP13 0025]

Response: As noted above, the proposed transmission lines would provide redundancy to the SE Idaho and NW Wyoming transmission system. The proposed Hooper Springs Substation and transmission lines would provide another transmission path for the power in the event the connection to Palisades Dam through Snake River Substation is lost or overloaded. The transmission system loop that BPA is proposing to connect into feeds LVE's Lanes Creek, Valley and Tincup substations in Caribou County in addition to LVE's Freedom, Bedford, Grover, Afton 1 and Dry Creek substations in Wyoming. The proposed transmission lines would also provide another line to LVE and FREC customers in case a major power failure occurred at PacifiCorp's Goshen Substation.

Comment: *The need for new transmission in the Northwest has been well documented and this project represents an opportunity to enhance the reliability of the region's electric power grid. The new Hooper Springs-Lower Valley 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line proposed by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is designed to maintain voltage stability and accommodate load growth. Knowing that additional transmission capacity will be available in the future factors into Idaho's every planning goals and increases opportunities for economic development.* [HSTP13 0010]

Response: Comment noted.

Purpose of Action

Comment: *So these people won't get any benefit, except maybe up the power rates from what they are now? [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *What benefit is it? That's what Mrs. Torgesen just said. What benefit do we get out of it, other than if you do access a private property with monetary return? Are there other benefits? [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *I don't see where it's going to benefit this community ever. The power is already here and you're going to move it from here somewhere else. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *I want you people to know that you have been to my home twice. We have been out to Clark Valley to the cattle range. I have not really heard anything here much today that we haven't discussed with your crew. That being said, they were very nice to me, but I have not found one iota of a thing that will benefit me from this line going through. I told them that when they came and I haven't change my mind. But I do want you to know that they have treated me very nicely. Thank you. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: The benefit to Caribou County residents would be continued reliable electrical service from their local power provider during times of peak loads. Additionally, customers of LVE and FREC would see the most benefit because the proposed transmission lines would provide another transmission line into their area helping to alleviate major outages to those customers. Also, Hooper Springs Substation would be designed and constructed with room to expand if additional service to the City of Soda Springs is needed in the future.

Comment: *When you say northern California, how far south does that go? Does it take San Francisco? So basically it's Oregon, Washington, some in California, Idaho?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Now, is it possible, once you get this line in, that you are going to be able to transmit more electricity into a higher-priced market such as Portland or Seattle; is that what we're playing with here? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *This project is to provide power running to the east; is that not correct? Isn't it true most of it's going to Jackson Hole? Have we looked at bringing power to this area from the east, like, into Wyoming and bringing it this way?[HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *I can't happen to think that you got 50 million bucks or whatever you are talking about, you're going to ship this power somehow into a higher-priced market because I am assuming that Seattle and Portland and maybe some of the larger cities pay more for their power than we do here. And that's what you are enabling this thing to happen. [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *You'll purchase it from them [Rocky Mountain Power] and move it somewhere else.*

Response: As discussed in Chapter 1 and above, the project is needed to address voltage stability and reliability concerns on LVE's transmission system. Project purposes do not include transmission of power to other areas outside of the SE Idaho/NW Wyoming area.

Comment: *The other question that was jotted down here, I know when the big power line went up through Lanes Creek, those people were pretty excited because they thought they were going to get power. Once the line was through, no, we can't take power down from a big line like that. And probably the only reason they got permission and got cooperation is they thought they could get power, which is another dishonesty. So how easy will power be to access from this line you're putting through? [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for Action, describes how LVE and other utilities are customers of BPA who purchase all, or almost all, of the electric power required to serve their electrical loads from BPA. Residential customers would still receive electricity from their current provider but the new transmission lines would mean the electrical system in SE Idaho/NW Wyoming is more reliable.

Comment: *Is the power that you are going to (inaudible) over this line, is that excess power that you have on hand now or are you going to have to create that somehow?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: The power source to the proposed Hooper Springs Substation would be purchased by BPA from PacifiCorp's 345-kV system at their Three Mile Knoll Substation. This power would offset power that is currently being purchased from Goshen Substation.

Public Involvement

Comment: *A question about your formal meeting that you intend to have. Is this going to be a meeting that will have a moderator and will have minutes and questions and answers in an organized forum or is this going to be another kind of walk-about and chat with the folks there? I just question how comments and questions of the audience can be recorded and addressed, you know, and kept other than just from memory if there isn't minutes taken and, you know, a formal question-and-answer? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA held a public meeting in April 2013 to gather comments on the draft EIS. The meeting was a combination open-house style and question and answer session. Audience members provided verbal comment during the question and answer session which was recorded by a court reporter. All comments gathered at the public meeting have been responded to in Volume 2 of this supplemental draft EIS and also have helped to inform project design and development and identification of the preferred alternative (the South Alternative's Option 3A).

Comment: *This is the last meeting I could find in this document that showed that there was a public meeting where input was recorded. I know that I attended on meeting and I know there was a meeting afterwards that my brother and others that I've spoken to attended that has not been mentioned in this document at all. And some very fine concerns were raised at that meeting. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *I am wondering if the comments and questions, technical and philosophical, that were presented at that meeting are going to be recorded on this? Was there any record of any of that or did everything that was expressed just go out the window? [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: BPA attended two Caribou County Commissioner meetings in June and September 2012 to describe and give an update on the Hooper Springs Transmission Project. Since it was not BPA's meeting, we did not gather comments. However, all comments and responses were recorded by a Caribou County court reporter and those have been posted in their entirety on BPA's Hooper Springs Transmission Project website: http://www.efw.bpa.gov/environmental_services/Document_Library/HooperSprings/. Responses to these comments are also included in Volume 2 of this supplemental draft EIS

Comment: *You've talked about a lot of things here and you got a lot of holes in your program, a lot of things that you haven't done that could be done to alleviate the concerns that we're expressing here today. Are you going to do anything about this or are you just giving us lip service? I think we need to have at least one more meeting on this to find out what you've done with these suggestions and holes that we're finding that you haven't done. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: BPA held a project update meeting in September 2013 to provide an opportunity for the public to gather additional information and have their questions answered regarding by the current alternatives. The meeting was open-house style with BPA and contractor engineering, realty, and environmental staff available to answer questions. Feedback from this meeting was incorporated into the project design and considered in the development and identification of the preferred alternative.

Comment: *So have you been in contact with all of the private landowners that have property on the proposed route? So they're all aware of how to get ahold of you with their concerns about this thing? If someone has concerns and they feel like they haven't had the appropriate opportunity to express those, what would you recommend they do at this point? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Both routes (North and South) being considered by BPA cross private property. We believe that it is very important for BPA to work carefully with private landowners to address concerns regardless of the ultimate route chosen. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: BPA has reached out to all private and public landowners along both North and South alternatives and route options. Additionally, BPA has encourage landowners and other interested parties to contact the project manager or realty specialists to address concerns including arranging face-to-face meetings.

Comment: *Just one suggestion. I think that what the attitude of most of the folks here, when you bring more people back, it probably would be good if they were straight talk and not super polished, you know, to gloss over something just -- I don't think anybody is going to buy -- I think you've probably figured that out. Nobody is going to buy a well --well-spoken excuse. Whatever it is, I would hope that there would be some straight talk on what some alternatives can be, what some possibilities could be and how everybody could work this out so it's satisfactory. [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *I think this -- what we would like to see is -- the public here -- is just some consideration and some coordination. And I don't think there's anybody here that's really wanting to see the power project stopped, but we'd certainly like to see an appropriate route taken, one that has less impact on -- on individual landowners and one that, we think, should be more cost-effective to go the shorter route. Maybe it won't be. I'm not an engineer and I don't know. But we'd like to see it done with some sort of sense rather than a bureaucracy at work.[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA has worked extensively to coordinate with the public – and in particular potentially affected landowners – concerning the proposed project, and has used valuable information from this coordination in its analysis of the project alternatives as well as in identifying the agency’s preferred alternative. BPA also has attempted to provide information to the public in as even-handed and straight-forward fashion as possible. BPA intends to continue this approach throughout the environmental review process.

Comment: *And I want to be sure that everybody understands that in addition to being a state Senator, I also have a real job and I work for Agrium U.S. Industries. I'm not here on their behalf. They didn't ask me to be here today. And I haven't had any discussions with BPA over power line routes. And, Eric, I don't know who you've talked to in our company, but I'd be happy to facilitate some of the discussions and conversations if we need to go there. And I don't know if the southern route is the best route. I brought a series of questions up just to make sure that we have considered all options and that we've made sure that if we're not going that route that there is a better route. So I'd make that offer to you, Eric, to facilitate some discussions with some people in our company. And I haven't been involved in any discussions, even inside our company, on this route, but I can find the right people to talk to.[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted. Thank you.

Comment: *I live at Wayan at the end of Gravel Creek Road. And when you are talking about your preliminary workup, I -- we've been told all along that we would seek permission to go on your land. On July 15, my daughter and I found surveyors just east of my property, a fence to the south and a fence to the west. And I said to the Adam Dell, who was the head guy -- kid there, I said, What are you doing on my property? And he said, I'm surveying. I'm on forest land property. I said, You are not on forest land property. And I would like you guys -- to invite you out and show you where my cattle are -- are grazing and look at the -- the cow pies and this is the area they were in and it is my property. [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *I am from Wayan and I just have a couple of quick questions and one statement. My one statement: I think there's several people in the valley that they've trespassed on that has not given permission besides Madelyn with pictures, other people have that they've been. That's my statement. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted. It is not BPA's policy to allow trespassing of any sort by its employees or contractors.

Proposed Project and Alternatives (Chapter 2)

General Comments

Comment: *I would just be asking -- well, but is this still just a proposal? If we let y'all in the easement and study it, it's not cut-and-dried that you are going to do that?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Yes, at this point in time, BPA has not made a decision on whether or not to build the proposed line and it is still a proposal. In addition, all alternatives and options described in detail in the EIS are being considered by BPA for this proposal. Because of this, if a landowner allows BPA access to their property to conduct studies for the proposed project, this does not mean that BPA will choose to build the project, let alone build it on a route that would cross that landowner's property.

Comment: *OER objects to BPA's failure to disclose various alternatives in the Draft EIS. This includes BPA's consideration of the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area as alternative on the southern route. Understanding that BPA has certain time restrictions, OER believe that a complete and full discussion of all relevant options is necessary for high-quality decision-making. By not including this and potentially other alternatives, interested stakeholders are limited in the amount of helpful feedback they can provide to BPA. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: BPA believes that it has sufficiently discussed potential alternatives for the proposed action in the draft EIS, including both those alternatives considered in detail and those alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study. Regarding a proposed reroute on the Blackfoot River WMA, BPA has revised the draft EIS and prepared and issued a supplemental

draft EIS to address this reroute, which is referred to as Option 3A. BPA has worked with all interested parties to gather feedback for all route options, including Option 3A. The project update meeting held in September 2013 was an opportunity for the public to gather additional information about the proposed WMA reroute and other routes, and have their questions answered by BPA. Feedback from this meeting was incorporated into the project design and considered in the decision making process.

Comment: *Because the Draft EIS does not address all feasible alternatives, does not accurately present resources and detailed mitigation actions for the public to comment on, and does not include a preferred alternative, BPA should prepare a supplemental draft EIS according to § 1021.314 before a final EIS is published. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *GYC commented on the initial scoping for this proposal; however, we did not comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (“DEIS”) because none of the proposed alternatives would have located the transmission line within the WMA. The new alignment of the proposed line differs greatly from any of the line locations proposed in the DEIS, which was released for public comment this past March. Should BPA wish to relocate the transmission line so that it passes through the WMA, BPA must release a supplemental environmental impact statement to disclose the impacts of this change. [HSTP13 0031]*

Comment: *Thus, if a modification may substantially change the environmental impacts of a project, the agency must reevaluate and reveal the new effects.*

In sum, a supplemental NEPA analysis is generally required if changes proposed will cause significant environmental impacts.

In the case at hand, BPA is proposing to change the location of the transmission line to cross through a significant portion of the WMA, a change that will undoubtedly lead to significant environmental impacts that were never analyzed in a NEPA document that would appropriately inform the agencies and the public of the project impacts.

All of these values may be significantly impacted by the location change proposed by the BPA. For this reason, BPA may not move forward with this new proposal without first issuing a supplemental EIS that fully discloses and analyzes the environmental impacts of the new alternative. [HSTP13 0031]

Response: As discussed in the previous response, BPA has prepared this supplemental draft EIS to include detailed analysis of Option 3A and provide the opportunity to comment on this routing option for all interested parties. BPA believes that the EIS adequately addresses all feasible alternatives for the proposed action and sufficiently describes the affected environment and possible mitigation measures to allow meaningful public comment. While identification of the agency’s preferred alternative in a draft EIS is not required under NEPA, BPA has nonetheless identified its preferred alternative in the supplemental draft EIS (see Section 2.7 of Volume 1).

North Alternative

Comment: *My concern is with the northern route. On the maps it's page 29-1 where my parcel is depicted. I just wanted to provide that information for the BPA people so they can zero in on that more quickly. And perhaps look at a route realignment and pulling the line south a little bit away from my four acre property. Plus taking the access further south on the lower two existing offramps that are there. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *If we could make a new PI from Tower 30-2, and then route that southwesterly to Tower 28-8, that would help pull the power line southerly, away from the smaller parcel. And it would increase the access from the two routes southerly along Highway 34 as visited with our right-of-way – our access people this evening here at the meeting. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *It seems to me that access through this four acre property is an overburden and an expectation beyond something that is practical. I would like to see a revision in the route should the north route be chosen. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: BPA has worked with the landowner and further analyzed this area. Design changes have been made to move the proposed transmission line location slightly southeast and to modify the access road to enter the property from an existing highway approach. This change would mean that the four acre property mentioned by the commenter would not be divided by the line and access road. Additionally, BPA has identified the South Alternative's Option 3A as the preferred alternative which would not cross this landowners land.

Comment: *My family is involved in farming north of Soda Springs, ID. The proposed "Northern Route" as originally proposed crosses nearly 6 miles of our land. We are probably, by far, the most effected farmers in the area. Given that we as a human race need and depend on a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of electrical power, we do not oppose the "Northern Route" as originally proposed. We would ask, as landowners, that the power line be placed ON the property line where two different landowners join, and that the poles be placed as close as possible to rural county roads. We would ask that the poles, where possible, be placed on or boarder natural rock outcroppings, in an effort to minimize the impact on our farming operations. We would also request that when crossing thru the middle of a field, that you run the pole line "true" north and south, or "true" east and west, as to facilitate our use of GPS guidance systems on our equipment. [HSTP13 0006]*

Response: BPA has worked with the landowner and further analyzed this area. Additionally, BPA has identified the South Alternative's Option 3A as the preferred alternative which would not cross this landowners land.

Comment: *Why don't you just follow Highway 34?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: An alternative that followed Highway 34 from the proposed Hooper Springs Substation to Lanes Creek Substation was reviewed in the early stages of project planning. However because Grays Lake Wildlife Refuge is so close to the highway in this area, it was assumed impacts to migratory birds traveling to and from the refuge would be high. This alternative also would have added mileage to the transmission line which would mean higher costs and potentially higher overall environmental impacts.

Comment: *The North Alternative crosses state endowment trust land between markers 11 and 15. The Long Valley road option does not cross state endowment land. It is IDL's preference that this project avoid state endowment land. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *You've got a substation up there off of 34 about Tenco; is that correct? But isn't that the one where this line will eventually tap into?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *There's a substation there (inaudible). Now, is this line not more efficient to go directly into a substation than tapping in the line down below? Isn't that what the bottom line of this thing is? Why don't you build a substation down there -- how expensive are they -- so that the southern route could tap into a substation right there?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *But it's easier for your line to tap into a substation rather than just get the line similar from the southern route? So that's why we're going the northern route because that's easier to do?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *He was talking about if you go the southern route, you were going to tie into the end of that line. They've got the substation down on Highway 34 in the Lane's Creek area. If that's going to be a problem, they could move that substation to the other end of the line so you can tie back into the sub on that (inaudible) –[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: A proposal to connect into Lanes Creek Substation is part of the North Alternative that BPA is evaluating. In general, it is more reliable to connect into a substation rather than tap an existing line and essentially extend the line. However in this case, in the location where BPA is proposing to tap the existing LVE line it would be difficult to operate and maintain a substation because of harsh winter conditions with poor access.

Comment: *As described above, the increased impacts that result from the north alternative need to be more thoroughly and accurately described so that 1) BPA can make more informed decisions and 2) local residents, visitors to the region, the general public, and local, state, and federal agencies can evaluate the impacts of all feasible alternatives. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA believes that the EIS adequately describes and analyzes the potential impacts associated with the North Alternative, and that this analysis allows decision makers, the public, and others to understand the impacts of the alternatives considered in the EIS.

Comment: *After reviewing the written materials and the plat map, it is apparent that if the “Northern Route” is selected, there will be an adverse impact and “taking” of the westerly 100’ of the farm property which is adjacent to and extends north along Highway 34, and as the highway proceeds northward.*

Of the three (3) available options, it is the position, and request of the William Meads Trust that the proposed high voltage transmission line be submitted as a “no-action alternative” proposal. However, if it is determined that the power line project is going to be approved and constructed, then, the William Meads Trust requests that the construction be pursuant to the “Southern Route” alternative. [HSTP13 0026]

Response: Comment noted.

South Alternative

Comment: *Eric, in the last meeting in June, the contention was made that the transmission line would go -- that if you would take that southern route, you would have to travel across some of the historic mining sites that were CERCLA sites. It would look like from that map there was a route where you could skirt all of those. Sometimes the corridors are pretty narrow, but it looked like there were some corridors where you could stay out of those sites. Have you looked at doing that and, if so, why are you dismissing that option? Are you still doing some work to see if that's a viable option?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Eric, just looking at the map, it looks like there would be a way to realize most of the southern route and bypass the mines. I don't know the geology or the topography of that area. I'm guessing there's probably other obstacles to doing that, but do you know that for sure that you couldn't reroute this around the mines and if you could still make that work?[HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *My concern is I live in Wayan. We've got a place there in Wayan and you're bringing that thing within 100 feet of our house, our home. I believe it's 400. Pardon me. (Inaudible) the strip's 100 feet. It's going to be 400 feet from our house. Okay. But what we're saying is, yeah, we need that line or you need the line or whatever, but with a little work and effort and negotiations, from what we were seeing it there, take that southern route and -- as the Senator over here said -- move the -- move it so you're not going across the mining and all that threat that you're worried about. Do a little more work and then it solves the problem and Wayan won't have to deal with this thing.[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Couldn't you come farther to the south on a lot of the public land and stay on Forest Service ground without getting the mines involved? I think from just looking at the crowd here, we have a lot of people that this is going to be in their backyard and I think that's probably why a lot of 'em's here is to -- they're wondering why it has to be right through their area out there. [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Now, as I -- I got to get the Monsanto people involved. A lot of those streams run north and south with the mountains with the ore seams and a lot of the mine sites that I've seen in my experience are -- I don't know -- 1,000 feet wide, maybe, at the most. But they -- you know, they follow that seam down and it seems to be quite narrow to me. Although they have other acreage around on each side in this developable right, can't there be agreements reached where they could -- you know, we could take from ridge to ridge or identify where the ore seams are known to be and plan to be mined in the future and couldn't you more closely coordinate with them in a way that would be constructive to hop and skip over their concerns so you wouldn't have to move the line again or have any concerns like that? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *if you look at this map, just swing it around a little bit and it all goes away. Avoid the mines, avoid all this stuff, change the direction a little bit and you don't even need to bother us up here. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As described above, BPA evaluated three alternatives plus route options during the NEPA process. During project scoping, while BPA did eliminate alternatives that did not meet the purpose and need, the South Alternative and options were not among those eliminated. BPA has continued to study and refine the South Alternative and its options during preparation of the supplemental draft EIS including how best to avoid possible CERCLA sites and active mines. As discussed in Section 2.7, BPA has identified the South Alternative's Option 3A as the preferred alternative. See Sections 3.1.1, Land Use, and 3.13, Public Health and Safety for further discussion of issues related to current and former mining sites.

Comment: *That southern or shorter route, that goes -- it's up -- and I haven't been out there for years, I have to apologize -- but that runs close to a county road now where your trucks could follow that if you had a problem out there. Is that not true? Or a good part of it does anyway.[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: The commenter is correct in that the South Alternative and some its options do parallel Blackfoot River Road most of the way to Blackfoot River Narrows which would provide adequate access to the line similar to the North Alternative where it travels along Highway 34.

Comment: *Well, you guys are going through ground that's been there for generation after generation. I mean, our ancestors would just roll over in their graves if they could see what you're doing. And we've got -- now, we've got to look at it for the rest of our lives. You know, it would be one thing, though, if you were going -- had a proposed line that went straight over that valley, then we could almost thank you for doing what you could to go around this. But I still*

think going about twice as far, I think you should be able to do some -- if you've got really good lawyers, you should be able to arrive at something that would protect you and build it straighter, a shorter route. [HSTP13 0028]

Response: See response above regarding BPA's continued refinement of the South Alternative and route options.

Comment: *This letter is in reference to BPA's proposed transmission project's South Alternative and the effect and impact this specific route alternative will have pursuant to the farm and ranch property owned by the Mark J. & Beth Carter Family.*

Accompanying this letter are copies of three Aerial Photomaps showing pole and transmission line locations which were presented by BPA at the April 3, 2013 meeting held in Soda Springs, Idaho; ref. Sheets 13, 14, and 15: 4/1/13. At this meeting, Ross Wilde (Carter Family representative) reviewed and discussed these maps with various BPA members of staff. Ross expressed some of the Carter Family concerns and discussed the previous farming history that is visibly obvious. Given the route and pole locations as drawn on these three maps it appears the Carter Family could accept this plan. Of concern is the initial and extended impact to the ranch's homestead which is located close to the power line.

The Carter Family owns two full sections (640 acres ea.) of property that would be effected by the line route as shown on the Aerial Photomaps. The East section would have one pole in the S/E corner of the section and the West section would have four poles in the S/W corner of that section near the homestead. Considering the variety of agricultural options and potential with the land and water, any other route option or pole location effecting these two sections of Carter property is not acceptable and will be adamantly opposed. [HSTP13 0024]

Response: BPA has worked with the landowner and further analyzed this area. Design changes have been made to the proposed transmission line and access roads locations to reduce impacts to the landowner.

No Action Alternative

Comment: *I'm affiliated with property that's on the south route, so I can empathize with Mr. and Mrs. Hunsaker, the impact that it's has on ranchers out there. The one question that I would like to have BPA address is in your one letter here it says, "BPA is also considering a no action alternative. That is BPA would not build the transmission line."*

I would like to have you elaborate on that a little bit. To have that put in there they way that is, that has to be a consideration that you're addressing. Does that mean there's another line or another route or another option that isn't part of this? [HSTP13 0025]

Response: BPA always considers the No Action Alternative as a possible solution to meet a project's purpose and need. However, as described in Sections 2.4 and 2.6 of the EIS, without a new line, voltage stability and reliability problems on the transmission grid in SE Idaho/NW Wyoming could continue. Additionally, the growing energy requirements in this area may not be met. In this case, the No Action Alternative would not meet the project's purpose and need.

Comment: *I could say right now, by a show of hands, the no build would get a hundren percent. Ready? Well, I guess maybe not a hundren percent.*

Response: Comment noted.

Easements and Land

Comment: *I think what my last question would be when you estimated your costs, how did you estimate what the compensation was going to be for the private landowners? And what I'm saying is you have an estimate of 40 to \$50 million to come around and I don't think you've taken into consideration what it's likely to cost you to compensate the landowners. Because I guarantee you, we've been through this before with the Lander Trail and we won our case at that point. We did not accept the low-ball figure that was given to us. And I don't think anybody in this room is going to accept the low-ball figure that you guys are going to throw out. We're going to have to look at this thing for the rest of our lives, for our children's lives, and very few people in this room ever intend to sell their land. We -- most of us have children who will inherit this land and we really don't want to look at a 100-foot swath of power lines going through what -- when my father's estate was appraised -- was designated the highest and best use was the pristine value of the land and recreation or greater. So you are just voiding the appraised value of our land that we have actual appraisals on this land which that's what they say the best use of the land is. But you're not only destroying our values, you're destroying other people's values whom you're not touching because they have to look at it, too. So I think you'd better take that into consideration when you give your ballpark figures because there isn't anybody in this room who's given you permission to even come in and survey. And if you're going to use eminent domain, which I think is probably the only way you're going to get this ground, you know, there will be something other than low ballpark. You need to go across the land that's already been ruined by the mining, not ruin. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: If the decision is made to construct the transmission line along the preferred alternative, BPA would seek to purchase easements across private land. Each parcel would be properly evaluated and appraised to determine the fair market value. BPA would provide an appraisal on each easement it proposes to acquire. Each land owner would be given the opportunity to accompany the appraiser and provide input into the appraisal.

Comment: *If any routing option selected by BPA crosses state land, there will be a need for BPA to work with the relevant state authority as well as OER on appropriate site specific mitigation. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted. If BPA makes the decision to construct a new transmission line, we would work with the relevant state authority and OER to mitigate impacts to state lands if they are crossed.

Comment: *Any routes that cross state endowment land must be located to minimize impact to the remainder of the parcel. A 20-year term easement would be the authorizing instrument issued to allow the project on trust land. Application for use can be obtained from any IDL office. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *And when you said you were going to take out a single pole when it goes across cropland and when it comes across grazing lands, you are going to go back to the double pole? And that will still be 100 feet? And the road would be in that 100 feet, too?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As described in Chapter 2, BPA is proposing to use steel single pole structures in agricultural areas. For the North Alternative, once the line leaves these areas, structures would change to double wood pole structures. For the South Alternative, all proposed structures would be steel single pole structures.

Also described in Chapter 2, is BPA's standard easement 100 foot easement for a 115-kV transmission line (for both single- and double-circuit transmission line). This width is based on the typical swing of the conductor and electrical clearance needed to maintain public safety. The access roads would require a 20 to 50 foot easement based on the topography and layout of the access road. Not all access roads would be located within the transmission line ROW. Placement of roads is also based on topography and the availability of existing roads.

Comment: *The other thing, I've never heard anybody say that if this goes across private property what you'll pay to have each pole and what you'll pay for a right-of-way. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *I want to know the impact on the landowners. You mentioned that some landowners have accepted \$500 in compensation. Is that just for access to their property during this preliminary phase? This isn't -- this isn't an easement for the transmission line if you should decide to build there, is it? So eventually if the transmission line were built across private property, is there compensation to the landowner? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *So this will be a one-time fee to these landowners, a one-time payment – [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Your compensation agreement (inaudible) will it be a one-time – a one-time fee to the landowners or will you be paying them based on the rate of how much power is going to be going across the line on an annual basis? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: BPA has offered to pay landowners 500 dollars to gain access to their property for civil and environmental surveys. This payment is a one-time payment and has absolutely no relationship to any future easement negotiations between BPA and the landowner. Any easement payments made in the future would also be a one-time payment for a perpetual easement on the property.

Comment: *I've never seen an environmental impact study before. I was shocked at the easements. And you're going to get one bite at the apple when you give up the easement. This will be on your land forever. I want to just warn you, from all of these restrictions, make sure that it's a big apple and that you get a damn big bite, because there won't be any second bite. They have it when they take that easement. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *Mr. Kackley's comments on the easements and the right-of-ways that will be granted and the impact on the trees is just tremendous. I had no understanding that it was going to be that wide and that invasive into the surrounding properties. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: As described above, the proposed transmission line easement width would be 100 feet wide for both the North and South alternatives and options. Easements for access roads that fall outside the transmission line easement would be 20 to 50 foot wide.

Comment: *And if the landowner didn't want to negotiate an agreement, ultimately what happens? Do you take the property? Do you take the easement through eminent domain and force it to happen? You don't want to do that, but is that ultimately an option that you would consider? I understand it's not something you would want to do. So you think it's unlikely that in the end you'll put it across private property where the landowners don't agree? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *What's going to happen if we don't give you permission and the use to go through our land?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Okay. Let's say it goes to eminent domain -- don't I have a good case where you have an original route that was okayed, approved and turned it down yourselves and didn't have adequate proof that it was inadequate? And, like I say, I think I'd have a pretty good case if -- if you decide to go through me but you had an alternate route that was okayed, you spent a lot of money on and your lawyers said, well, maybe, maybe we can't go there but it's no definite proof?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Who oversees that? It does go to the Department of Justice at that point and the case is heard in front of a judge and the judge makes the ultimate decision.[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *If you have to resort to eminent domain, what would be the time, like, for example, the person is served and then (inaudible)? Well, let me just ask an additional question. If you go to the process of eminent domain, it's (inaudible), correct? I mean --Yes, but --But percentage-wise, most of the time, if it does go to eminent domain, it goes to the party that's attempting to do (inaudible) --the only thing you're going to be arguing about is what's fair market value. It would be the price, then. It wouldn't be whether it was justification of taking the land or not?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Eminent domain is a last resort for BPA. BPA preference is to work with landowners to come to an agreement on the price of an easement.

Comment: *If the landowner is being damaged from a fallen line overheating or something and there was a fire that caused damage or if you had a pole fall over and you had to bring equipment in and tore up my field while the grain hadn't been cut, would the landowner be compensated for that?[HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *You have (inaudible) poles designated on my place. What kind of fire protection do you have? I mean, if the power line goes down. Well, anything, wind. I know of farmers that's had some poles sheared off from wind shears. You just tromped his grain to pieces trying to get it out. Would you compensate for the damages? Just for the first time initial purchase, right, that's where I am only to see the money?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As described in Section 3.1.4, Mitigation, BPA would compensate landowners for damage to property or crops, as appropriate.

Comment: *“Upgrade of line or increase of corridor: Electricity use in these has been increasing at a rate of about three percent a year.” This line will not have to be – the line will have to be increased or expanded in about 34 years, meaning more right-of-way or that something will have to happen there. And I assume that they’re going to try to parallel the right-of-ways. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: It is unknown what potential electrical loads will be in the timeframes referenced by the commenter. It also would be speculative to attempt to predict how these future electrical loads would be addressed by BPA. However, BPA is designing the project to accommodate predicted loads for at least the next 10 ten years and likely many years beyond that. Accordingly, BPA has no plans to acquire additional ROW or propose to place another transmission line adjacent to the proposed line.

Transmission Line Design

Comment: *We just need to know a schedule or some kind of an outline that says, okay, the 33 mile route is going to have x amount of poles, x amount of miles, x amount of wire. So much stuff at this substation, so much at that substation. So there's going to be the bottom line value. The same thing with the 22 mile one. And then maybe we can see what you're up against. Right now we can't. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Chapter 2, Proposed Project and Alternatives, describes the project components that would be required for the North and South alternatives. The North Alternative would require about 234 structures over the 33-mile length and the South Alternative would require 210 structures over the 22.5-mile length. A description of the conductor and substation equipment is also included in Chapter 2. Substation work would be required at both the proposed Hooper Springs and existing Lanes Creek substations for the North Alternative while work would only occur at the Hooper Springs Substation for the South Alternative and its options.

Comment: *Okay. Question 2: On the south route, the Senator suggested maybe we could hop and skip around through the areas of concern. What's your longest span that you can do between your towers on this project? What's the engineering?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: As described above, BPA has been working to further develop the South Alternative and its options to avoid areas of concern to BPA. Regarding conductor spans, while very long spans can be design and constructed they are very costly. Typically a span of 1200 feet would be the longest span BPA would propose based on the proposed structure types and terrain located along each route.

Comment: *How deeply do you think you're going to sink the holes for the power poles?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As described in Chapter 2, structure footings for the North Alternative would be about 10 feet deep for wood poles and about 15 feet deep for steel pole structures. On the South Alternatives, footings would be between 15 and 30 feet deep depending on whether the structure is a suspension or dead end structure.

Comment: *"Guy wires would generally be within the north alternative right-of-way, and no further than 50 feet from the right-of-way center line." This means that probably they could also probably be outside of the right-of-way, I would assume. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: It is possible that a guy wire would need to be located outside of the proposed ROW regardless of alternative. If this occurs, BPA would ask to purchase an additional guy wire easement from the property owner.

Access Roads

Comment: *Another thing that I'm -- I'm curious about --and I certainly don't know your business as well as you do -- but your road standards for year-round access, I've seen a lot of power lines and some of 'em going over difficult terrain that do not seem to have any sort of road access and they seem to get along fine. What is it that compels BPA to demand year-round access roads? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Now, your line will enter in Alpine through that rugged country. Does it have an access road to provide the 12-month access through the -- where the line goes through the Swan Valley?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA's maintenance and reliability standards require year-round access to all structures.

Comment: *You're going up over a mountain that's at about 30 degrees or more. How are you going to get a road up there? You're doing switchbacks? And clearing trees as you go? It's mostly rocks up there, though. But we will see that from the valley then?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Construction and improvement of access roads are described in Chapter 2, Access Roads. Access roads required in steep topography could possibly require a series of switchbacks that may fall outside of the transmission line ROW in order to maintain appropriate road grades as defined in BPA's access road engineering standards. As described in Chapter 3, Visual Resources, access roads would be more visible on steep slopes, especially where cut and fill is needed.

Vegetation Clearing

Comment: *"The north alternative would require the permanent removal of approximately 110.6 acres of native vegetation." I take that to mean clear cutting. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: All tall growing vegetation would be removed from the transmission line ROW as described in Chapter 2, Vegetation Clearing. For the North Alternative clearing as mentioned above, approximately 75.5 acres of the total 110.6 acres of native vegetation consists of grass- and sagebrush-dominated vegetation communities. In these areas, vegetation would be removed or crushed and would likely be reestablished within two-growing seasons.

Comment: *The EIS proposes to clear large acres of timber for the transmission line. Unlike regular timber sales which are replanted or regenerate naturally, this clearing and the accompanying maintenance road will have to be maintained in perpetuity, making this an irretrievable and irreversible commitment. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: As noted above and in Chapter 2, all tall-growing vegetation would be cleared from the ROW. For the life of the transmission line, the ROW would be maintained to be compatible with low-growing vegetation species. When tall-growing vegetation grows or falls close to a transmission line it can cause an electrical arc that can start a fire, cause an outage of the line, or injure or kill someone.

Comment: *How wide of an area would you have to clear-cut when you cross through timberland?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Across private timberland all tall growing trees within the 100 foot ROW would be cleared. On either side of the new ROW, danger trees that pose a hazard to construction activities and reliable operation of the transmission line also would be removed as described in Chapter 2, Vegetation Clearing. Danger tree removal depends on the tree's height, health, and species. On C-TNF lands, the USFS has requested that BPA clear a 250 foot wide area initially. During operation of the line, BPA would then manage vegetation with the 100 foot wide ROW including danger trees along the ROW edge.

Comment: *I have a small four acre recreational property out there, deeded to me from my grandfather. It's a keepsake piece of property. In this design process the power lines will skim along the south boundary line of this four acre parcel. If I understand that right, the quaking aspen forest on this property will have to be thinned back and cut away from this power line. I think that's a huge impact on a small recreational property to have to bear. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: As described above, all tall growing trees including aspens that are within the transmission line ROW would be cleared including removal of danger trees outside the ROW. While, BPA has proposed a reroute of the North Alternative to move the line off this property, there may be some danger trees identified outside of the ROW that would need to be removed.

Comment: *Run a 100-ft ROW, open areas to weed invasion. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: BPA would conduct pre- and post- construction weed surveys to assess the noxious weed presence within the ROW and along access roads. During operation and maintenance of the transmission line and access roads, BPA's vegetation management is guided by its Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. BPA adopted an integrated vegetation management strategy for controlling vegetation along its transmission line ROWs in

2000. This strategy involves choosing the appropriate method for controlling the vegetation based on the type of vegetation and its density, the natural resources present at a particular site, landowner requests, regulations, and costs. Measures also would be implemented during construction to limit the spread of weeds as discussed in Section 3.4.4 of the supplemental draft EIS including following guidelines used by land managers on state and federally managed land.

Construction Schedule and Work Crews

Comment: *Can you give me an idea of the time line? When do you hope to start construction? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As described in Chapter 2, Construction Schedule and Work Crews, if BPA decides to proceed with the Project after completion of all necessary environmental review, construction of the proposed substation and transmission lines could begin as early as June 2015.

Maintenance

Comment: *“tall trees that grow outside of the right-of-way that could fall into the line must be removed.” And then later on in this – I have this by page number. Later on in that page it says that “On either side of the new corridor, danger trees that pose a hazard to construction activities and reliable operation of the transmission line would be removed.” So the impact on the land can be far outside the right-of-way. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: The commenter is correct. BPA would have the right to clear danger trees if they posed a threat to the transmission line. The landowner, as the owner of those trees, would be compensated.

Comment: *Now, on the easement that you want, this is an easement for the power poles themselves, plus you are going to have to have a road that goes through there so you can maintain those power poles, correct? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Chapter 2, Easement and Land, describes the proposed easement widths including ROW and access roads. As mentioned in above responses, the transmission line ROWs would require a 100 foot wide easement and up to 50 feet wide easements for access roads that fall outside of the transmission line easements. BPA may also purchase guy easements if a guy wire needs to be placed outside of the transmission line easement.

Estimated Cost

Comment: *How is the federal government compensated for the power lines or transmission lines across the public property? Who is funding the Bonneville Power Administration for you to build this line? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: BPA is a self-funded federal agency. We generate all of our revenue from the transmission and power rate payers of the entire northwest. BPA does not receive appropriated tax dollars like most federal agencies.

Comment: *I'm with Agrium. I just would like to put on the public record that the southern route, one of the CERCLA sites, is associated with us. We do have concerns that it is also close to an operation that we have right now. If that route is the accepted alternative, there will be costs associated that we expect BPA to bear to move that line around the mining operation as is required. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: As described above, BPA recognizes that the mining leases pre-date the proposed transmission line proposal and constitute an existing contract with the federal government. While the mining leases would allow BPA to use the surface for a transmission line and access roads, this surface use cannot unreasonably interfere with the mining company's right to fully extract the phosphate. If BPA decides to proceed with the project along an alternative that travels near or within a mine area or CERCLA site, easements would be negotiated to avoid interference and address current and future land use needs.

Comment: *The cost of construction, regardless of whether the "Northern Route" or the Southern Route" is selected will be approximately \$55.0 million. There is no cost saving by selecting the longer "Northern Route". [HSTP13 0026]*

Comment: *Extended costs of longer distance through the north Grays Lake route. [HSTP13 0021]*

Comment: *The construction cost for the north and south routes is estimated at \$51 million for both routes. However, no supporting information is provided. Although materials for the lower voltage line along the north route are cheaper than those for the higher voltage line along the south route, the north alternative is approximately 50% longer (9.5 miles longer) than the south alternative, requiring more labor, access roads, vegetation removal, and materials. A detailed explanation of how these cost estimates were obtained should be provided for the north and south alternatives and how various routing options for the public adequately evaluate the costs associated with the project. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *The draft EIS provides no data at all to substantiate the assertion that despite this difference in length, both the North and South Alternatives would cost "about \$51 million". [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *The EIS also fails to explain why the projected costs of the South Alternative jumped from \$9.3 million in the 2009 Preliminary EA to the current \$51 million estimate. This nearly 500% increase in projected price of the South Alternative in less than 4 years is not credible. If something as tangible as cost projections can change by over \$40 million (5-fold) so quickly with no supporting facts, why should the public believe any of the much less tangible projected environmental impacts mentioned in this draft EIS? [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: BPA notes the comment and has performed additional engineering and cost analysis since publication of the draft EIS. Under the North Alternative, construction cost of the Hooper Springs Substation, additions to Lanes Creek Substation, construction of the proposed 33-mile-long single-circuit 115-kV and 0.2-mile-long 138-kV transmission lines is estimated to be about \$72.5 million. Annual maintenance costs would be about \$10,000 to \$20,000. Under the South Alternative, construction cost of the Hooper Springs Substation and the proposed 22.5-mile-long double-circuit 115-kV and 0.2-mile-long 138-kV transmission lines is estimated to be about \$62.4 million. Annual maintenance costs would be about \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Comment: *In addition, the cost of the proposed action along the south alternative in the 2009 Environmental Assessment was \$27.3 million (\$18 million for the substation and 9.3 million for the transmission line). Although costs have likely increased since 2009, it does not seem reasonable that costs have nearly doubled in the past 4 years to the currently estimated \$51 million as stated in the Draft EIS. BPA should include a rationale as to why the estimated cost for the south alternative has increased by 46% since 2009. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *My concern with the presentation is we get told that there's 22 miles on one route and 33 miles on the other route. And then that they'll cost about the same, but never a price. I'm sorry, but putting in 33 miles on one route should cost more, realizing that it is a different type of pole and a different style. But, still, you're going to have to pay for the right to go through people's lands. You're going to have to pay extra for the poles. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *Exactly how much will it cost, estimated of course, for the 33 mile line? And exactly, estimated of course, for the 22 mile line, so that people can see exactly what you're saying. We're in the dark on that. We don't know what you are talking about as far as costs, what you're talking about as far as availability and all of your different things that go into that. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *If the price is the same, I don't want 10 extra miles of wire and poles out across our countryside. If the price is the same, why do I want 10 extra miles of wires and poles? [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *How much -- I guess this is 30 miles north from what your original plan was going through the mining. How much is that costing you? An additional 30 miles of power lines poles and right-of-way and all that rigamarole, how much is that costing you? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Another thing that occurs to me on that same issue is if it's that much shorter to go the other route, it would appear that it should be probably \$10 million less to construct, more or less. And if it was, I seriously doubt you'd have over a \$10 million fine for digging 20 or 30 post holes. [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *I have a question - you were talking about the cost of the transmission lines, the shorter one and the longer one, but it seemed like when you were talking about the shorter one that you said that they were different kind of wires and it was three wires instead of two wires or something. And so it sounded to me a little bit like apples and oranges. If that line that's going that's the northern route were to be put on the southern route with just what you're proposing for now, how much would that cost versus how much it would cost to go the northern route, the increase in that process? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *The last time we were here you said that the increase to the northern route would cost an additional \$10 million versus going with the southern route and now this time you're telling us it's a wash. What happened to that \$10 million? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *So how much is this project costing?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: As described in Chapter 2, Estimated Cost for both the North and South alternatives, the total cost of the Northern Alternative would be about \$72.5 million and the total cost of the Southern Alternative would be about \$64.2 million based on current project estimates. These cost estimates include all costs to date plus future expenditures to build each alternative. The costs of the route options would be similar.

Comment: *Bonneville Power acknowledges that one of the criteria considered in favor of the Northern Line is its proximity to an existing substation. What is the amount of money saved by Bonneville Power by utilizing this existing substation? How is this dollar saving weighed against the environmental impact in Bonneville Power's analysis? What is the formula utilized by Bonneville Power in such weighting and how can the public obtain a copy of this analysis? [HSTP13 0027]*

Response: Electrically the Lanes Creek Substation is a secure and reliable place to terminate the line in order to connect it with the existing grid. However, while it is less expensive to connect into an existing substation rather building a new substation, terminating the North Alternative at the Lanes Creek Substation does not reduce the total project cost as compared to the total cost of the South Alternative or its options (see above for project costs).

Comment: *Did the amount of studies you have to provide going across private land rather than going across that much government-controlled land that's in that state of repair or disrepair, did the cost of those studies have anything to do with the decision to go with the northern route? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Prior to release of the supplemental draft EIS, BPA had not identified a preferred alternative. Additionally, the amount or cost of studies on private or public land does not play a part in the identification of a preferred alternative. BPA has however identified a preferred alternative in this EIS and it is Option 3A.

Comment: *Okay. You're going to pass 50 or \$60 million in charges off to these people over in Star Valley, is that what you are telling us? Well, who's paying for this thing then?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Okay. And the ratepayers -- I know you are looking out for the ratepayers, but you are going the northern route and it's going to cost a lot of money. You're going to have to maintain those lines -- another 10 miles of lines until the world comes to an end, I guess. That's going to cost the ratepayers. Has anybody thought about asking the Idaho congressional delegation to slip something into a bill that would give you immunity from this problem of crossing the mines? I think that our senators and representatives, if we're going to save 10 or 15 or \$20 million, would be happy to do that and especially in the state budgets. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: See comment above for a description of BPA as a self-funded federal agency. The commenter is correct in that maintenance costs would likely be greater for a longer line. BPA's preferred alternative, Option 3A, would cross less miles than the North Alternative.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Non-wires Alternative

Comment: *Once a ROW is secured additional development, including larger and/or more transmission lines, could occur in the foreseeable future, especially since BPA has not included any "non-wires" measures (e.g., energy conservation) to address energy use and reliability. BPA dismisses energy conservation entirely as only a short-term solution, rather than incorporating it into a long-term sustainable energy use plan. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Chapter 2, Non-wires Alternatives describes BPA's evaluation of a non-wires solution to the project's need. The possible non-wires measures identified included the following: energy efficiency—increasing efficiency of existing buildings or appliances to reduce electricity use; demand response—managing when power is used at its source; distributed generation—constructing a new natural gas peaking generation facility at or close to the source of load; fuel switching—changing energy consumption from electricity to natural gas, primarily for space and water heating, to reduce peak demand. BPA determined that a combination of non-wires measures could at most defer, but not eliminate, the need to construct a transmission line, and there is a fundamental level of uncertainty about whether these measures could be fully implemented in time to address the growing need for the Project.

Comment: *It would seem like that relationship [with LVE] should continue, not be dissolved, because they have a power station that feeds into that – what you are trying to accomplish. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *Lower Valley Energy also has supply stations other than the Palisades to feed that line. They have a propane unit, fire generating system. [HSTP13 025]*

Response: BPA has coordinated with LVE on many aspects of this proposal, including the development of possible alternatives for this project. Although LVE does have sources of power that feed into their system, these sources are not adequate to support the current and forecasted area loads. During winter peak loadings, most of the area support comes from the transmission system to the east (Goshen Substation). There is a propane system in the Jackson area, but it feeds area gas needs, and does not have the capacity to provide back-up for the electrical system. This project would provide a direct source to the southern portion of LVE's system to compensate for loss of the LVE's Palisades-Snake River line should an outage occur.

Comment: *We appreciate the additional “non-wires alternative” which demonstrated that the project could be deferred until 2016 or 2020. While Phase 1 and 2 studies of this alternative showed that the transmission line project could not be entirely eliminated, it demonstrated it could be deferred while the project is reassessed through a Supplemental EIS. Given the recent slowdown in the regional and national economy, the BPA should again reassess the urgency for this project and factor in additional increases in efficiency and alternative routes from power generation sources to consumers. We believe that this alternative should be fully developed in a Supplemental EIS. As part of this effort, the BPA should show the locations of all these transmission lines along with the Westside Energy Corridor. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: As described in Sections 1.1 and 2.5.6 of this supplemental draft EIS, BPA has continued to assess the need for the proposed transmission line as well as its timing. These assessments have reaffirmed that a combination of non-wires measures could at most defer, but not eliminate, the need to construct a transmission line. Accordingly, non-wire measures remain an alternative that was considered but eliminated from detailed study in the EIS. BPA believes that the EIS adequately discusses possible non-wire measures and the reasons why this alternative was eliminated from further consideration.

Undergrounding

Comment: *The EIS should also analyze the feasibility of burying certain sections of powerlines which has been done routinely in Europe. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *Given that the purpose of the Hooper Springs Transmission Project is to “improve the stability and reliability of the transmission system in southeastern Idaho,” the Draft EIS should include an analysis of constructing an underground transmission system, which are generally more reliable than overhead transmission systems (Hall 2012). Because of this*

omission, the current Draft EIS does not adequately evaluate all potential alternatives. A detailed cost-benefit analysis, including monetary and non-monetary costs/benefits, of overhead transmission lines and underground transmission lines should have been included in the Draft EIS. [HSTP13 0017]

Comment: *Underground transmission systems have 1) increased reliability during storms and high winds (which frequently occur throughout the project area), 2) reduced exposure to lightening (which also frequently occur throughout the project area), and 3) newer underground cable systems tend to be more reliable and require less maintenance than overhead installations (Hall 2013). In addition, underground systems result in less exposure to wildlife, mitigate the negative impacts on visual resources, and have better public safety (Hall 2013). One of the main challenges associated with installation of underground transmission systems is their monetary cost; however technologies and cost-effectiveness have improved, making their construction more feasible. For example, a 333-mile underground electric transmission line from Quebec to New York City was recently approved by their state Public Service Commission (Rulison 2013). Because of numerous public comments related to visual resources, wildlife, and rural land uses, during the scoping period and at the public information meeting it is important for BPA to consider underground power transmission for the entire length of the north and south alternatives. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *If constructing the entire length of the transmission line underground is not feasible, then constructing a portion of the route underground where negative impacts to wildlife, land uses, and/or visual resources occur should also be considered. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: BPA did not consider an underground alternative for the transmission line because this issue was not raised during project scoping. A discussion of undergrounding has been added to the supplemental draft EIS in Section 2.5.7. Generally, burying the transmission line would increase the construction cost of the project by 10 to 20 times the cost of an overhead line, and would result in much higher maintenance costs. Additionally, while undergrounding a transmission line can reduce visual impacts, environmental impacts to natural resources from undergrounding the transmission line are typically the same or greater than impacts associated with an overhead line. Finally, due to the difficulties in locating failed or damaged underground cables, any necessary repairs could take significantly longer, making this alternative less advantageous from a service and reliability standpoint.

Comment: *Have you seen in your past any other places where you have actually buried the lines instead of suspending it up on poles?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: While there are cases where utilities bury power lines, BPA would not propose to bury either the North or South alternatives or their options for the reasons mentioned above.

Alternative Routes

Comment: *Erich, on that line coming from Palisades southeasterly onto – yeah, that line right there. Why don't you build a second line there and strengthen that structure through there rather than encumber this southeastern Idaho area? Is there not a possibility to run a second line through – to widen your easement right-of-way through there with a second line to support the existing line? [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *As far as your secondary line there by Palisades, you know, we're looking at the same thing down around the Rupert and burley area with this Gateway transmission line. They want them separated and not run parallel. I stand the chance of getting hit by lightning if I walk outside of this building too, but I'm not holding my breath that that is going to happen. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *What is the cost factor of building that parallel line from Palisades Dam to backfeed into Lower Valley Energy's loop there? [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: As described above, the proposed transmission lines would provide redundancy in the SE Idaho/NW Wyoming transmission system. Because all of the transmission lines for the FREC and LVE service areas originate from PacifiCorp's Goshen Substation, expanding existing lines does not solve the existing problem where all lines serving the area are sourced at Goshen Substation. Because an alternative that includes a new line constructed parallel to an existing line in the Palisades Dam area does not meet the project need for a second source (other than Goshen Substation) into the area, a cost estimate has not been prepared.

Comment: *So is there a different route they could go and still build a secondary line there and not affect us by building from Threemile and out either through Lanes Creek our out through the south route? [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: In order to provide redundancy, BPA needs to interconnect with the 345-kV system in the area. PacifiCorp's Threemile Knoll Substation was selected as the proposed point of connection because geographically the substation is closest to the system loop that needs to be strengthened. The next closest point of connection would be Idaho Power's Bridger Substation 169 miles to the south. In order to connect to LVE's and FREC's systems a much longer transmission line with additional impacts and much higher costs than the proposed transmission line routes would be needed.

Agency's Preferred Alternative

Comment: *From the first meeting we had over in the school system, you told us you were going to take the northern route and that was all that it was going to be to it. I asked a number of people at that meeting and it was the northern route, the northern route, the northern route. All the rest of it is out. There was no doubt in your minds that you were going to go about this that way and you've held to it regardless of everything else. There's no room -- there's no compromise at all in your going to the south route, but we know what the plan was. It was to condemn a right-of-way all the way through private land. And you were determined to do that and you were not going to go the southern route no matter what any of us said and it's been that way every since. And every meeting we've had since, it's the same bunch of crap.[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *I've been to all four of the meetings like a lot of people in this room today. At every meeting we've had, since the first one, BPA has said the only group that they were going to allow for was going out to Gray's Lake and that was going to be it. We had no choice. From the very first meeting where they had the four routes, the first thing they said was we are going to Gray's Lake on Highway 34 and there's nothing you can do about it.*

They have maintained that right up to this meeting. And the only reason that they're having this meeting is because we've all stood together and said to hell with that. You can go up Lanes Creek where it isn't a burden on us. [HSTP13 0025]

Comment: *So, Eric, can you tell me where we are today? Is there still an opportunity for this group to impact the route of that line or are you guys set on the northern route at this point and it's a done deal?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA has been evaluating three alternatives each with a number of routing options (including the No Action Alternative) since the Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published in 2010. The preferred alternative (South Alternative's Option 3A) was not identified until release of this supplemental draft EIS. Public comment was taken very seriously and helped to influence identification of the preferred alternative (South Alternative's Option 3A) by BPA.

Comment: *The Bureau of Indian Affairs Fort Hall Agency and Fort hall Irrigation Project are commenting in support of the South Alternative Option 2. Although we are in support of Option 2, we do support the selection of any of the Southern Alternative options over any option in the North Alternative as a preferred Alternative. [HSTP13 0030]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *In addition, we recommend BPA consider these differences in impacts to vegetation and wildlife when selecting a preferred alternative. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: Pursuant to the SHC framework, we urge BPA to consider when selecting a preferred alternative the compatibility of the project with the overall rural and natural character of the landscape, including wildlife and visual resources. [HSTP13 0020]

Comment: In contrast, much of the southern alternative crosses land already subject to disturbance. The portion of the southern alternative that runs east-west is largely within a corridor of existing linear disturbances. Currently there are multiple distribution lines, a transmission line, paved roads, and the railway and multiple haul roads that serve the surrounding mines. Fragmentation, especially by linear features, is a major concern for many wildlife species. Co-locating linear disturbances, such as the proposed project, is an effective way to minimize wildlife impacts. We strongly recommend BPA consider this when selecting a preferred alternative and when micrositing the proposed line. [HSTP13 0025]

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: Again, I understand that we have to have poles and wires to bring electricity. Clearly I think you'll hear from the community that we prefer the southern route. We prefer the shorter distance so as not to have the impacts. [HSTP13 0025]

Response: Comment noted. Environmental impacts have been evaluated in the supplemental draft EIS including the difference in line lengths between the alternatives and options considered.

Comment: While Idaho appreciates the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) efforts thus far in this process, we would like to register our strong objection to the fact that BPA did not designate a Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS. BPA's decision to not designate a Preferred Alternative creates a strain on state agency and local government resources, as well as Idaho citizens, as they attempt to review the proposed routes. [HSTP13 0022]

Response: BPA did not identify a preferred alternative in the draft EIS because it was important to gather comments from the public and incorporate those into the process of identifying a preferred alternative. As discussed in Section 2.7 of the supplemental draft EIS, BPA has identified the South Alternative's Option 3A as the preferred alternative.

Comment: I think if they want to get to that substation they out to keep their eye on the ball and get to the substation with the southern route. It's just arrogance and orneriness that they're going to do it to us regardless of what we say. And if we don't hold together they will do it. That's why this meeting is held today, the only reason. [HSTP13 025]

Comment: They brought new people that haven't been here before. There's even a guy out there that has a public relations tag on his shirt. Before it's always been we're going to do it or way and to hell with you. I think they'll try to do it again. I would ask all the people here today to stand with us and make them go the other way. [HSTP13 0025]

Comment: *As far as I'm concerned, I would go with the 22 mile route any day because it doesn't ruin the views, doesn't ruin people's hunting and fishing and their cattle ranches, their homes. You're impacting a lot of people to go through the 22 mile route. It's going to make this community very upset and it's not worth it. That's not what we're here on this earth for is to make's everybody's life miserable. We're here to work together, so let's work together and see what we can do to make the 22 mile route work. Thank you. [HSTP13 0025]*

Comment: *And I know you'll have concerns with property owners regardless of which route you take, but this is a shorter route. It would impact fewer landowners, I would say, and potentially keep you away from the mines that are concerned – environmental concerns you have there.[HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *The “Northern Route” will be approximately 32 miles long and includes two (2) route options. While the “Southern Route” will be approximately 22 miles long and includes four (4) options. There is no need to add an additional 10 miles of electrical lines and transmission poles across the corridor. [HSTP13 0026]*

Comment: *I look at 10 miles of wires and poles. That's what I see on this map. One route, 32 miles, the other route 22 miles. I'm concerned about the 10 miles difference of wire and poles.*

Basically, you know, we've got to get electricity where we need it to be able to meet customers and stuff. You said we don't have a, I guess, higher line than the other. We're looking at both of them as equal. But one requires 10 extra miles of wire and poles. It doesn't matter where you put it, that's going to impact. It impacts the farmers and the ranchers, the recreationists, the tourists, people traveling through our area. [HSTP13 0025]

Response: In the supplemental draft EIS, BPA has evaluated both alternatives to determine impacts to resources along their routes. An additional 10 miles of transmission line and associated access roads on the North Alternative would have a higher environmental impact on some resources. As discussed in Section 2.7, BPA has identified the South Alternative's Option 3A as the preferred alternative.

Comment: *Simplot became aware in 2008 that a new electrical transmission line was under consideration for a route north and east of Soda Springs, Idaho. As a business owner accustomed to electrical service outages for our operations and with employees who are members of the communities in Caribou County, we welcome the opportunity for improving electrical service and capacity for the southeastern corner of Idaho. [Eventually, this project became known as the “Hooper Springs Transmission Project”.] Simplot, as described below, favors the South Alternative. However, we believe that either route would be preferable to the “No Action” Alternative. Simplot does not support the No Action Alternative. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Comment noted.

Mitigation

Comment: *BPA should take additional steps to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to natural resources along these routes. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *We appreciate the analysis of the Northern Route along Highway 34. We would like to see additional analysis of ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts along this route. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comments noted. Throughout preparation of the draft and supplemental draft EISs, BPA has proposed ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to natural resources, as appropriate.

Comment: *The proposed project has the potential to impact resources within the proposed corridor for a long time. Therefore, we recommend that the final EIS describe a monitoring program designed to assess both impacts from the project and the effectiveness and the proposed mitigation measures for the impacts. The document should also indicate how the program would use an effective feedback mechanism to assure environmental objectives would be met throughout the project lifespan. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: BPA conducts post-implementation monitoring of compliance and mitigation effectiveness on a sample set of new construction and transmission rebuild projects on a yearly basis. The monitoring helps BPA determine if mitigation measures implemented were effective for their desired purpose and provides a method to improve mitigation proposals in environmental documents or the process of implementing mitigation. During and after construction, activities are also monitored to ensure that environmental specifications are implemented as stated.

Comment: *As stated in our previous comments, the list of proposed mitigation measures are measures to minimize impacts, and not to mitigate them. Additional descriptions are needed. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. Mitigation measures have been described in greater detail in the EIS where necessary. These measures have been designed to avoid, minimize, and otherwise mitigate for potential project-related impacts, consistent with 40 CFR 1508.20.

Comment: *Descriptions of affected resources, environmental consequences, and mitigation in the current EIS are too general. In addition, complete information on some resource concerns are lacking. Therefore it does not afford adequate public review and comment to evaluate the specific mitigation actions proposed for specific impacts as required by policy of the Environmental Quality Improvement Act 43 FR 55990, Section 1500.2 and Department of*

Energy NEPA Implementing Procedures Title 10 CFR § 1021.313. Examples of these general descriptions and resource analyses that lack sufficient information in the Draft EIS, are provided below. [HSTP13 0017]

Response: BPA believes that the EIS describes the affected environment, potential environmental consequences, and possible mitigation measures at an adequate level of detail under NEPA, and that it provides sufficient information concerning potentially affected resources to allow decision makers and the public to understand the potential impacts of the proposed project. In addition, input and comment from the public on the draft EIS has been used to provide even more complete information on resources and potential project impacts in the supplemental draft EIS. Through publication of notice in local newspapers, direct mailing and outreach to landowners and occupants of nearby properties, and the solicitation of comment through public meetings, BPA has provided opportunity for public review and comment that complies with the above regulations.

Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation Measures (Chapter 3)

Comment: *We note with appreciation that the DEIS addresses many of the issues we raised during the project scoping period in August 2010, including analysis of cumulative and climate change effects. Thus, we commend BPA staff for working with a variety of stakeholders and considering public comments in the NEPA analysis for the project. The DEIS document includes a good description of resources in the project area, anticipated impacts, and mitigation measures to offset the impacts. In particular, we appreciate information provided in section 2.6 (p. 2-33) comparing alternatives, their impacts to various resources and associated mitigation measures, and cost. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Comment noted. Thank you.

Comment: *We support timely improvements and expansion of transmission infrastructure where needed, but in the case of the Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project, we are deeply concerned that the proposed route does not strike the appropriate balance between minimizing costs and minimizing environmental effects. In particular, we have concerns regarding the urgency as well as the adverse environmental effects from all the proposed alternatives. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *As stated above, we have concerns regarding the apparent urgency of this project as well as the adverse environmental effects from all the proposed alternatives. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. Chapter 1, Purpose of and Need for Action of the supplemental draft EIS and responses above describe the need for the project. While the draft EIS did not include a preferred alternative, several alternative as well as potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures were addressed in the draft EIS.

Comment: *I would like to see a map with the alternatives. [HSTP13 0007]*

Response: Comment noted. A map was sent to the commenter. Additionally, maps of the North Alternative, South Alternative, and their respective routing options are shown in Chapter 2 of the supplemental draft EIS and on the project website.

Land Use

Comment: *One other comment that I've had. Since this would be a publicly used utility, it would be appropriate to use basically public lands it's constructed on rather than have individual landowners be the ones that have to bear the burden of having the lines through their property. And that seems to make sense where it's the public generally, why not have it land that they own, as well?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Because of the mosaic pattern of land ownership in the project area, it was not feasible to route the proposed project exclusively across public land. Chapter 3 provides analysis of impacts to land use in the project area and proposed mitigation measures. Wherever practicable, the proposed transmission line would be sited in locations that would result in minimal negative impact to the function and productivity of private lands.

Comment: *On the north versus the south route, private versus public, wouldn't it be true that there is maybe less public land that you go across, but there is a larger percent of private land that you do not go across because the route is not shorter? So if you had total miles of private one side versus the other, north versus the south, there would still be significantly less on -- on -- on private land, wouldn't it? Because the -- the other route is a third shorter basically?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *More private property transversed. [HSTP13 0021]*

Response: The proportion of public versus private land traversed by each alternative is roughly similar; private land represents 65 percent of the ROW length on the North Alternative, whereas private land represents 68 percent of the ROW length on the South Alternative. The South Alternative would traverse less private land than the North Alternative – 15 miles versus 21 miles – due to the shorter transmission line length.

Comment: *Simplot remains a strong advocate for the construction of the Hooper Valley Transmission Project, regardless of the ultimate route chosen. Although we believe it is most appropriate that a project intended to serve the public is better placed on public land where possible. Simplot is committed to provide the rights to use Simplot land if necessary to build the infrastructure that will improve the economic sustainability of this region. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Comment noted. Thank you.

Comment: *Then what about the mining impact? If we're worried about the mining impact on the southern route, wouldn't it be the same as the forest in the Wayan area, the mining impact? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The North Alternative does not traverse any mining areas; therefore the mining impacts to the area of C-TNF traversed by the North Alternative would be less than the South Alternative.

Private Lands

Comment: *Finally, the northern alternative would cross farmland enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP program is designed to encourage uses of environmentally sensitive land that have conservation benefits. Please discuss current agricultural practices on the CRP land along the northern alternative and any existing associated wildlife benefits. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *We note that BPA will be consulting with the Farm Service Agency in assessing the project impacts to prime farmlands and CRP lands. We recommend that the final EIS include outcomes of those consultations and recommended measures to avoid and reduce impacts to those lands. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA has coordinated with the Farm Service Agency regarding CRP lands. As part of these discussions, BPA inquired about any additional information that was available concerning current agricultural practices and related wildlife benefits on CRP lands, and has included this information in the supplemental draft EIS where applicable.

Comment: *I have one – not more -- scathing remark to give. We talked a lot about the Gray's Lake area. But what about the farmers here that's north of town? I've heard a little bit of discontent from some of them and not super critical, but it would be a firm suggestion that maybe you could align your poles between -- if you take that route -- on the boundary between the property owners so there wasn't a blank spot in the field that they'd have to go around and farm around. If you had it up closer to the line and they could farm right up to the line on both sides, not to have to dodge the poles; is that right? We got farmers in the group here. Is that how you're thinking?[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *The consumption of hydropower will continue to grow. Meet the need but be accommodating to the irrigation systems and other agriculture. [HSTP13 0003]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA has attempted to align the proposed transmission lines near the property boundary when crossing private land wherever feasible. Wherever possible, the proposed transmission line would be sited in locations that would result in minimal negative impact to the function and productivity of agricultural lands.

Comment: *Okay. So that would be an issue. And probably the same with the access road that you'd require if it's that close or far away from a regular public road. I'll bet they'd like it so they didn't have to go around that, too, just right up to the edge of it.[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA has attempted to align access roads near the property boundary when crossing private land wherever feasible. Wherever possible, the proposed access roads would be sited in locations that would result in minimal negative impact to the function and productivity of agricultural lands.

Comment: *The northeastern portion of the northern alternative crosses lands donated by the Kakley family in 2006 to the Idaho Foundation of Parks and Lands for preservation in perpetuity under a conservation easement. These lands provide habitat for sharp tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*), sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), sage sparrow (*Artemisiospiza belli*), Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), and other grassland and sagebrush species. Please address the easement in subsequent NEPA analysis, including an explanation of the proposed transmission line's compatibility with the terms of the conservation easement. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Comment noted. An earlier iteration of the North Alternative had placed the route across the property in question, but based on habitat considerations and the status of that property as a conservation easement, the North Alternative no longer crosses the Kackley parcel.

Comment: *Additionally, several Land Trusts, including the Teton Regional Land Trust and the Sagebrush Steppe Regional Land Trust have identified conservation values for protection within the proposed project area, particularly within the rural ranching lands of northern Caribou County. Please address how the conservation and wildlife values of private lands and the potential for conservation land acquisition, donation, or purchase of easements could be affected by the proposed northern alternative. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: BPA welcomes consultation with all interested parties regarding the proposed project. At this time the preferred alternative is Option 3A which would not cross lands specifically selected for acquisition. It is speculative to discuss hypothetical impacts to unidentified lands that may or may not be acquired, donated, or become subject to an easement at some indeterminate point in the future.

Comment: *The DEIS does not take into account the effects of the proposed transmission line on ongoing efforts to alleviate sandhill crane depredation of crops in the area. For several years participating landowners have agreed to let cranes use portions of their fields in return for payment from an endowment set up through the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It is imperative that the proposed action not limit the effectiveness of ongoing actions to minimize crop depredation by cranes or cause additive mortality from collisions to cranes currently being managed or hunted in the depredation area. We suggest BPA develop a coordinated strategy to assure the transmission line route does not conflict with the management goals of lure crop plantings or IDFG-managed hunting locations, and that crane strikes do not increase within proximity to lure crop plantings. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Mitigation measures described in Chapter 3, Wildlife, would reduce the potential for mortality associated with avian collisions. BPA would install visibility enhancement devices on the overhead ground wires to reduce the risk of collision in areas that have been determined by the avian risk model to bear a high risk of increased avian collisions.”

State Lands

Comment: *We appreciate the fact that the southern routes appear to avoid directly impacting the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area (WMA), but are still concerned about the southern route’s proximity to the WMA [HSTPS13 0020]*

Comment: *We recommend that the transmission line be routed as far south of the WMA as possible while still avoiding the Inventoried Roadless Area (Dry Ridge) on the USFS. The line should avoid Mill Canyon in section 21, and instead, after crossing Dry Ridge should follow a course due east or southeast into the next drainage to the south. This drainage seems to be unnamed but may have been referred to as Mosquito Creek on the May 17 field tour. The drainage has a road and open to motorized vehicles ‘less than 50” in width’ on several trails according to the current USFS Travel Plan Revision. Impacts to wildlife habitat would be lessened in this drainage that already has a road and is disturbed. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *We reiterate our past encouragement for any routing decisions to minimize effects to the visual and wildlife resources of Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA was acquired in 1995 and has been maintained since with the assistance from partners including Ducks Unlimited, The Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Trout Unlimited, and the North American Moose Foundation. The primary goals are to benefit aquatic and terrestrial wildlife through the improvement of vegetation communities, and to provide wildlife related public use opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and viewing. We request continued consultation and early opportunity to work with BPA on minimization and mitigation if the preferred route is to cross the WMA. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: BPA recognizes the Blackfoot River WMA as important public lands managed for recreational activities and as wildlife habitat, and understands the concerns about the proximity of the South Alternative and its route options to the WMA. Many different routes have been investigated by BPA in an effort to avoid crossing the Blackfoot River WMA while still meeting the project's purpose and need. In the draft EIS, the routing of the South Alternative and its route options completely avoided crossing the WMA. However, all of these routes would cross the planned Husky-North Dry Ridge Mine and the majority of the North Maybe Mine Investigation Area.

Following release of the draft EIS, BPA, BLM, and the lessee of the Husky-North Dry Ridge Mine met to discuss the viability of a transmission line crossing the phosphate resource within the mine leasing area for this mine. BLM made it clear that under mining laws, the transmission line, as a surface use, cannot interfere with the lessee's ability to develop their lease (i.e., the ability to fully extract the ore within the lease area). While BPA could design the line to span the 400 to 600 feet wide operational area of the mine, very tall structures would be required. In addition, included in the mine operational area would be a haul road along both sides of the mine. The lessee would not want transmission structures between the haul road and the mine edge nor would they want transmission line access roads to interfere with the haul road. Furthermore, the placement of conductor over the mine pit would limit the lessee's ability to use certain types of equipment because they could come in contact with the conductor or at least be within an unsafe distance from the energized line. The lessee also could not use explosives to construct the mine. The use of explosives creates "fly rock" which can travel vertically hundreds of feet into the air possibly coming in contact with the conductor. Additionally, BPA prefers to not construct a transmission line in areas where there is the potential that the line would need to be moved. Because of all of these considerations and concerns, BPA developed Option 3A for the South Alternative, which necessarily required routing onto the southern edge of the Blackfoot River WMA to avoid the mining areas in the vicinity.

Another factor in the routing of Option 3A within the Blackfoot River WMA are the BLM's resource recovery requirements for phosphate deposits including the Husky-North Dry Ridge deposit within and south of the WMA. The lease (issued in 1983) is a contract with the federal government giving the lessee exclusive rights to recover the phosphate resource within the lease. Accordingly, the BLM's position is that it could not recommend to the USFS that they issue a surface use authorization for a transmission line across the leased phosphate resource if it would interfere with the phosphate recovery.

Regarding the North Maybe Mine Investigation Area, it was BPA's intent when proposing possible routes, to avoid construction, operation, and maintenance of a transmission line in areas of known contamination and to avoid direct contact with waste dumps, seeps, or mine pits. For this reason, Option 3A was proposed because it avoids as much as possible the Investigation Area along East Mill Creek and to the south toward the past mining activities at North Maybe Mine.

BPA has worked extensively with IDFG and the C-TNF to site the Option 3A ROW, access roads, and structures to minimize intrusion onto and impacts to the Blackfoot River WMA and C-TNF lands. This supplemental draft EIS describes Option 3A, provides a detailed analysis of its potential environmental impacts, and allows all interested parties the opportunity to comment on this routing option. BPA welcomes continued consultation with IDFG and the C-TNF, as well as suggestions from interested parties, regarding further avoidance and minimization to these areas and their resources.

Comment: *Sections 3.1 & 3.7: We understand that at least one option under consideration for the southern alternative would cross a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) administered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Ownership of the WMA is split between IDFG and the Idaho Department of Lands. Section 3.1 of the DEIS briefly mentions state lands on the southern alternative, but does not identify where those lands are or identify the WMA. As acknowledged in section 3.2, the WMA is administered to provide for public recreation, to improve Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia bouvieri*) habitat, and to provide upland and riparian habitat for the benefit of wildlife, including wintering elk, deer, and moose. Construction of new roads and infrastructure as part of the southern alternative likely would impact the resource values the WMA is designed to protect. Consequently, we encourage BPA to explicitly address impacts to the WMA and the wildlife that uses it in the land use ...sections of subsequent NEPA analysis. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: The commenter is correct in that Option 3A would cross the Blackfoot WMA. Section 3.1.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, South Alternative Route Options, Option 3A, describes land use impacts to the WMA from Option 3A.

Comment: *As stated in the Draft EIS, the construction of the transmission line and access roads along the north route is not consistent with the Corridor Management Plan for Highway 34, the Pioneer Historic Byway, which is designated as a State of Idaho and National Scenic Byway. Because of this, the resulting impacts should be classified as high, not moderate. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Comment noted. The Corridor Management Plan for the Pioneer Historic Byway provides management prescriptions for preserving the visual and scenic qualities of the highway corridor (Pioneer Historic Byway Committee 2000). The Corridor Management Plan does not prohibit the construction of transmission lines, but rather recommends that road building and infrastructure development within the byway corridor should minimize visual impacts, and that future installation of overhead power lines along the byway corridor should be minimized. In the case of unavoidable disturbances, the Corridor Management Plan states that materials should blend in with their backgrounds.

In an effort to reduce visual impacts, the transmission line would be sited to blend in with the background to the extent possible. Where the transmission line would parallel or cross Highway 34, the transmission line would be in the foreground and obvious to motorists; however, for large portions of the North Alternative corridor, the transmission line would be partially or completely obscured by topography. This would especially be true for the portion of ROW crossing state lands east of Highway 34, and the portion crossing BLM and C-TNF lands in the northeastern part of the North Alternative corridor. In this northeastern portion of the North Alternative, the use of wood pole structures from line miles 11 to 22 would further allow the line to blend in with the background.

Comment: *In a 14 February 2013 news release, the Idaho Outdoor Business Council stated that “preservation of prime wildlife habitat in Idaho.... Is a sound investment in Idaho’s recreation-based economy” and cited programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as important to preserving and increasing public access to natural areas. LWCF have been used in Caribou County to conserve the natural rural landscape. Rural communities that conserve and build upon these natural and historic resources will be better positioned to enhance quality of life for their residents (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2011). [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Presently, this project does not intend to utilize state property. However, in the event this transmission project is altered to include state property, it is appropriate for Idaho’s comments to include specific considerations related to state land holdings. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Comment Noted.

Comment: *Any use of Endowment Lands will require application for and approval of term easements with fees based on current market rates. Easements may include multiple uses in some locations. Final location of any easements should be placed, wherever possible, in locations that will result in minimal negative impact to the function and productivity of Endowment land. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Comment noted. Any use of Endowment Lands would be contingent on the approval of an easement and BPA acknowledges that fees would be based on current market rates. Final location of any easements would be placed, wherever possible, in locations that would result in minimal negative impacts to the function and productivity of Endowment land.

U.S. Forest Service Lands

Comment: *As stated in the Draft EIS, construction of the transmission line along the north route crosses a portion of the Gravel Creek Special Emphasis Area and is also not consistent with the management goals identified by the USFS Caribou-Targhee National Forest. However, no mitigation measures are stated in section 3.1.4 for this negative impact, classified as high for both short and long-term impacts. It is not adequate to state that “BPA is currently working with USFS to further avoid or minimize potential project-related impacts to this area.” Under federal NEPA law, BPA is required to analyze the short and long-term impacts to the Gravel Creek Special Management Area and describe how these impacts will be mitigated. The fact that the USFS Caribou-Targhee National Forest is listed as a cooperating agency in preparation of this EIS further supports that these impacts and mitigation measures should be specified. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *Additional mitigation is needed if the Gravel Creek Special Emphasis Area is impacted at all. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: The roughly 328-foot portion of the proposed North Alternative ROW traversing the Gravel Creek Special Emphasis Area, similar to other portions of the project crossing National Forest lands, is the subject of an application for an amendment to the Caribou National Forest plan, included as Appendix A of the supplemental draft EIS. The Amendment would change the portion of ROW currently designated as management prescription 2.1.6(b) to management prescription 8.1, Concentrated Development Area. BPA is required by the forest plan to undertake consultation with the USFS, IDT, Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), and USACE regarding routing of the transmission line ROW over lands within management prescription 2.1.6(b), per the Memorandum of Understanding amongst those agencies. No roads or structures would be sited on the portion of the North Alternative ROW traversing lands currently designated as management prescription 2.1.6(b). Potential impacts to lands within management prescription 2.1.6(b) and associated mitigation measures are discussed further in Section 3.1 the supplemental draft EIS.

Mining Areas

Comment: *It is our understanding that the mining companies have found ways to eliminate most, if not all of the various mining area concerns that the draft EIS portrayed for the South Alternative. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: All of the alternatives have been developed in cooperation with mining companies to determine the best possible route while minimizing impacts to the environment and the mining operations. As discussed in Section 3.13, there remain contamination issues associated with mining areas crossed by the South Alternative. It is also possible that unknown contaminated sites could be discovered during construction of the South Alternative or its options, in mining areas crossed by the corridor. BPA would strive to mitigate potential impacts by avoiding excavation in areas of identified contaminants and conducting soil sampling in areas reasonably likely to be contaminated by mining waste containing selenium and other hazardous substances.

Comment: *We recommended siting all new facilities and structures in previously developed corridors as much as possible. However, we do not have significant concerns regarding placing transmission lines in areas with past or proposed mining activity. Material from formerly reclaimed mining areas may need to be rehandled to help address selenium contamination issues. Transmission line construction could either mobilize contaminants or impair needed reclamation efforts. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: BPA is aware of potential mining contamination hazards. Chapter 3, Public Health and Safety of the supplemental draft EIS addresses issues related to mining and potential hazards of past contamination issues. The North Alternative avoids direct impacts with mines. For the South Alternative and Options 1 through 4, there is a small likelihood that they would come in contact with contaminated mining sites. However, transmission lines and access roads would be sited to avoid areas of contamination. As noted in Chapter 3, Land Use, Option 3 would avoid both the Blackfoot Bridge Mine and the Conda/Woodall Mountain Mine, while Option 4 would avoid the Conda/Woodall Mountain Mine. Option 3A would avoid the Blackfoot Bridge Mine, the Conda/Woodall Mountain Mine, and the Husky-North Dry Ridge Mine.

Comment: *In the DEIS, BPA identified two issues related to mining especially for the South Alternative. Specifically:*

1. Accommodating new mining operations that may be built along or adjacent to the South Alternative Route.

Issue number one can be resolved by coordinating closely with the phosphate mining operations that are planned for Caribou County regardless of the ultimate route chosen. [HSTP13 0010]

Response: Comment noted. All alternatives and options have been developed in cooperation with all landowners including mining companies to determine the best possible route while minimizing impacts to the environment and the mining operations.

Comment: *You talked about the south route over the mining property. Is some of it unmined property that might be permitted in the future that you're protecting?[HSPT13 0028]*

Response: The South Alternative and its options have the potential to cross areas of future mining activity. As mentioned above, BPA has developed alternatives in cooperation with all landowners including mining companies. As noted above in responses regarding estimated costs, BPA recognizes that surface uses cannot unreasonably interfere with a mining company's right to fully extract the phosphate. Since subsurface rights take precedent, BPA could be required to relocate its transmission line to allow for mining activities. BPA prefers to not construct a transmission line in areas where there is the potential that the line would need to be moved.

Recreation

Comment: *In addition, the Blackfoot WMA and surrounding area has important aesthetic characteristics that many Idahoans want to maintain. Blackfoot Bridge WMA attracts visitors from all over Idaho to fish and to enjoy the scenery. The impacts of the southern routes on the undeveloped nature of the area do not appear capable of being mitigated and these southern alternatives should be rejected. [HSTPS13 0016]*

Comment: *GYC's members regularly use and enjoy the lands and waters of southeast Idaho, including the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area, for a variety of activities such as fishing, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, photography, and other pursuits. If BPA were to change the alignment for the Hooper Springs Transmission Project so that it crosses into the WMA, GYC's and its member's interests would be substantially harmed.*

As we understand, based on a map dated July 9, 2013, BPA now is considering a change in alignment of the transmission line to pass through the WMA. In fact, from our best calculation more than a mile of the line would be constructed within the WMA. GYC and its members have a long history in protection the WMA. GYC "adopted" the WMA through the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's "Adopt-a-Wetland" program in 1997 and our staff and members have volunteered more than one thousand hours of labor on the WMA. We have carried out numerous restoration and enhancement projects that have improved fish and wildlife habitat within the WMA. The proposed alignment change as illustrated in the July 7, 2013 map will have profound, negative effects on habitat within the WMA, which in turn will negatively affect GYC's members and supporters, as well as the larger public who value the WMA for a variety of recreational activities. [Greater Yellowstone Coalition Letter]

Comment: *Moreover, the WMA provides an important recreational site for residents of and visitors to Idaho. People visit the WMA each year to participate in a variety of activities, including fishing, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, and photography. [Greater Yellowstone Coalition Letter]*

Response: BPA recognizes the importance of the Blackfoot River WMA as a recreational area and that GYC is an active participant in restoration and enhancement projects within the WMA. As described above, BPA has, after investigating numerous routes in an effort to avoid crossing the Blackfoot River WMA, identified Option 3A as the preferred alternative. This route would avoid the proposed Husky-North Dry Ridge Mine and the majority of the North Maybe Mine Investigation Area. BPA has worked extensively with IDFG to site the Option 3A ROW, access roads, and structures to minimize impacts to the Blackfoot River WMA.

Visual Resources

Comment: Pursuant to our mission and the framework of SHC, we recognize the value of providing for the needs and values of people when considering project impacts. As expressed by the public at the April 3, 2013, meeting in Soda Springs, visual impacts across the proposed northern alternative are of concern to local landowners and those who recreate in the area, including at Gray's Lake NWR. The northern alternative is not consistent with the rural and natural visual experience of the area, including Gray's Lake NWR. Please address in subsequent NEPA analysis the potential visual impacts of the northern alternative to Gray's Lake NWR. [HSTP13 0020]

Response: Comment noted. The closest point from Gray's Lake is over 3 miles from the North Alternative; however, an assessment of visual effects on private lands and visitors at the Gray's Lake NWR has been conducted and is discussed in Chapter 3, Visual Resources.

Comment: The selection of the "Northern Route" will also adversely impact the views associated with the "scenic corridor" which extends north from Soda Springs to the termination point of the project. [HSTP13 0026]

Comment: The northern route would impact scenic and historical routes. [HSTP13 0012]

Comment: It is shocking that BPA would give serious consideration to developing a new transmission line corridor through an area that has high scenic values, is relatively "pristine", and that is globally renowned for its high concentrations of birds, when the South Alternative provides a viable way to avoid the highest avian conflict areas and confine the transmission corridor primarily to an area that already has a relatively high level of human activity and disturbance. [HSTP13 0013]

Response: An assessment of visual effects on the "scenic corridor" of the North Alternative and its options, has been conducted and is discussed in Chapter 3, Visual Resources and Appendix B, Visual Resources Assessment. As described above, BPA's preferred alternative is the South Alternative's Option 3A.

Comment: If this was physically possible, it would be visually objectionable and a maintenance nightmare. [HSTP13 0013]

Response: Comment Noted

Comment: All photo-simulation photos (Figures 3-11, 3-12, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15, 3-17, 3-18) appear to have been taken with a wide angle camera lens and only depict visual simulations of the proposed transmission line from far distances. [HSTP13 0017]

Response: Comment noted. Updated simulations have been incorporated into the supplemental draft EIS. Photos were taken with a digital camera using a standard lens. Visual simulations were intended to provide support to narrative descriptions of potential visual changes to the existing setting. As is typical, simulations were conducted using standard, agreed-upon methods and were reviewed by appropriate agency staff for accuracy. Where appropriate, close-up views of the proposed project were provided.

Comment: *No photo simulations are included where the transmission line is adjacent to or crosses Highway 34 or local roads. The evaluation of environmental consequences is therefore biased and does not sufficiently evaluate impacts to visual resources where the transmission line is near and/or crosses Highway 34 and local roads. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Comment noted. Additional visual simulations have been provided and analyzed in Chapter 3 which depict the impact to visual resources for points where the project crosses Highway 34.

Comment: *And then it says, "All pictures in section 39.3. These pictures are small and of poor quality, possibly from being printed. They give a false impression of how the lines will appear. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: As noted above, visual simulations are intended to provide support to the narrative descriptions, which present a detailed analysis of the potential for visual changes to the existing setting. Additional visual simulations have been added to Chapter 3, Visual Resources. The photos were likely compressed for printing and uploading of the document. Originals can be provided or the pictures in the document can be enlarged and/or not compressed.

Comment: *For aesthetic values, we would prefer that the transmission line not be visible from any portion of the WMA. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *We appreciate efforts to keep the line as far away from the WMA property as possible, and particularly routing that prevents visual impacts from the river valley in the middle of the WMA. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comments noted. Section 3.3.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, South Alternative Route Options, Option 3A, describes the impacts to visual resources within the Blackfoot River WMA.

Comment: *Figure 3.3 was taken several hundred yards east of the Kackley Ranch gate. To the north you can see the Crawford Ranch and Badger Noll. The draft EIS states, ‘Evidence of human presence along this portion of Lanes Creek Road includes low fencing, wooden utility lines and residential homes.’*

Well, I can tell you that there’s no utility lines visible from where this picture was taken. In the 1970’s, when the Kackleys and the Crawfords contracted for power, they paid to have the lines buried. To view the lines along Highway 34 from the location you would need field glasses and you can hardly see Highway 34. And I know from firsthand experience that it’s hard to see the cars unless there’s light flashing off the windshields. [HSTP13 0025]

Response: Comment noted. Figure 3.3 of the draft EIS was intended to be a representative photograph from this portion of the project area. While the photograph itself may not contain all the items included in the narrative, those elements are present in the vicinity. There is a wooden transmission line that crosses Lanes Creek Cutoff just over a mile south of the Lanes Creek Substation, and crosses Lanes Creek Road, just south of the intersection of Lanes Creek Cutoff and NF—191 road.

Comment: *“Figure 3-10 shows an existing non-BPA transmission line in the north alternative corridor in a similar configuration as the proposed steel single pole structures. This transmission line is more closely related to the south alternative than the north alternative. It follows the Lanes Creek cutoff road that BPA has identified as the south alternative.” [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Comment noted. The draft EIS figure was meant to represent a single-circuit configuration steel pole tower, similar to what is being proposed in certain portions of the North Alternative.

Comment: *From a persona side, taking the school board hat off, this is the area that I drive in the summer to relax, the northern route. I don’t drive the southern route. But that northern route is an area that is scenic and is enjoyable to drive. I’m concerned about that and the impact that will have. You’re going to be going along a scenic highway that will ruin a lot of people’s views. And there’s historical landmarks and stuff like that on that highway that will be ruined because you’ve got these power lines. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Comment noted. As noted in the EIS Chapter 3, Visual Resources, unavoidable impacts to the visual landscape would occur. Mitigation efforts would be implemented to minimize these impacts when possible and are described in Section 3.3.4, Mitigation.

Vegetation

Comment: *The ability of Idaho Department of Lands to manage the Endowment Assets for the maximum benefit of the beneficiaries will be impacted by this project. Among these impacts are:*

A: Spread of noxious weeds. Area-specific management plans will be necessary to protect all abutting land owners. [HSTP13 0010]

Response: BPA would conduct pre- and post- construction weed surveys to assess the presence of invasive and noxious weeds within the ROW and along access roads. During operation and maintenance of the transmission line and access roads, BPA's vegetation management is guided by its Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. BPA adopted an integrated vegetation management strategy for controlling vegetation along its transmission line ROWs in 2000. This strategy involves choosing the appropriate method for controlling the vegetation based on the type of vegetation and its density, the natural resources present at a particular site, landowner requests, regulations, and costs. Measures also would be implemented during construction to limit the spread of weeds as discussed in Section 3.4.4 of the supplemental draft EIS including following guidelines used by land managers on state and federally managed land.

Comment: *The most cost-effective way to deal with noxious weeds is to protect strongholds of native vegetation from activities which either spread noxious weeds directly or create suitable habitat by removing native vegetation and disturbing the soil. BPA activities should limit road use and the exposure of mineral soils where weeds may become established. Roads, trails, and rivers serve as the primary routes for noxious weed species expansion. Special care should be taken to safeguard ecologically intact areas that are not currently infested. The Supplemental EIS needs to analyze the effects of noxious weeds in transmission corridors and describe BPA management of weeds in these areas. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Chapter 3.4, Vegetation, provides a discussion of the potential impacts to native vegetation from the spread of noxious weeds. As discussed above and in Chapter 2 of the EIS, BPA would implement the Vegetation Management Program EIS guidelines and mitigation measures as described in Section 3.4.4 to minimize the spread of noxious weeds.

Comment: *The overall impacts to noxious weeds for both alternatives are classified as low in subsection introductory paragraphs; however, low and moderate impacts are referenced in the subsequent text. Therefore impacts to and risk of spreading invasive species should be considered moderate based on existing analysis. This ranking should be reevaluated in light of life-history characteristics of plant and animal species affected. [HSTPS13 0017]*

Response: Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.2 identify the alternative's impacts to the spread of noxious weeds as low. BPA does not see any indication this analysis should be changed at this time.

Comment: *However, if temporary roads are necessary, they should be properly reclaimed to prevent unauthorized access as well as preclude noxious weeds. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Chapter 2, Access Roads, describes how temporary roads would be reclaimed according to landowner requirements including installation of erosion control measures, regrading, and reseeding following completion of construction activities.

Comment: *We would recommend that no new roads/trails be constructed for the placement or maintenance of the line (as per the intent expressed on the May17 tour) and mountain brush communities should be preserved to the extent possible. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: As described above, BPA's maintenance and reliability standards require year-round access to all structures. It is BPA intent to minimize impacts to native vegetation such as mountain brush communities where possible.

Comment: *Loss of aspen habitat - IDFG has identified aspen as an important direct and indirect habitat component for terrestrial wildlife species IDFG is particularly award of the benefits of aspen habitats to mule deer and elk for annual recruitment. Idaho's current Mule Deer Initiative focuses particular importance on fawning habitat and overall forage production associated with aspen stands. The positive impacts of healthy aspen communities on watershed also benefits fisheries. IDFG support efforts focused on the regeneration of aspen communities that are disrupted by this activity. [HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *If possible, any timber removal should favor the enhancement of aspen communities. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA would consider, if opportunities exist, enhancement of aspen communities as part of timber removal activities related to ROW, access road, and pulling site clearing. As described in Section 3.4, Vegetation, the Project would avoid vegetation removal and aspen impacts except as necessary for ROW and access road clearing and to remove trees and snags that would pose a danger to the transmission line. However, the transmission line and permanent access road ROWs must be kept clear of all tall-growing vegetation and would therefore have some impacts to aspen communities.

Soils

Comment: *What geologic analysis was made by Bonneville Power in determining the amount of impact on the environment of the proposed Southern Line and Northern Line? Where can copies of this material be obtained by the public for consideration by appropriate personnel? [HSTP13 0027]*

Comment: *I've wondered, have you ever done a thorough geologic assessment of that southern route? You are worried about these potential contaminants and such. If so, I'd like to see it. I'd like to see a copy of this. You guys just sit up there in Portland and take maps out and draw lines. I find them not very satisfactory and acceptable. I hope you do a more thorough environmental assessment out there than what you are doing. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA conducted geotechnical investigations of the North Alternative in 2012; investigations along the South Alternative would be conducted in 2014. Copies of the geotechnical reports would be made available to the public upon request.

Comment: *Have you done any studies on earthquakes?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Earthquake studies were not conducted. However, USGS earthquake information for the region was reviewed for the supplemental draft EIS.

Comment: *I've got one more question on the soil disturbance. When we started talking again about cutting across the mines, you mentioned the steel towers and they were big and required the huge footprint, you know, with a cement base and everything, and that would cause the disturbance. Well, that -- is there a reason that a similar transmission line like is proposed through the Wayan area, the double wooden poles that don't require that kind of a footprint couldn't be used there? It looks like that that would take care of most of the soil disturbance. Then about all you would have -- you could haul off all that -- if that soil was contaminated that you dug up, remove it, fill the hole with cement and the pole and then all you'd have to do is haul in dirt for your road or gravel, and it looks like it would be a minimal deal. I'm not an engineer, but it doesn't look -- it looks like the pole (inaudibles) number of miles would appear is what it looks like, you know, for not being able to take a transmission line across there without causing any kind of major environmental impact. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As described in Chapter 2, the South Alternative would be constructed as a double-circuit transmission line with steel single-pole structures. BPA does not design or build double-circuit lines using wood pole structures because they do not provide the required ground-to-conductor clearance nor is there room on the structure for 6 wires.

Water Resources, Floodplains, and Wetlands

Comment: *Please discuss effects anticipated from filling wetlands to install the proposed project, including hydrologic effects to the surrounding area, and resultant potential impacts to the resources available for wildlife use. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Also, how about the wetlands you will be crossing?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Possible impacts from wetland fill or disturbance are discussed in Section 3.6 Water Resources, Floodplains, and Wetlands. Impacts that would potentially occur to wildlife species from wetland impacts are discussed in Section 3.7, Wildlife.

Comment: *The Woodall Wetland complex should be avoided entirely. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. Option 4 is the only route that would not avoid the Woodall wetland complex.

Comment: *We are particularly concerned about construction of transmission facilities across wetlands, floodplains, unroaded areas and in sensitive wildlife habitat, particularly in the region of the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when more appropriate routes exist. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Impacts to wetland and floodplains within the Blackfoot River WMA are described in Section 3.6.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, South Alternative Route Options, Option 3A. Impacts to wildlife within the WMA are described in Section 3.7.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, South Alternative Route Options, Option 3A.

Comment: *Finally, please describe any possibility for micrositing of the transmission line along the northern alternative to avoid and minimize impacts to aspen and wetland vegetation. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: BPA does employ micrositing of the transmission to reroute alternatives away from sensitive resources such as wetlands and sensitive plants. Unfortunately, aspen populations are more difficult to avoid because as tall growing vegetation, they must be cleared from the ROW. Section 3.4.2, Environmental Consequences of the North Alternative, describes impacts to about 75.5 acres of grass- and sagebrush-dominated vegetation communities with about 33.4 acres of impacts aspen- and conifer-dominated communities. The majority of the North Alternative does traverse non-aspen type communities.

Surface Water

Comment: *However, the project will cross many drainages and the combination of riparian vegetation and other vegetation removal, earth moving activities and associated erosion and sediment loading could exacerbate water quality conditions in streams already on the State of Idaho's 303(d) list due to exceedances of water quality standards for temperature, sedimentation and other pollutants (p. 3-111). [HSTP13 0015]*

Comment: *Because of such potential impacts to water quality, we recommend that BPA continue to coordinate with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and Tribes affected by the project to assure that the state and tribal water quality standards will be met during implementation of the project, and monitor as appropriate to assure protection of water quality. We also recommend that the final EIS include information about compliance with Water Quality Restoration Plans that function as BPA's share of implementing relevant Total Maximum Daily Loads, such as the Blackfoot River TMDL, designed to meet State and Federal water quality rules and regulations in the planning area. [HTSP13 0016]*

Response: BPA would continue to coordinate with Idaho DEQ as applicable to address any concerns about water quality standards. The project does not cross any tribal lands so consultation with tribes for water quality is not required. There is one proposed access road culvert installation on an unnamed tributary to Gravel Creek on the North Alternative. As described in Section 3.6.2, no new access roads for the North Alternative would be constructed over any perennial waterbodies and no access roads crossing the Blackfoot River, Little Blackfoot River, Meadow Creek or Gravel Creek would be improved. There are no proposed access road stream crossings on the South Alternative or its options. Section 3.6.4 describes mitigation measures that would be implemented to lesson possible impacts to water quality. Information has been added to Section 3.6.1 to describe the Blackfoot River's TMDLs.

Comment: *Since the project also anticipates obtaining Clean Water Act § 401 and 404 authorizations, and in a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for planned construction activities likely to disturb on or more acres, the final EIS should include updated information on those permit application processes and recommended measures to protect water quality. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Section 4.9, Clean Water Act, describes all CWA permits including Section 401, 402, and 404. However, Section 4.9 has been updated with additional information regarding impacts to waters of the U.S. and possible permits required. Mitigation measures to protect water quality are described in Section 3.6.4, Mitigation.

Groundwater

Comment: *In addition, groundwater extraction in the area, land disturbance, material storage, waste disposal, inadvertent chemical or hazardous liquid spills, and compaction produced by vehicular traffic can all affect recharge to the local aquifer and groundwater quality. [HTSP13 0016]*

Response: Sections 3.6.2 and 3.6.3, Environmental Consequences of the North Alternative and Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, describes impacts to groundwater from construction. Mitigation measures described in Section 3.6.4 include preparation of Spill Prevention and Response Procedures which would reduce possible impacts to groundwater.

Wildlife

Wildlife Habitat and Species

Comment: *Section 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 discuss impacts to vegetation resources and indicate that the proposed project would directly affect vegetation communities through trampling and removal due to construction of the transmission line, access roads and workspaces. Some impacts would be temporary, while others would be permanent. Since thermal modification and sedimentation are the primary cause of streams not supporting beneficial uses in the project area, we are concerned that vegetation removal along waterways could result in streambank scouring, erosion, poor drainage and loss of soil and wildlife habitat. Therefore, we recommend that such areas be targeted for active restoration to increase vegetation cover and improve thermal conditions in stream channels. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Comment noted. Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 and response above describe how all tall growing vegetation would be removed within the transmission line ROW. This includes all riparian areas unless the conductor is high enough that trees can remain on the ROW. Mitigation measures described in Sections 3.5.4 and 3.6.4 for Geology and Soils and for Water Resources, Floodplains, and Wetlands, include retention of low-growing vegetation, maintaining erosion controls near waterways, and reseeded of disturbed areas would help reduce impacts to stream channels and wildlife habitat.

Comment: *Please have your environmental studies look at: Power lines have little or no impact on wildlife. [HSTP13 0003]*

Comment: *Please have your environmental studies look at: And the wolves, bear, lions, coyotes, eagles, crows and ravens have pretty well taken care of useable wild life anyway so that's no issue. [HSTP13 0003]*

Comment: *Please have your environmental studies look at: Animal, bird and fish impact. [HSTP13 0004]*

Comment: *The North Alternative (32 miles) is about 50% longer than the South Alternative (22.5 miles) and impacts to wildlife, particularly birds, are much higher. [HSTP 13 0013]*

Response: Sections 3.7.2, Environmental Consequences of the North Alternative and 3.7.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, address the impacts of the proposed alternatives and options to wildlife.

Comment: *Please have your environmental studies looks at: Effect on winter range for deer elk etc. [HSTP13 0005]*

Response: Sections 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 address the impacts of the proposed alternatives to wildlife habitat, including big game habitat.

Comment: *Lastly, in addition to the errors and omissions regarding impacts to swans and other birds, the EIS shows similar problems with regard to its analysis of impacts to big game in the project area. Contrary to Appendix F, which states that white-tail deer are more abundant in the area than mule deer, anyone familiar with that area knows that is nonsense. Mule deer and elk are the abundant big game species. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Comment noted. Appendix F represents observations made during wildlife surveys in the area.

Comment: *Waterfowl and waterbirds are the primary avifauna at Grays Lake. Besides the 250 pairs of nesting Sandhill Cranes, numerous waterfowl species nest here, including Trumpeter Swans, as well as shorebirds (Killdeer, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Wilson's phalarope, Wilson's Snipe), waterbirds (American Coot, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Bittern), and Northern Harriers. Colonial species at Grays Lake include: Eared Grebes, White-faced Ibis, Franklin's Gulls, Black Terns, and Forester's Terns. During migration, shorebirds (Greater Yellowlegs, American Avocet, Sandpipers) are abundant. Tall grass wet meadows around the marsh support Bobolinks, and Savannah Sparrows, while the willow patches support Willow Flycatchers and Yellow Warblers. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Comment noted. Additional information on Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge has been added to Section 3.7, Wildlife.

Comment: *The habitat surrounding Blackfoot Reservoir is a mix of dryland grain fields and native sagebrush steppe with aspen pockets and basalt outcrops. The reservoir has several islands, covered mostly with native sagebrush habitat, but also with some willow riparian. Gull island is used by nesting American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, California Gulls, and herons. The reservoir is storage for irrigation water, thus can experience low water by late summer. The reservoir is also important as a fishery for stocked rainbow trout and native Yellowstone cutthroat trout. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Based on the above, we suggest there are differences between the two action alternatives in impacts that could result from construction and maintenance of the proposed project, and recommend revising Table 3-19 [3-16] of the DEIS to reflect those differences. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Table 3-19 of the supplemental draft EIS has been updated to include probability of species occurrence along the North and South alternatives and their options.

Comment: *Sections 3.1 & 3.7: We understand that at least one option under consideration for the southern alternative would cross a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) administered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Ownership of the WMA is split between IDFG and the Idaho Department of Lands. Section 3.1 of the DEIS briefly mentions state lands on the southern alternative, but does not identify where those lands are or identify the WMA. As acknowledged in section 3.2, the WMA is administered to provide for public recreation, to improve Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia bouvieri*) habitat, and to provide upland and riparian habitat for the benefit of wildlife, including wintering elk, deer, and moose. Construction of new roads and infrastructure as part of the southern alternative likely would impact the resource values the WMA is designed to protect. Consequently, we encourage BPA to explicitly address impacts to the WMA and the wildlife that uses it in...wildlife sections of subsequent NEPA analysis. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *The WMA provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including moose, elk, and deer. Streams within the WMA provide crucial habitat for native fish, including the imperiled Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Furthermore, the sagebrush lands of the WMA provide habitat for sage grouse, a species with the Fish and Wildlife Service has determined warrants listing under the Endangered Species Act, largely due to fragmentation of the species' habitat. [Greater Yellowstone Coalition letter]*

Response: Analysis of impacts specific to wildlife on the Blackfoot River WMA has been added to Section 3.7.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, South Alternative Route Options, Option 3A.

Comment: *The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) is legally mandated to protect and manage all of the state’s fish and wildlife resources and as a result coordinated the development of a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for the State of Idaho (CWCS) (IDFG 2005). The CWCS provides “a common framework that will enable conservation partners to jointly implement a long-term approach for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need” (IDFG 2005). However, the impacts of the proposed transmission line on the Species of Greatest Conservation Need that occur in the project have not been addressed in the Draft EIS. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *Impacts to all these special status species identified by the State of Idaho and known to occur within wetland and other habitats along the north and south alternatives should be analyzed. Because these species are lacking, the analyses of environmental consequences and mitigation are not sufficient to evaluate. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *The Blackfoot River/Reservoir (North and South Alternatives), Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge (North Alternative), and Woodall Lakes (South Alternative) all involve heavily used flight corridors for a variety of birds. Bird use includes migratory birds such as ducks, geese, American white pelican, sandhill crane and trumpeter swans. Raptors include bald eagle and peregrine falcons and upland game birds include sharp-tailed grouse and greater sage-grouse. Many of these species are categorized as sensitive by Federal agencies or Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by Idaho and we believe the DEIS would be strengthened by reflecting Idaho’s SGCN conservation status for these species (<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/wildlife/cwcs/>). [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *We strongly urge you to select the South Alternative and emphatically reject the North Alternative. The North Alternative creates a needless risk of direct mortality to a breeding group of Trumpeter Swans that is classified as “Critically Imperiled” in Idaho. This route would needlessly and permanently impact the avian resources of two Important Bird Areas of Global Significance, Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Blackfoot Reservoir, and the impacts cannot be reasonably mitigated. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Sections 3.7.2, Environmental Consequences of the North Alternative, and 3.7.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative, address the impacts of the proposed alternatives and options to wildlife including special status species.

Comment: *The draft EIS provides a superficial and erroneous description of Trumpeter Swan use of the project area. Some of the omission and errors include: The draft EIS completely fails to disclose that Trumpeter Swans are classified as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Idaho and that our nesting population has been designated as “Critically Imperiled”. Instead, the draft EIS merely says that IDFG classifies it as a “game bird”. Technically its designation under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 is indeed “game bird,” however that is totally irrelevant to its conservation status. It is the current conservation status in Idaho of vulnerable species that is (or should be) of paramount interest in this EIS. The EIS should have clearly disclosed that Trumpeter Swans are classified in Idaho as Critically Imperiled, with only 97 adults and about 24 nesting pairs occurring state-wide. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *In Appendix G, the draft EIS erroneously reported the IDFG classification of virtually every sensitive species by focusing on whether it was game or non-game, rather than giving its conservation status (State Rank or SRank) of “vulnerable”, “imperiled” or “critically imperiled”. Whoever put this appendix together apparently did not understand how to use the State Rank system in Idaho which is readily available and explained at: (<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/docs/compWildStrategy/appendixB.pdf>)*

Response: Table 3-22 of the EIS has been updated to include the global and state conservation rankings.

Comment: *The draft EIS also fails to disclose that Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge is the single-most important Trumpeter Swan nesting area in Idaho and supports about 1/3 of all of the adults and nesting pairs in the entire state. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *The draft EIS fails to reveal that both Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Blackfoot Reservoir have been designated as Important Bird Areas of Global Significance by Bird Life International and the National Audubon Society. The EIS fails to describe the diversity and the abundance of the avian populations whose flight paths would be traversed by the North Alternative route. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Section 3.7, Wildlife, has been updated to include additional information on Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, Appendix G, Avian Collision Risk Assessment and Marking Plan, includes information on the status of these locations as Important Bird Areas.

Comment: *In addition to the facts in the IBA description, in August-September there is a very large staging area for Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, and other waterfowl in the grain fields and wetlands along the east side of Blackfoot Reservoir along the North Alternative route. The draft EIS should have discussed these unusual avian concentrations and recognized the high risk of bird strikes that a transmission line through this area will cause. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *Your proposed North Alternative route virtually encompasses the spring and fall migration routes to and from Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent environs. The routes are used by thousands of cranes, waterfowl, and many of the other of the 150+ avian species that inhabit this superlative 22,000-acre marsh and associated upland habitats. [HSTP13 0014]*

Comment: *The draft EIS showed no awareness of the daily spring, summer, and fall low altitude foraging/feeding flights to and from Grays Lake Valley by cranes, some waterfowl, and other colonial nesting birds. These movements, which occur daily, involve anywhere from hundreds to several thousand birds of different species, which pass on a broad front southeasterly through Gravel Creek drainage, Hwy 34 corridor, Williamsburg, Lanes Creek, and Tincup Creek with some continuing on to WY. Smaller numbers of birds also move southwesterly from Grays Lake Valley to the Blackfoot Reservoir area and return in these same low altitude flights. Most all of these bird flights would be forced to cross your North Alternative transmission lines. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: Section 3.7, Wildlife has been edited to add additional information on Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, Sections 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 of the EIS discuss the potential effects of the North and South Alternatives on avian collisions and Appendix H, Avian Collision Risk Assessment and Marking Plan, includes information on the our analysis of the highest risk areas for avian collisions for all alternatives.

Comment: *The draft EIS also fails to reveal that Blackfoot Reservoir, in conjunction with the grain fields to the east of the reservoir where the North Alternative would run, comprise one of the more heavily use Sandhill Crane fall staging areas in Idaho, and the area also receives considerable use by geese and ducks. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: Appendix H includes the avian collision risk assessment and marking plan developed for this project. This assessment and marking plan considered the important bird habitat at the Blackfoot Reservoir in determining both potential impacts to avian species, including sandhill crane, and developing a marking plan to minimize potential impacts.

Comment: *I also reviewed the bird list for Species of Special Concern in Idaho (Appendix G) and found more than 35 bird species that occur along or near the North Alternative transmission line route. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *No bats insects, or gastropods are listed in Section 3.7 Wildlife, but several species that are listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need occur in southeast Idaho. Impacts to species that occur or are likely to occur along the north and south route alternative should be analyzed. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: BPA consulted with IDFG during the preparation of the supplemental draft EIS. IDFG indicated which species could potentially occur within the project area and those species were included in the supplemental draft EIS. BPA has updated Table 3-22 of the supplemental draft EIS to include the global and state conservation ranking status.

Comment: *In addition to sage-grouse, we believe that other wildlife such as pygmy rabbits, sage thrasher, sage sparrow, birds of prey, and so forth should be of concern in planning. New construction and infrastructure will also change crucial habitat for these species. The BLM should avoid construction in any designated areas or lands for special management of these species. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: BPA consulted with IDFG, BLM, USFWS, and USFS during the preparation of the supplemental draft EIS. These agencies indicated which species could occur in the project area and could be potentially impacted. The EIS addresses these species, including raptors, sage sparrow, and pygmy rabbit in Section 3.7, Wildlife. In the case of the sage sparrow and the pygmy rabbit, no detailed analysis was deemed necessary because they have a low potential to occur in the project area.

Comment: *Executive Order 13186 (66 Fed. Reg. 3853, January 17, 2001), entitled “Responsibilities of Federal agencies to Protect Migratory Birds,” directs Federal agencies to integrate migratory bird conservation practices into agency activities, and to promote the conservation of migratory bird populations and their habitats. Pursuant to this executive order, the Department of Energy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Service in 2006, which BPA also operates under. That MOU requires BPA to “avoid or minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts on migratory bird trust resources when conducting agency actions.” In addition, it compels BPA to “ensur[e] that migratory bird protection and conservation is considered in NEPA project reviews.” In keeping with these obligations, we recommend BPA integrate the additional analyses described above into subsequent NEPA analysis for the proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Line project. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Given that either alternative of the proposed transmission line likely would pose a threat to migratory birds, we encourage BPA to coordinate with the Service on ways to “protect, restore, enhance, and manage habitats of migratory birds.” As agreed to in the MOU and as is being implemented on other transmission lines proposed for construction in Idaho and neighboring states. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Outside the framework of the EIS, we recommend that BPA prepare a Bird Conservation Strategy (BCS), in coordination with the Service. We recommend the BCS describe how the project complies with the MBTA and the DOE/FWS MOU described above. The BCS should outline measures that BPA would take to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts to avian species during all phases of the project. [HSTP13 0026]*

Response: Section 3.7.4, Mitigation and Appendix H, Avian Collision Risk Assessment and Marking Plan, describe mitigation measures designed to minimize and mitigate for potential impacts to migratory birds. Measures to be implemented include preconstruction nest surveys, sage-grouse lek surveys, installation of visibility enhancement devices, limiting vegetation removal suitable for grouse nesting, and avoiding snag and large tree removal to the extent possible. The updated 2012 MOU requires BPA to “avoid or minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts to migratory bird trust resources when conducting agency actions.” In addition, it compels BPA to “ensur[e] that migratory bird protection and conservation is considered in NEPA project reviews.”

Comment: *In addition to implementing the APLIC guidelines, we recommend revising the mitigation measures proposed in the DEIS to be more specific. As stands, many are too vague to understand what will be implemented on the ground or their effectiveness in avoiding and minimizing impacts to resources. Where these measures pertain to Federal trust resources, including migratory birds and their habitats, we would be happy to assist BPA develop appropriately-specific best management practices and mitigation measures for inclusion in the FEIS. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: BPA appreciates the offer of assistance. As discussed above, BPA has conducted an avian collision risk assessment and developed a marking plan that can be found in Appendix H of the supplemental draft DEIS.

Comment: *In addition, mitigation for negative impacts to wildlife should be identified for each alternative and the various routing options. The north alternative is nearly 50% longer than the south alternative and is in closer proximity to Blackfoot Reservoir and Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, both of which have been identified as globally significant Important Bird Areas (<http://netapp.aubudon.org/iba/state/US-ID>). Although both transmission line alternatives cross migratory bird pathways, it is likely that the impacts to birds and other wildlife along the north alternative would be significantly higher because it is a longer transmission line. The increased environmental impacts of the north are not currently addressed in the mitigation section of the Draft EIS. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Both alternatives would require similar mitigation measures, although the exact locations and extent of these measures would vary between alternatives or options. BPA has developed the marking plan to minimize potential avian collisions from the proposed project.

Comment: *Appendix F: The species list provided in the DEIS as species documented during project surveys seems improbable for the area. For example, Columbian ground squirrels (*Urocitellus columbianus*) are not otherwise known to occur in southeastern Idaho, yet are described as being present in “high” abundance. Additionally, hunting records and previous observations show mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) as significantly more abundant than white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in the project area, yet the species list identifies the former as moderately abundant and the latter as highly abundant. Please check that the correct species list is included in the FEIS. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Appendix F (Wildlife Species Documented Within the Project During Wildlife and Vegetation Surveys) appears to contain errors. Columbian ground squirrels have not been documented in southeast Idaho. The common ground squirrel in the project area is the Uinta ground squirrel. White-tailed deer occurrence in the project area is known to be very low while mule deer abundance would be considered high. Harvest data and recent surveys suggest black bear numbers are relatively low in the project area. Based on our recent surveys, northern leopard frog numbers would be considered moderate to low. Clarification of the methods employed to obtain abundance and species identification is requested. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted. The supplemental draft EIS has been updated to remove incorrect references to species in the project area.

Comment: *No information was provided on when wildlife surveys were completed or the methods used. Wildlife surveys of the project area should be completed during spring, summer, fall, and winter in order to account for species that may use the area during different life history stages (e.g., spring migration, breeding, molting (birds), fall migration, and wintering).[HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Text in the supplemental draft EIS has been updated to include dates for wildlife surveys. In most cases, survey timing was based on USFS and BLM timing criteria.

Comment: *Under both alternatives, the proposed action would include construction of new access roads in order to construct and maintain the proposed transmission line. In many cases, these roads are difficult to close to subsequent public use, despite use of gates, boulders, or other barriers. As acknowledged in section 3.2, roads increase human access, including illegal use by people on ATVs. Increased access can disturb nesting birds, displace wildlife, lead to illegal take, or cause other issues. Please address in the wildlife section of subsequent NEPA analysis the wildlife impacts of new road construction and potential increased human activity in the area, compared to baseline conditions. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 of the supplemental draft EIS contain analysis of the impacts of road construction and increased use to wildlife.

Comment: *The selection of the “Northern Route” will adversely impact the hunting and fishing sites located along the route, as well as causing significant interruption to the “flight patterns” of waterfowl and the “game trails” of big game animals. [HSTP13 0026]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The southern alternative does, however, pass near the mouth of the Blackfoot River narrows. While we do not have data on numbers of migratory birds that use that area, birds migrating through the area likely include pelicans, ducks, geese, and osprey. We recommend that BPA coordinate with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to assess use of the area by these species and include in subsequent NEPA analysis a discussion of potential impacts. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: BPA consulted with IDFG during the preparation of the supplemental draft EIS. Use of the Blackfoot River Narrows by birds is described in Section 3.7, Wildlife.

Comment: *The affected environment description for wetlands and special status species does not include a complete list of wildlife species that have been documented using wetlands along the affected area of the north and south alternatives. Avian species that occur in wetland habitats along the proposed north and south alternatives, but are NOT listed as species in the section describing wetland wildlife habitat in the Draft EIS are:*

Geese: Canada geese.

Dabbling ducks: northern pintail, mallard, northern shoveler, cinnamon teal, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, American widgeon, gadwall.

Diving and sea ducks: lesser scaup, greater scaup, ring-necked duck, canvasback, redhead, bufflehead, ruddy duck, hooded merganser, red-breasted merganser, common merganser.

Grebes, rails and other marshbirds: eared grebe, western grebe, Clark’s grebe, American coot, sora, Virginia rail, American bittern, Wilson’s phalarope.

Shorebirds: long-billed curlew, spotted sandpiper, willet, Wilson’s snipe, white-faced ibis, upland sandpiper, black-necked stilt, American avocet, greater and lesser yellowlegs, long-billed dowitcher.

Gulls and terns: Franklin’s gulls, Forester’s tern. [HSTP13 0017]

Response: Common wildlife species listed in the draft EIS were not intended to be a complete list of species that could occur in the project area, but are instead a representative sample. However, BPA has updated the supplemental draft EIS with those species listed above as appropriate.

Comment: *Avian species listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the State of Idaho and known to occur in wetland habitats along the north and/or south route alternatives, but NOT included in Table 3-18 include:*

<i>Northern pintail</i>	<i>Clark's grebe</i>	<i>Black-necked stilt</i>
<i>Lesser scaup</i>	<i>American white pelican</i>	<i>American avocet</i>
<i>Hooded merganser</i>	<i>White-faced ibis</i>	<i>Long-billed curlew</i>
<i>Western grebe</i>	<i>Sandhill crane</i>	<i>Wilson's phalarope</i>
<i>Franklin's gull</i>	<i>Forester's tern</i>	

Other avian species listed as species of Greatest Conservation Need by the State of Idaho and known to occur in other habitats along the north and/or south route alternatives, but NOT included in Table 3-18 include: Swainson's hawk and Short-eared owl

In addition of IDFG Status (column labeled State Status in Table 3-18), the Statewide Rank should also be included for each special status species. For example, trumpeter swans have a rank of S1B, S2N meaning that the statewide breeding population is critically imperiled and the statewide non-breeding population is imperiled. Several other protected nongame species not currently included in Table 3-18 have a statewide rank of S3B meaning that breeding populations within the state of Idaho are vulnerable. [HSTP13 0017]

Response: As discussed above, BPA consulted with IDFG during the preparation of the supplemental draft EIS. However, BPA has added the global and state conservation ranking to Table 3-22.

Comment: *Under the Bald Eagle Protection Act, the transmission line should be sited to avoid any impacts to bald eagles. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. As discussed in Sections 3.7, Wildlife and Appendix G, Special Status Wildlife, during aerial raptor nest surveys conducted in 2013, two inactive bald eagle nests were observed within 1 mile of the project corridor. One of these nests, located in the southern portion of the project corridors for both the North and South alternatives, had been documented in 2011 as a potential active bald eagle nest. The second inactive bald eagle nest was documented in a large Douglas-fir snag overlooking the Blackfoot River east of the haul road, near the center of the South Alternative corridor. Several bald eagles were observed soaring and/or foraging during these aerial surveys, but no active bald eagle nests were documented. Because there are no active bald eagle nests located within 660 feet of the proposed project (the recommended buffer for transmission lines in the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (USFWS, 2005)), the project alternatives have been sited to avoid impacts to bald eagles.

Comment: *Anyway, I've just put your map on the computer and I couldn't pick a worse route to go for migratory birds. And they're probably no doubt going to be based on (inaudibles) and having inquired of several environmental groups about this kind of foolishness of putting big transmission lines right on primary migration routes of large birds and, hence, cranes, geese, trumpeter swans. By the way, trumpeter swans, the local population in Idaho is listed as critically imperiled. Anyway, it's a lot of nonsense I see looking at that route. You are in a major migration route, have a scenic highway and we have a historic Lander Trail out there and you guys want to plow right through that with your -- what I consider mess. And there's better ways to go. Your southern route, I've looked at that. That's pretty (inaudible) except you have these -- I consider -- phony reasons why you shouldn't be looking at that. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *And lastly, you are subject to laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1980, which opens you wide open to suits, the Eagle Act of 1940 -- and we can go on and on and on. So I'd like to see these things addressed and not just sit there in some office in Portland and come up with a bunch of nonsense. And that's what I consider your proposal, nonsense. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Do you know anything about the flyway treaty? Have you heard about that? Three migration flyways. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Without specific references, BPA is unable to respond to this comment.

Comment: *Both alternatives of the proposed project cross important breeding, wintering, and migratory habitats for migratory birds. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Farther south, anywhere from several hundred to a few thousand cranes may use the area near Woodall Springs and the proposed southern alternative in the fall, when they come to feed in nearby grain fields prior to migrating south for the winter. Some of these cranes feed at the grain fields during the day and travel north to roost at the Blackfoot Reservoir each evening. These daily movements cross the proposed project area. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: *Section 3.7: Although the DEIS mentions cranes and swans, it does not quantify the extent of bird use of the area (including the exceptionally large number of cranes that use Gray's Lake NWR) or describe patterns of bird use and behavior, as they relate to the risk posed by the proposed project. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA conducted an avian collision risk assessment to determine the portions of the alternatives with the highest risk of avian collision. It can be found in Appendix H, along with a marking plan designed to minimize collision risk.

Comment: *The DEIS also does not describe waterfowl use. Please include such discussion in subsequent NEPA analysis for the project. Please also describe resultant population impacts expected from the proposed action. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *What migratory waterfowl flight data and/or material were considered by Bonneville Power in determining the amount of impact by the proposed Southern and the Northern Line? Where can copies of this material be obtained by the public for consideration by appropriate personnel? [HSTP13 0027]*

Response: BPA did not include analysis of migratory waterfowl flight data, but instead used information obtained in consultation with state and federal agencies to determine the presence of species in the area, as well as required surveys. A brief description of waterfowl has been added to the supplemental draft EIS.

Comment: *Transmission lines provide perches for common ravens (*Corvus corax*) and raptors, species that commonly predate on other birds or their eggs. Infrastructure facilitates expansion of raven populations into areas where they were previously absent or in low abundance. Ball (2003) noted that most crane nests at Grays Lake are lost to predators and recent nest success witnessed from 1997-2000 was much lower as compared to Steel (1952) and Drewien (1973). Researchers attributed this at least in part to changes in the predator community, most likely increased raven and coyote populations (Austin 2007). Sandhill cranes, geese, and long-billed curlews (*Numenius americanus*) that nest on the Refuge are large birds that nest relatively early, before wetland vegetation has grown tall enough to provide shelter. They thus are quite conspicuous to predators while sitting on their nests. Currently, there are few perches along the proposed northern alternative. Fencing is limited on the Refuge, and there are no existing transmission lines and few distribution lines. Increasing the availability of perches in the vicinity of wetland complexes with nesting birds may negatively impact the nesting success of birds on the Refuge and surrounding lands. Please discuss in subsequent NEPA analysis the impacts associated with the proposed line as a perch for predators. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Both greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse are known to occur in the area of both alternatives. In addition to the concerns with avian collision addressed above, appropriate methods should be employed to avoid providing additional perch or nesting sites for predators of greater-sage grouse. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: BPA has included a discussion of the potential for increased predation in Section 3.7, Wildlife. In addition BPA would continue to coordinate with its cooperating agencies as appropriate sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat conservation guidance is developed.

Comment: *The timing of construction and maintenance activity could have adverse impacts on nesting raptors. At risk species such as bald eagle, great gray owl, northern goshawk, and peregrine falcon are known to occur in the area. There have been two confirmed great gray owl nesting territories along Rasmussen Ridge and numerous additional sightings throughout the area of the alternative routes. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *In 2004 a great grey owl was sighted in the timbered habitat at the south end of the WMA and there is a possibility of a nest site in the vicinity. Other nesting territories of great grey owl have been identified to the north and south of this location. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *In the vicinity of timbered sections and particularly the area of Dry Ridge, a concerted effort should be made to locate nest sites of forest raptors such as owls and goshawks so nesting sites are avoided. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *The timing of the activity could have adverse impacts on nesting goshawks and great gray owls, both of which are sensitive species. There have been two confirmed great gray owl nesting territories along Rasmussen Ridge. Additional survey should be conducted to determine the extent of breeding goshawks and great gray owls in the project area.[HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *Additional surveys should be conducted to determine the extent of breeding raptors in the area of all alternatives and disturbance during the breeding through fledging periods should be avoided. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comments noted. As discussed in Section 3.7.4, Mitigation, pre-construction raptor nest surveys would be conducted before removal of any trees.

Comment: *The draft EIS contains many errors and omissions BPA should reject the North Alternative due to its unacceptable impacts on wildlife, particular on avian species. [HSTP13 0014]*

Comment: *We strongly urge you to select the South Alternative and emphatically reject the North Alternative. The North Alternative creates a needless risk of direct mortality to a breeding group of Trumpeter Swans that is classified as “Critically Imperiled” in Idaho. This route would needlessly and permanently impact the avian resources of two Important Bird Areas of Global Significance, Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Blackfoot Reservoir, and the impacts cannot be reasonably mitigated. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *For all the reasons mentioned above, we ask that you reject the North Alternative and select the South Alternative if action is proven to be essential. Selection of the North Alternative would cause permanent damage to the globally significant avian resources of this area. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *The Trumpeter Swan Society strongly urges BPA to reject the North Alternative due to the potential impacts to Trumpeter Swans, which are classified as Critically Imperiled in Idaho, impacts to many other avian species, and impacts to two Important Bird Areas of Global Significance. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: *Raptor populations should be monitored throughout the year to determine level of use and possible hazards from collision and electrocution in the vicinity of the substation and the transmission line. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The draft EIS also fails to disclose that throughout the year, these “Critically Imperiled” swans move back and forth on low level local flights between Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Chubb Flats, Meadow Creek, Goose Lake, Blackfoot Reservoir, and winter at various sites from Blackfoot Reservoir southward. Much of the North Alternative route, from Mile Marker 1 to about Mile Marker 20 poses a collision hazard risk to Sandhill Cranes as they stage in late summer in this area. It would be impossible to attempt to mark these 20 miles of line sufficiently to reduce bird strikes. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *Our past research on avian powerline strikes found that 115kv lines can cause major avian mortalities on low flying birds, particularly cranes, waterfowl, and especially the vulnerable trumpeter swans which also nest at Grays Lake. The static wires pose the biggest problems and can contribute to large numbers of mortalities and injuries. [HSTP13 0014]*

Comment: *In addition, during autumn migrations, snow geese, tundra swans, cranes, and other birds from areas further north that normally stop overnight in route to other destinations, would also be subjected to the BPA net of wires in the Grays Lake and Blackfoot Reservoir vicinities. [HSTP13 0014]*

Comment: *BPA states it would (3-141) “minimize collision risk through installation of visibility enhancement devices in the area of highest collision risk.” Based upon my 40+ year knowledge of the area and routes of daily bird flights, it would require over 7 miles (from near mile 25 to mile 32) of marking lines with devices to enhance visibility, making your Transmission Line corridor look as if the Eastern Idaho State Fair and Carnival at Blackfoot had moved to rural State Scenic Hwy 34 near Wayan. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: As discussed above, BPA has conducted an avian collision risk analysis and developed a marking plan (see Appendix H).

Comment: *The draft EIS also fails to reveal that Trumpeter Swans are usually vulnerable to power line collisions due to their massive body size and weight, and their inability to maneuver quickly. Trumpeters are the heaviest flying bird in North America. Powerline collisions are one of the leading documented cause of death of Trumpeter Swans in the US despite the frequent use of line markers. Because of their great weight (20-30lbs) and huge wingspan (7+feet) collision frequently results in damage to the line and power loss, as well as the death of swans. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *If Northern route Through Grays Lake There is possibility of migratory bird strikes, ie, Cranes, Swans and Whooping Cranes. They are highly susceptible to wire strikes. [HSTP13 0021]*

Response: BPA discusses avian collision risk in detail in Appendix H, Avian Collision Risk Analysis and Marking Plan, including the fact that species type affects collision risk.

Comment: *The draft EIS fails to reveal that powerline marking devices do not minimize mortality from avian powerline strikes. At best, they reduce mortality by varying degrees, depending upon a multitude of factors. Utility industry and regulatory agency guidelines clearly state that not siting a new transmission line in heavily used avian flight paths is the only reliable way to minimize avian mortality. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *Frankly, I find it difficult to believe you studied the potential problems seriously prior to proposing to locate a Transmission line in such close proximity to such large bird concentrations. The evidence available suggests BPA only gave this route a cursory inspection prior to selecting it as the North Alternative route. One of the major criteria in the Avian Collision Model (Heck 2007: 117) that BPA used was: "NEW POWER LINES SHOULD NOT CROSS PERPENDICULAR TO MAJOR FLIGHT CORRIDORS." BPA obviously did not read this section or took the information lightly, and instead, offered up a superficial but nonviable remedy. Your proposed route puts BPA in direct conflict with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918), and possibly the Eagle Protection Act (1940), and other laws. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: BPA developed a marking plan (Appendix H) that follows APLIC 2012 guidelines for minimizing avian collision risk. Although transmission siting to avoid heavily used avian flight paths is ideal, it is not always possible due to other factors. When that is the case, transmission line marking is an accepted practice to minimize avian collisions and mortality.

Comment: *The draft EIS failed to utilize the most up to date information regarding reducing avian powerline collisions. This is widely available and use should be mandatory on this and all other BPA projects. It appears that BPA has never developed an Avian Protection Plan (APP), as recommended by APLIC and others. [HSTP13 0013]*

Comment: *To minimize bird collisions and electrocutions, we encourage BPA to implement the 2012 APLIC guidelines, which reflect the current best available scientific information about injury or death of birds from electrocution by and collision with power lines, instead of older versions of the guidelines, as described in the DEIS. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Due to the large body mass of trumpeter swans and known collision hazards with power lines, the project impact on trumpeter swans in Table 3-19 should be moderate to high as stated in the text. Similar resource impacts occur for sandhill cranes, a species not even listed in Table 3-19. Flight patterns of birds, including migratory pathways and daily flight patterns between roosting, foraging, and/or nesting areas should be analyzed. In addition, the Draft EIS does not include the most recent information on bird collisions with power lines published in October 2012 by the Edison Electric Institute (Avian Power Line Interaction Committee 2012). [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: The supplemental draft EIS has been updated to reflect the 2012 APLIC collision document and to incorporate the above comments into Table 3-22.

Comment: *Our August 1, 2006 comment letter referenced adherence to an Avian Protection Plan (APP) and the Avian Power line Interaction Committee (APLIC) guidelines during this project. The DEIS is unclear as to whether the reference to APLIC indicates an adoption of both the APP and the APLIC guidelines, which should be clarified. We strongly encourage BPA to use widely recognized, contemporary methods to reduce powerline collisions, particularly important for the northern alternative. Bird strike diverters should be installed according to recommended protocol and their effectiveness should be monitored and reported with modifications deployed as needed. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *Both the substation and the proposed transmission line should be constructed to be 'avian safe' according to guidelines of the Avian Protection Plan (APP) and the Avian Powerline Interaction Committee (APLIC). [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *Regarding the Caribou-Lower Valley transmission line we have some concerns with the routing of the line. It is well documented that power lines create hazards for wildlife directly through collisions and electrocution. Construction details should follow guidelines according to the APP and APLIC as above (see Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Powerlines and Mitigating Bird Collisions With Powerlines). {HSTP13 0022}*

Comment: *On the ridgeline itself and adjacent to any wetland areas, bird avoidance devices should be considered to lessen chances of collisions especially during seasonal migrations. [HSTP13 0195]*

Comment: *In IDFG's July 12, 2008 comment letter reference was made to the adherence to the Avian Protection Plan (APP) and the Avian Power line Interaction Committee (APLIC) guidelines during this project. It is unclear if the reference to "avian safe" transmission structures (3.2.8 Mitigation Measures) indicates an adoption of APP and APLIC guidelines. [HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *We stand by all recommendations in the July 12 letter referring to guidelines in the Avian Protection Plan, wildlife sightings, needed surveys, and critical wildlife activity periods. As stated previously, bird avoidance devices should be utilized and we would encourage any possible steps to minimize sight distances within the cleared corridor through timber. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: As discussed above and in Section 3.7.4, Mitigation, BPA intends to install visibility enhancement devices on overhead groundwires. In addition, this section indicates that BPA intends to consult with the appropriate state or federal land management agency concerning special status species that have already been identified or that may be identified during follow up surveys, and implement any mitigation measures (such as feasible and appropriate avoidance measures) identified as a result of these consultations. Section 3.7.4 has been updated to clarify that BPA intends to follow both APLIC and APP guidelines in the preparation of the marking plan, as found in Appendix H,

Comment: *I also read in your EIS that you're going to cross some water fowl areas. One of the reasons we live here is because we like to hunt and fish. When I read in there that you're going to put some gadgets on the poles and wires, and you'll cut down the mortality of 57 percent of swans and cranes, I have a problem with that. Particularly in some of these areas around Henry and other areas, I think that's unacceptable. Not only do we have trumpeter swans and some endangered cranes in the area, that's a big concern. Even those gadgets you put on the wires don't work all that well. Anybody who goes around Soda Creek knows that those poles and wires that are there, even though they have those types of things on them, we get a large mortality with ducks and geese and swans in that area. I'm not saying that the company didn't work to try not to do that, but I think you got to come up with a better solution. A 57 percent reduction in mortality is not that great a number, guys. There has to be something better. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *In airspace regularly traversed by waterfowl, BPA should use single poles without guy wires to reduce mortality from collisions. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *Avian mortalities - In the EA discussion concerning structure installation, reference is made to guy wires, “Some structures may require guy wires that provide stability to structures subject to stress, such as dead-end or angle structures.” ... Guy wires would be within the ROW, anchored no further than 110 feet from the structure.” (2.1.2.2 Transmission Line Structures). In an area of known high wildlife usage, particular large birds, wires strung at levels above ground level even at relative acute angles could result in significant injuries or deaths. [HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *Given that the probability of collisions increases when birds cross a transmission line area frequently (APLIC 2012), it is concerning that both alternatives bisect the area between the grain fields and wetlands used by cranes. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *In addition, the proposed project is in close proximity to areas where young cranes fly as part of daily movements to feeding and roosting areas near the Refuge, Blackfoot Reservoir, and Woodall Springs. Younger birds are known to be less agile fliers, with a correspondingly lower ability to maneuver to avoid power lines (Crowder 200, APLIC 2012). Although a larger percentage of the northern alternative is in close proximity to short cover wetlands and grain fields used by cranes, both alternatives could have potentially large impact on the local population of cranes. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Trumpeter swans also use the area surrounding Blackfoot Reservoir. Approximately one third of the adult trumpeter swans in Idaho use Gray’s Lake NWR, including for nesting. Approximately two to 20 swans from the Fivemile Meadows Complex may winter and travel throughout the area, to Woodall Springs (just east of both alternatives). Blackfoot Reservoir, and Gray’s Lake NWR. Tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) also occasionally pass through the area. Because swans generally travel parallel to the proposed transmission line, collision risk is likely lower than for sandhill cranes. However, risk still exists, as the majority of flights in the area are daily movements at low flight heights. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Numerous American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrohynchos*) use the south end of the Blackfoot Reservoir, in close proximity to both alternatives. Pelicans are also prone to transmission line collisions. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *Finally, numerous species of waterfowl use the seasonal wetlands and sedge flats at Goose Lake, west of Gray’s Lake NWR. These wetlands attract hundreds of waterbirds and provide vitally important seasonal waterfowl staging areas during spring migration. The proposed northern alternative passes through and immediately adjacent to these wetlands. Waterfowl tend to have high wing loading (small wings), and therefore have limited flight maneuverability, or ability to avoid unseen obstacles such as the shield wires on power lines. Consequently, it is reasonable to anticipate a seasonal high probability of waterfowl collisions along the northern alternative. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *First, the northern alternative passes within approximately a mile of Gray's Lake NWR. Gray's Lake was established in 1965 to protect and restore habitat for ducks, geese, and other species. It includes the largest hard bulrush marsh in the world, and hosts the largest population of nesting sandhill cranes in the world. The Refuge is surrounded by seasonal wetlands managed by BLM, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and private landowners that provide additional habitat for migratory and nesting waterfowl, cranes, swans, and other avian species. The northern alternative also crosses private lands of high resource value near Blackfoot Reservoir and Goose Lake. The northern alternative transmission line would be in close proximity to two globally recognized Audubon Society Important Bird Areas (IBA), designated at Gray's Lake NWR and the Blackfoot Reservoir because of the value of local habitats to cranes and other avian species. We are concerned this juxtaposition would place large numbers of birds at high risk for being injured or killed by colliding with the proposed transmission line. Please thoroughly address potential impacts to the avian populations that use the Refuge and surrounding lands. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Chapter 2 describes BPA's proposal to use steel single pole structures for the 11 miles of the North Alternative and for the entire length of the South Alternative and its options. This means that single pole structures would be used in the areas between the Blackfoot Reservoir, Woodall Springs and the Blackfoot River where birds move from grain fields to wetlands. As mentioned in responses above and in Section 3.7.4, Mitigation, and Appendix H, Avian Collision Risk Analysis and Marking Plan, BPA intends to install visibility enhancement devices on overhead groundwires.

Comment: *The EIS should provide additional information on how powerlines will be designed to minimize electrocutions of raptors. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Electrocutation of bird species is normally is not an impact resulting from transmission lines. Even birds with large wingspans most likely would not touch two conductors at one time. Bird electrocution is normally a concern for distribution lines because they have less distance between conductors than transmission lines.

Comment: *The area around Gray's Lake NWR and Blackfoot Reservoir are of particular importance to sandhill cranes and trumpeter swans, both of which are highly prone to collisions with power lines because of their long legs, large body size, wing shape, tendency to flock, and flight characteristics (Bevanger 1998, APLIC 2012, Morkill and Anderson 1991). Gray's Lake NWR hosts the largest breeding population of nesting greater sandhill cranes in North America. Annually, approximately 700 sandhill cranes, including 200 to 250 breeding pairs, use shallow flooded wetlands at Gray's Lake NWR and the surrounding areas within in valley, including seasonally flooded meadows approximately a half mile from the proposed northern alternative. As many as 3,000 migratory sandhill cranes use the area within the Grays Lake basin, proximate to the identified northern alternative, as they stage for the migration to wintering areas. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Comment noted. The supplemental draft EIS has been updated to incorporate the above information.

Comment: *The DEIS describes applying an avian collision model (Heck 2007) to the northern alternative. We would recommend applying the same model to the southern alternative, and using it to compare the two alternatives in a similar way to how collision risk was compared across different sections of the northern alternative. The Service would be interested in seeing the modeling output. Further, we would encourage BPA to include in the Final EIS (FEIS) graphic and written descriptions of model outputs and how they inform selection of a preferred alternative or any micro-siting done along the proposed power line route. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *The collision risk model is based on site-specific application of a number of factors that contribute to overall risk (Heck 2007). In subsequent NEPA analysis, please discuss those factors, as well as the additional ones identified in APLIC 2012, and how they apply to each of the proposed alternatives. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *It is difficult to assess the utility of the avian collision model (Heck 2007) used to analyze the collision potential along the North Alternative and we question why a model that is not commonly found in the literature was used; providing the rationale for use of this model rather than other published models would strengthen the DEIS. To allow for our evaluation of this model, please provide information as to where and how the model has been previously applied and the specific inputs used in this application. If the methodology is acceptable, we suggest that the avian collision model also be used to assess the Southern Alternative to adequately compare the two alternatives. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Results and a discussion of the methodology of the avian collision model for the South Alternative and options have been added to the supplemental draft EIS as Appendix H.

Comment: *The Blackfoot River is a heavily used flight corridor for a variety of birds. Bird use is not limited to waterfowl but includes sandhill cranes and tundra swans. We request monitoring of the effectiveness of the bird strike diverters at the Blackfoot River crossing points to ensure avian collision are minimized. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: As discussed in Section 3.7.4, Mitigation, BPA intends to consult with the appropriate state or federal land management agency concerning special status species that have already been identified or that may be identified during follow up surveys, and implement any mitigation measures (such as feasible and appropriate avoidance measures) identified as a result of these consultations.

Comment: *Habitat fragmentation resulting from vegetation cleared for the proposed transmission line should be analyzed in more detail to assess its impact on native vegetation, noxious weeds, and wildlife resources. This analysis should include life history strategies of all affected plant and animal species and how they are expected to respond to increased fragmentation and soil disturbance from vegetation removal. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Comment noted. Sections 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 contain analysis of the effects of the project on noxious weeds, vegetation, and wildlife resources.

Comment: *Portions of the project area contain habitat that is crucial to fish and wildlife species such as Yellowstone cutthroat trout, sage-grouse and other species. Such habitat has been severely fragmented and reduced through a variety of land management practices, including road construction and development of rights of way corridors. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The northern alternative would impact wetlands and more than four times as much aspen-dominated vegetation as the southern alternative. These two communities provide disproportionately high resource value to wildlife. Numerous species including migratory birds, elk, deer, and bears use aspen riparian areas for forage and shelter. Wetlands provide important habitat for waterfowl, cranes, swans, and other avian species. Although the DEIS describes impacts to vegetation in section 3, 4, it does not discuss in section 3.7 the corresponding impacts to wildlife. Please describe the wildlife impacts that would result from clearing aspen and riparian vegetation, including the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Comment noted. Sections 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 of the EIS describe impacts to wildlife, including the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation.

Comment: *This reassessment is critically important as the EIS needs to conduct a more thorough analysis on avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts to sage-grouse. The project area appears to contain either Preliminary General Habitat or Preliminary Priority Habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *The project area appears to contain either Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) or Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) for Greater Sage-Grouse (see map below). PPH, as identified in BLM's Greater Sage-Grouse Interim Management Policies and Procedures, IM 2012-043 (12/27/2011), "comprises areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable Greater Sage-Grouse populations" that "have been identified by the BLM in coordination with respective state wildlife agencies." For pending projects in PPH (including those for which a Draft EIS has been issued and would likely have more than minor adverse effects on sage-grouse), the IM provides that the agency must:*

Ensure that reasonable alternatives for siting the ROW outside of the PPH or within a BLM-designated utility corridor are considered and analyzed in the NEPA document.

Identify technically feasible best management practices, conditions, etc. (e.g., siting, burying powerlines) that may be implemented in order to eliminate or minimize impacts. (emphasis added) [HSTP13 0016]

Comment: *Consequently, transmission lines should be avoided in PPH, and the BPA has not made the requisite findings or considered measures to avoid or offset damage to the habitat that would be affected by this project. If these routes receive further consideration, BPA must disclose these impacts and consider mitigation measures, including the offsite mitigation. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: The supplemental draft EIS has been updated to incorporate the results of additional sage grouse surveys conducted in 2013. Additionally, Map 3-8 has been updated to show Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) and Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) for greater sage-grouse. As shown on Map 3-8, all alternatives and options avoid both PGH and PPH. There is a portion of PGH that extends north to the Blackfoot River although this is south of the proposed South Alternative and its options.

Comment: *A Supplemental EIS is needed to conduct a more thorough analysis on avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts to sage-grouse. Greater sage-grouse suffer from the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat throughout the west. It's estimated that only 50-60% of the original sagebrush steppe habitat remains in the west (West 200), and in 2007, the American Bird Conservancy listed sagebrush as the most threatened bird habitat in the continental United States¹ As such, we cannot stress enough how important it is for agencies to consider impacts to sage-grouse and for public land managers to conserve existing habitat and actively restore altered sagebrush steppe habitats. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *Based on the habitat guidelines for sage-grouse management presented in Connelly et al. (2000),⁵ we recommend siting the transmission line in such a way to avoid impacts to sage-grouse. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *Depending on location and design specifics, the construction of transmission lines within sage-grouse habitat could constitute "nonlinear infrastructure" under the Conservation Plan for Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee 2006). Nonlinear infrastructure is defined as "human-made features on the landscape that provide or facilitate transportation, energy, and communications activities...including wind energy facilities."² The Conservation Plan lists infrastructure such as this as the second greatest threat for sage grouse, with wildfires as the greatest risk. Road construction and use associated with transmission line maintenance represents high risk for loss of lek areas, nesting locations, and brood-rearing habitats (Braun 1986, Connelly et al. 2004).^{3,4} In addition, sage-grouse have been shown to avoid transmission lines, presumably because of potential predation. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: BPA has conducted sage-grouse lek survey along the proposed alternatives, as described above and in the supplemental draft EIS which has been updated to incorporate the results, as well as to include additional analysis regarding the potential for effects to sage-grouse, including the potential for increased predation.

None of the alternatives considered cross active leks as defined by Conelly et al. 2000. In addition, the alternatives do not cross preliminary priority or general habitat. However, BPA will need to site the transmission line through some amount of sagebrush habitat in order to fulfill its purpose and need. Federal, state, and private landowners would be still able to manage sage-grouse habitat (as suggested by Conelly et al. 2000) along the proposed corridors so long as the actions do not affect the transmission line. BPA will continue to coordinate with federal and state land managers on sage-grouse presence. The use of monopole structures will reduce the potential perching or nesting of avian predators compared to other tower types such as steel lattice.

Comment: *Where impacts are unavoidable, the BLM should implement on and off-site habitat mitigation to offset any impacts to sage grouse. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: BPA assumes the commenter is referring to BPA rather than the BLM. Currently, the proposed alternatives and options avoid long-term impacts to sage grouse.

Comment: *The BPA analysis should recognize that sage-grouse are a landscape-scale species and that individuals may move dozens of miles between required habitats. [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *Given the consideration of year-round habitat use and known impacts of human activity on sage-grouse populations, mitigation will be needed for disturbance to sagebrush near lekking areas; disturbance and loss of sagebrush and native forbs used for early brood-rearing; and disturbance and impacts to hydrologic function of wet areas used for early to late brood-rearing. A conservative estimate for the nesting and brood rearing area affected will include buffers with radii of 6.2 miles around known leks. Mitigation specifics could be based on a mitigation template recently created for the Lesser Prairie Chicken, a ground-nesting species facing similar threats (Horton et al. 2010). [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: BPA recognizes that the type of habitat required by sage-grouse may be found within the project area. However, as mentioned above and in Section 3.7, Wildlife, the alternatives and options are not within PGH or PPH and there are no known leks within the project area.

Comment: *The BPA should consult closely with the Forest Service, BLM, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Local Sage-grouse Working Group to determine appropriate measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts in the Supplemental EIS. With the additional comments received, the BPA should design the transmission line to minimize the potential impacts described above. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *As stated above, we recommend reducing roads and trails in identified sensitive areas to preserve existing habitat. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *IM 2012-043 requires additional procedures for pending right-of-way applications that would affect more than one linear mile of sage grouse habitat. These procedures include a high-level interagency review process for any right-of-way project that would fail to “cumulatively maintain or enhance sage-grouse habitat.” The sage-grouse habitat that will be affected by proposed project routes has been acknowledged by the BLM as potentially important for protection. Allowing development of a transmission line through this landscape could result in harmful, and potentially irreversible impacts to important greater sage-grouse habitat, both by damaging sage-grouse habitat through the construction and maintenance of power lines and by providing “perches” for raptors and other birds of prey to more easily prey on sage-grouse. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found that transmission lines have a range of adverse impacts on sage grouse and their habitats. 75 Fed.Reg. 13909, 13928-29 (March 23, 2010). The Service’s 12-month finding on sage grouse noted the many transmission line proposals pending in the western states and explained “If these lines cross sage grouse habitats, sage grouse will likely be negatively affected.” Id at 13929. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA would follow all required procedures and permitting requirements for the Project developed in conjunction with agencies such as USFWS and BLM. At this time, BLM has not required or requested the additional procedures referenced in this comment.

Comment: *The Supplemental EIS should show the proximity of all routes with historic and currently active leks, as well as lek counts over the last several years. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *It is unclear from the DEIS whether a sage-grouse lek was “observed” or “discovered” adjacent to the South Alternative (P. 3-135, Appendix G-3). If a lek has been confirmed in the vicinity of the eastern end of the South Alternative, it is significant so we request clarification of the lek reference. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: As described above, BPA has conducted additional sage grouse surveys in 2013 along the South Alternative and options. Chapter 3.7, Wildlife, has been updated to include maps showing the proximity of historic and active lek sites to all alternatives.

Comment: *At the elevations of the project, we recommend that project activity be curtailed until mid-May (not “the beginning of May” – Table 2.4, p. 2-50) to protect greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse leks. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Section 3.7.4 of the supplemental draft EIS has been updated to indicate restrictions would be in place until mid-May.

Comment: *Sage and sharp-tailed grouse (both listed as ‘species of greatest conservation need’ – Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, 2005) have been sighted on the WMA in recent years. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

Big Game Habitat

Comment: *Avoiding long straight stretches where possible, minimizing the width of the corridor, and removal of only taller vegetation all would help maintain the security values for big game and other wildlife. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted. However, as described in above responses and in Chapter 2, the proposed 115-kV transmission line easement width would be 100 feet wide for both the North and South alternatives and options. Additionally, all tall-growing vegetation would be cleared from the ROW which would be maintained to be compatible with low-growing vegetation species.

Comment: *Construction activities should be suspended during elk and deer migration. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. As discussed in Section 3.7.4, BPA would consult with the C-TNF, the BLM, and IDFG regarding construction and access within big game winter range habitat between November 15 and April 15.

Comment: *Female elk and mule deer are particularly sensitive to disturbance during calving and fawning and we request a construction window that avoids activity during the critical period from late May to late June. We are particularly concerned with the reach for the South Alternative from Dry Valley to Upper Valley, which has been identified as an elk calving area by recent radio-telemetry studies. Currently this area has no U.S. Forest Service identified roads or trails. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *More indirectly, power lines and the associated roads, vegetation removal and visual effects may alter daily and seasonal use by a variety of wildlife. Security for big game during fawning/calving and especially hunting seasons may be affected significantly by increased sight distances. This is especially true at the easterly extent of the proposed transmission line route where it traverses Dry Ridge. This area adjacent to the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is heavily used by deer and elk through the spring, summer and fall. Of 25 cow elk radio-collared in the Soda Hills winter range complex (winter '05-'06) six were recently relocated in this vicinity just south of the WMA and have likely calved in the area. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *Work to install the transmission line in the Dry Ridge vicinity should occur outside of calving, fawning, and fledging periods from late May through early August. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *Female elk are particularly sensitive to disturbance during calving. The general area proposed for the temporary access roads has been identified as an elk calving area. Activity, particularly construction, should not be undertaken within the critical period late May-late June. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Section 3.7.4, Mitigation, has been updated to include limiting construction between Dry Ridge and Upper Valley within the Blackfoot River WMA during the elk and mule deer calving and fawning period and avian breeding and nesting from April 15 to July 1.

Comment: *IDFG has identified aspen as an important direct and indirect habitat component for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species. We are particularly aware of the benefits of aspen habitats to mule deer and elk for annual recruitment. Our current Mule Deer Initiative focuses on fawning habitat and overall forage production associated with aspen stands. The positive impacts of healthy aspen communities on watersheds also benefits fisheries. Where possible, aspen community disruption should be avoided and disturbed aspen communities should be regenerated or mitigated. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Large numbers of mule deer annually migrate from the north end of the Aspen Range/Wood Canyon higher elevations, across the valley to winter in Soda Hills and the Ninety Percent range. This migration corridor includes the area partially occupied by the Monsanto Soda Springs Phosphorous Plant and the PacifiCorp Substation. Although the proposed Hooper Springs Substation would cover a relatively small area (5.4 acres), the perimeter fencing (page 2-1) would impede mule deer movement through this area. We request actions to reduce and or mitigate potential impacts in consultation with our regional staff. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *We have no particular concerns with the construction of the proposed substation though we have little information on the detail of the project. Our observation is that substations typically encompass fairly insignificant acreages. However, the general area of the site is heavily traversed by mule deer in the early winter and late spring migrating to and from the Soda Hills wintering area. This migration corridor is already heavily impacted by Highway 34, county roads, railroad lines, residential housing and the Monsanto phosphate production plant. Any further impediments should be avoided or mitigated by improving passage through this bottleneck area. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *Disruption of mule deer migration corridor - Large numbers of mule deer annually migrate from the north End of The Aspen Range/Wood Canyon across the valley to winter in Soda Hills and the Ninety Percent range. This migration moves through the area currently occupied by the Monsanto Plant and the PacifiCorp Substation. Although the proposed Hooper Springs Substation would cover a relatively small area (5.4 acres) the perimeter fencing (page 2-1) would eliminate mule deer movement through this area. Additional discussion on how to either reduce and/or mitigate this situation is recommended. [HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *Surveys should be conducted in the spring and fall to determine the extent of the mule deer migration in the proximity of the proposed substation. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: As described in Chapter 2, the location of the proposed Hooper Springs Substation is adjacent to an existing substation and mining operation. In addition, the land is currently being cultivated. Given the current level of human disturbance and use of the area, it is unlikely that it provides suitable migratory habitat for mule deer or elk.

Comment: *The ROW created across Blue Mtn. (approx.. miles 22-24.5) would be devastating to migration and wintering Big Game animals because it opens access to what has been up to now a relatively rugged and secure area with very limited human intrusion and which has served as important winter range. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The North Alternative route in Miles 21-26 will traverse the primary migration route that elk and mule deer follow as they migrate between lower elevation winter areas to the west and summer habitat east of Grays Lake. [HSTP13 0013]*

Response: Comment noted. Consultation with IDFG and C-TNF wildlife biologists indicates the area contains important winter range for elk and moose as well as summer/fawning habitat for mule deer, but is not considered a primary migration route. It is not anticipated that the presence of the ROW would create a barrier to elk and mule deer migration. BPA would continue consult with the C-TNF and BLM regarding construction and access within big game winter range habitat between November 15 and April 15. Within big game winter ranges, disturbed areas would be seeded with preferred big game forage species, as recommended by the C-TNF and BLM.

Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area

Comment: *Any increase in motorized access may lead to reduction in big game security. Currently this area WMA has no US Forest Service identified roads or trails. Security may be compromised if the proposed temporary access roads are not properly reclaimed (retired) to prevent unauthorized access. Mitigation measures should ensure there is no increase in motorized disturbance once the project is complete. [HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *There is limited motorized access and therefore limited disturbance to this portion of the WMA and adjacent Forest Service (USFS) land. It would be preferable to maintain this refuge situation and keep the existing habitat intact. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: As discussed in Sections 3.1.4 and 3.7.4, Mitigation, BPA intends to both limit the amount of permanent access roads as well as restrict public access to permanent roads including existing roads on the Blackfoot River WMA and C-TNF.

Comment: *Given the large amount of fragmented habitat in the area associated with mining infrastructure and the importance of the remaining habitat, further fragmenting the area near of the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area appears needless and unacceptable. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The EIS does not address concerns to the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area. [HSTPS13 0016]*

Response: The supplemental draft EIS has been updated to include a discussion of the Blackfoot River WMA.

Comment: *In our letter on July 12, 2006, we expressed our desire that this portion of the line avoid the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and what we consider to be some important wildlife habitat on the WMA and Caribou-Targhee National Forest lands. At that time*

we were not fully aware of limitations on the route selection posed by severity of the slope on the west side of Dray Ridge. Because that steep face necessitates approaching the ride at a saddle overlooking the mid-point of Mill Canyon, and because any route down the Mosquito Creek drainage would involve more vegetation alteration and maintenance (disturbance) of the corridor, we no longer see an advantage to pursuing a route down Mosquito Creek. The saddle that the line will approach and cross over is along the southern edge of the unroaded and secluded refugia that we were hoping to protect. Once the disturbance reaches that point, any route that impacts more habitat in the short term or long term is not logical. We agree that following down along the less vegetated Mill Canyon proper, either on the open south-facing slope, or along the road on the north-facing slope, makes more sense for minimizing impacts to wildlife. [HSTP13 0022]

Response: Comment noted. See response above in Chapter 2, South Alternative's Option 3A.

Fish

Comment: *We note that BPA will consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, as moderate, long-term fish habitat impacts are anticipated in fish-bearing streams during implementation of this project (p. 3-158). We recommend that the final EIS include outcomes of that consultation and recommended measures to reduce risks to species within the analysis area to protect biota and habitat. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Section 3.8.2, Environmental Consequences of the North Alternative and Section 3.8.3, Environmental Consequences of the South Alternative describe impacts to fish habitat as none to short-term and low. BPA would consult with the appropriate state and federal agencies including the USFWS if needed.

Comment: *Mill Canyon Creek and other minor tributaries to the Blackfoot River and diamond Creek are occupied by Yellowstone cutthroat trout (also a 'species of greatest conservation need') and are potential spawning streams for that species. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment Noted. Section 3.8, Fish, identifies the presence of Yellowstone cutthroat trout within the Blackfoot River and upper reaches. Direct impacts to the Blackfoot River would be avoided by spanning the river.

Cultural Resources

Comment: *How about the Lander Trail?[HSPT13 0028]*

Comment: *What consideration has Bonneville Power made in the preservation of the Lander Trail in Idaho? [HSTP13 0027]*

Comment: *I would like to address a cultural issue on the northern alternative. The Lander Road that goes through that area and in the Wayan area, just east of that, the Lander Road is a nationally recognized immigrant trail under the National Trails Act. That road was built in 1858 and 1859. There's some original ruts in that area. Once those are gone, they're gone. Access roads may cross those. And like I said, once those ruts are plowed or harmed, they're not there anymore. [HSTP13 0018]*

Comment: *There's some viewshed issues in that area. It appears to me that the north alternative has some real issues with this cultural business, the Lander Road. [HSTP13 0018]*

Comment: *This route will closely follow the Lander Road, an emigrant route of great historical value. Placing the transmission project along the Lander Road and/or very close to the route will destroy the viewshed of the route which still today is one of the few places that people can experience the same environment that emigrants to Oregon and California experienced in the late 1850's and 1860's. There are numerous historical sites and graves along the Lander Road and I am also concerned about possible damage to these sites with the Northern Alternative. Again, I am opposed to the Northern Alternative of the Hooper Springs Transmission Project. [HSTP13 0008]*

Comment: *The path now being considered for the transmission lines is near the old Lander Trail, used by many in the pioneer days to cross this area. The construction of towers will have trucks and equipment crossing the old trail or even using it in places. If this happens, the trail, graves, noon resting areas and night camping areas have the potential to be destroyed. And there are places associated with a trail history that are not even known at this time. When those who want to experience this area as the pioneers did, they want to experience the view as it was. There are so few places left when this can be done. Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns. [HSTP13 0009]*

Response: BPA has made every effort to gain access to lands where the Lander Trail may be located but has not been provided access. Section 3.9, Cultural Resources, describes where the North Alternative would cross the mapped Lander Trail; however this portion of the road has not been evaluated for inclusion in the NRHP nor has BPA been allowed to survey for visible tracks. Additionally, because BPA cannot access the area, a viewshed study of the road area has not been conducted.

Comment: *The northern route would impact scenic and historical routes. [HSTP13 0012]*

Comment: *But from our standpoint, as far as immigrant trails preservation, we would have a real serious concern with the north alternative. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Comments noted. Potential impacts to cultural resources including historic roads are discussed in Section 3.9, Cultural Resources.

Comment: *Has Bonneville Power examined the federal funds being spent by the Federal Government in preserving the Lander Trail in Wyoming? [HSTP13 0027]*

Response: BPA has not examined those funds and would welcome additional information regarding federal funding for historic road preservation.

Socioeconomics

Comment: *Fishing, hunting, wildlife watching, and other outdoor recreation contribute over \$2 billion of Idaho's \$5.3 billion natural resource industry (Wendland and O'Laughlin 2013). When all forms of outdoor recreation activities (non-motorized and motorized) are considered, outdoor recreation created \$6.3 billion in consumer spending, \$1.8 billion in wages, and \$461 million in state and local tax revenue (Outdoor Industry Association 2013). Developments, such as the proposed transmission line, which negatively impact the natural resources of southeastern Idaho need to evaluate the impacts on the recreation economy within Caribou and adjoining counties. Based on personal experience and that of friends and neighbors, people are less likely to recreate in areas disturbed by development, therefore negatively affecting the local economy. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: The impacts to recreational resources have been described in the Recreation section. Short- and long-term indirect impacts associated with the development and operation of the transmission line would diminish the natural appearance and the undeveloped character of certain areas along the routes, affecting vistas and scenery.

The economic value of several resources, including outdoor recreation, is provided in the analysis. However, NEPA does not require that a monetary or quantitative analysis of the total economic value of natural resources or historic resources be undertaken. The description of the impacts, as a result of the proposed action, on natural and historic resources is sufficiently described throughout the document to allow sufficient evaluation by the public of the impact to these resources. Furthermore, undertaking a value analysis of impacts to these resources is a complicated and resource intensive undertaking in itself and the value of these findings would not justify the cost to undertake such an analysis for this project.

Comment: *One thing is I really don't believe you should be able to go in and destroy people's income. If you came one of the routes you would do for us. [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *State Trust Lands are not managed for the public at large and should not be referred to as “public lands” or “open space,” either specifically or in a generic sense. These are working lands producing revenue for the Beneficiary Institutions. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted. All endowment assets of the State of Idaho must, per the state Constitution, be managed “in such manner as would secure the maximum long term financial return” to the trust beneficiaries. However, the state also accommodates public use of endowment lands, to the extent feasible, provided such use does not impair financial returns. References to State Trust lands in the supplemental draft EIS has been clarified as managed “in such manner as will secure the maximum long term financial return.”

Comment: *The ability of Idaho Department of Lands to manage the Endowment Assets for the maximum benefit of the beneficiaries will be impacted by this project. Among these impacts are:*

b. Potential loss of access or value to Endowment Lands [HSTP13 0010]

Response: While users of state Endowment Lands would likely notice the presence of the proposed ROW, structures, and access roads, it is unlikely that the Project would result in an adverse impact to access or value of Endowment Lands. With the exception of land occupied by structures, land within the transmission line ROW corridor would continue to be accessed and used for existing purposes that are compatible with the transmission line corridor, such as grazing, recreation, and public access. In areas leased for grazing, which constitute the majority of Endowment Lands crossed by the proposed Project, construction of the proposed transmission line would result in low short-term impacts during construction; however, the amount of land within the ROW corridor is relatively small compared to the total acreage of Endowment Lands in the vicinity of the Project (53.7 acres for the North Alternative and 12.5 acres for the South Alternative). Additionally, BPA would negotiate and enter into an easement agreement with the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) in order to cross Endowment Lands, which would generate revenue accruing to IDL and therefore would be consistent with IDL’s mandate to manage these lands for the maximum benefit of the beneficiaries.

Comment: *Much private lands that occur on the northern end of the North Alternative are in pastures and some hayfields. A number of ranches are multi-generations, including lands originally homesteaded, and you wish to intrude on their traditional livelihood and rural lifestyle. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: As discussed in Section 3.10, Socioeconomics, during construction of the transmission line, potential impacts to agricultural production may include crop damage (depending on the time of year construction activities cross specific fields), soil disturbance, and/or loss of production for one or two growing seasons due to planting restrictions within or adjacent to the transmission line corridor due to ROW clearing, structure and counterpoise installation, pulling sites, and access road development. Following construction of the Project, agricultural practices would be allowed to resume within the ROW as long as farming activities do not interfere or jeopardize the operation of the transmission line. Few acres of grazing lands would be impacted by construction-related activities when compared to available forage for cattle. Once construction is complete, grazing would return to conditions similar to existing conditions. The majority of agricultural lands would be temporarily disturbed during construction activities, but not affected in the long term.

Property Values

Comment: *The right-of-way/easement across the William Meads Trust property will be subject to multiple permanent structures and will impact the farming operation of the Trust property, including the fair market value of the land and its crop production capabilities.*

Construction will take nearly two (2) years to begin and complete. There will be a minimum of two (2) years of an adverse economic impact caused by the construction and inability to have total access to the farming property for planting, fertilizing, care, and harvesting of the crop to be grown on the land. [HSTP13 0026]

Response: Construction phase impacts would not take place over the entire footprint of the ROW for the full 2-year construction period. Impacts to any individual properties would be localized and temporary.

Comment: *There is no assurance that the parties will be able to amicably be able to arrive at a fair market value of the property and the “value” of the “taking. This may result in extended litigation and incurrence of legal costs and expenses by both parties. [HSTP13 0026]*

Response: As mentioned above, if BPA makes the decision to construct the transmission line along the preferred alternative, BPA would seek to purchase easements across private land. Each parcel would be properly evaluated and appraised to determine the fair market value. BPA would provide an appraisal on each easement it wishes to purchase. Each land owner would be given the opportunity to accompany the appraiser and provide input into the appraisal.

Comment: *The draft goes on to say, ... “Neither alternative is expected to cause long-term, negative impacts on property values along the proposed route or in the general vicinity.” I was a licensed real estate broker in the state of Arizona for 30 years and I can guarantee you that a new transmission corridor through your property is going to adversely impact your property. That statement there can’t be true and I didn’t see a real estate appraiser listed as having anything to do with this. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: As Discussed in Section 3.10, Socioeconomics, the question of whether nearby transmission lines can affect residential property values has been studied extensively in the United States and Canada over the last 20 years or so, with mixed results. Most studies have concluded that other factors (e.g., general location, size of property or structure, improvements, irrigation potential, condition, amenities, and supply and demand factors in a specific market area) are far more important criteria than the presence or absence of transmission lines in determining real estate value.

Comment: *In Mr. Kackley’s comments on easements, don’t quote me, but I thought you said once this power line accesses your property it would enhance your property value. Am I correct? [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Mr. Kackley’s comment was that “those trans[ition]mission lines are the lines going around Wayan Loop Road that bring your domestic electricity into your farms and ranches. Those are good transmission lines. They do increase the value of your property because you have electricity on your property.”

Comment: *I’ve noticed over this summer in July the survey crews out there working and apparently they’re running a preliminary line called an L line -- is what I see on the survey stakes, the stakes that I’ve seen on Highway 34. And then up on Williamsburg they are going to run right past the three or four recreational properties, within 150 feet. Is there anything you -- what can you do to move that line away from those properties to help minimize the impact of that loss of value because of this project? There’s a question.[HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *That’s a large impact. Someone that’s got five or six sections of land for range or farming is one thing, but private, small-acreage landowners can zip right past ‘em. I think it’s really inconsiderate. Not that this is all inconsiderate.[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The commenter is correct that BPA has been conducting civil survey along portions of the North Alternative. BPA has worked with all landowners to minimize impacts to their properties. As described above and in Section 3.10, Socioeconomics, other factors are far more important criteria than the presence or absence of transmission lines in determining real estate value.

Taxes

Comment: *My understanding of the EIS is that these are exempt from property taxes. So in essence you come into our community, you impact our community. You say you benefit us and I would recognize that. I think the city of Soda Springs is the only entity in Caribou County that does buy BPA power. Everybody else buys it from somebody else. So I can't say that you don't have an influence if you live in city of Soda Springs. But clearly you're impacting the whole county.*

What do you give back for that impact? We live here, we hunt here. We drive those roads for scenic pleasure. We choose to live here for all of the good things that we get, but now you're going to come in and impact that. What do you give back?

The mines pay property taxes. They contribute to our schools, they fund things. Even Artic Circle and Subway have come in and helped with the schools and tried to contribute in some way. And not only with property taxes but with their contributions.

You're talking about coming in and spending a couple of years of intense building. You'll impact our area and then you'll be gone and what do you leave? That is a big concern for me. I think you have an obligation to leave something. You're going to be here, you'll be part of the community. Those lines will be here forever. What do you give back? That's a big concern. [HSTP13 0025]

Response: As described in Section 3.10, Socioeconomics, BPA, as a federal agency exempt from paying local property taxes, would not pay property taxes to Caribou County on the property acquired in fee for the substation and substation access roads. Additionally, BPA would acquire land rights (easements) from private property owners for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the transmission line and access roads. The property owners would retain ownership of the property and continue to pay property tax on the entire parcel, including the land within BPA's easement, which would have no impact on local and state tax receipts. However, in the short term, project and construction worker spending, as a result of the construction of this project, would slightly increase sales and use tax receipts to municipal and county governments. Therefore, there would be positive benefits to local and state governments from tax receipts during the term of construction of this project.

Additionally, Lower Valley Energy, which purchases its power from the BPA, provides power for rural Caribou County. Therefore, by constructing this line, BPA would enhance the existing power transmission system in rural Caribou County, and address the current voltage stability and reliability concerns within LVE's system, and would prevent violation of NERC reliability standards. Construction of this line would therefore benefit the entirety of Caribou County and the region of southeastern Idaho served by this line.

Comment: *There's a lot of commerce that passes through this town and I think it will be impacted by that northern route particularly. Communities struggle as they are in these days and we don't need that impact here diminishing our community. [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: Comment noted. The potential socioeconomic impacts of the project are discussed in Section 3.10 of the supplemental draft EIS. While there may be some beneficial impacts as a result of increased spending in local communities during construction, these would be short term. No adverse impacts are expected, however. Relative to other general market factors, the presence of the transmission line would not be expected to have an impact on commerce.

Comment: *This section does not address livability principles identified through an interagency partnership that are important in rural communities (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2011). The proposed overhead transmission line is in direct opposition to two of these livability principles, including 1) leveraging unique natural and land-based resources to raise the standard of living and 2) conserving and building upon unique historic features and iconic rural landscapes. In addition to the interagency partnership cited above, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endorsed Strategic Habitat Conservation, which includes “landscapes and system sustainability,” as their approach to conservation in support of their mission: “working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people” (emphasis added). The proposed transmission line, ROW, and access roads compromise the natural features, ecosystem integrity, and iconic rural landscape of southeast Idaho. [HSTP13 0017]*

Comment: *The iconic rural landscape of southeastern Idaho is defined by farmsteads & ranchlands, historic barns, public lands that support native habitats and wildlife, and working agricultural structures that are visual representations of agricultural, hunting, and natural resource traditions in the State of Idaho and throughout America. Farms, ranches, and recreational amenities such as national forests, national wildlife refuges, and state wildlife management areas all have economic value for rural communities. “Rural American communities are largely defined by their relationship to the agricultural and natural landscape, so conserving working and natural lands is a key strategy for protecting quality of life and the long-term economic viability of farming, forestry, tourism, and other natural resource-based activities” (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2011). The economic value of the natural and historic resources along the proposed transmission routes is not included in the draft EIS. Therefore, impacts and proposed mitigation to this economic resource cannot be evaluated by the public. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: The expected impacts to land use, visual landscapes, wildlife and fish, historic resources, and the proposed mitigation measures to minimize those impacts, are addressed in Sections 3.1, 3.3, 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 respectively. Based on the analysis included in the supplemental draft EIS, the project would not be expected to have a high level of impact on the natural features, ecosystem integrity, and iconic rural landscape of southeast Idaho. Additionally, the proposed project is consistent with the stated livability principle of “support existing communities,” as it would improve the reliability of the electrical system in the region.

Transportation

Comment: *All alternatives require construction of over twenty miles of permanent roads. Previous management activities have already resulted in extensive road and right-of-way densities throughout our public lands. This density compromises the ability to support wildlife and fish by promoting further human disturbance, fragmenting habitat, accelerating sedimentation, spreading noxious weeds, and encouraging Off Road Vehicle use. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between roads, even temporary ones, and human-caused wildfire ignitions. We recommend that the BPA seek to further minimize new road construction by placing the line next to previously existing infrastructure and also develop a mitigation plan to close or decommission a greater number of unneeded roads. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Chapter 2 describes the miles of access roads proposed for the North and South alternatives and options. BPA has designed the proposed access road systems for both the North and South alternatives and options to incorporate as many existing roads as possible. Unfortunately, BPA is not proposing to place the new transmission lines adjacent to existing lines because they are not present in the project area. Additionally, BPA cannot undertake road closure activities on private or public lands except when requested by the landowner. To date, no landowners or land managers have made this type of request.

Comment: *New temporary roads for construction and maintenance of transmission lines will provide more access for motorized recreation in areas without a current road system and more opportunities for illegal offroad riding. The devastating impacts of Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) on terrestrial ecosystems are well established. Irresponsible ORV users degrade water quality, spread noxious weeds, fragment habitat, disturb wildlife, increase fires, and displace non-motorized recreationists. While the EIS states that OHVs will not be allowed on closed roads, the Supplemental EIS needs to describe the ability for the BPA to monitor and control ORV use as permitted by land management agencies. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. As described in Section 3.2, Recreation, BPA intends to work with all landowners and land managers concerning possible solutions for controlling or minimizing the potential for unauthorized public access and use that could result from the proposed project. Potential impacts associated with unauthorized public access and use have been added to Section 3.11, Transportation, of the supplemental draft EIS.

Comment: *Under both alternatives, the proposed action would include construction of new access roads in order to construct and maintain the proposed transmission line. In many cases, these roads are difficult to close to subsequent public use, despite use of gates, boulders, or other barriers. As acknowledged in section 3.2, roads increase human access, including illegal use by people on ATVs. Increased access can disturb nesting birds, displace wildlife, lead to illegal take, or cause other issues. Please address in the wildlife section of subsequent NEPA analysis the wildlife impacts of new road construction and potential increased human activity in the area, compared to baseline conditions. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Potential impacts associated with disturbance of wildlife and their habitat, are discussed in Section 3.7 Wildlife, of this supplemental draft EIS. Additional information on potential impacts to wildlife has been added to Sections 3.7.2 and 3.7.3, Environmental Consequences of the North and South alternatives and options.

Comment: *Increases in motorized access due to construction of maintenance may lead to reduction in big game security. Measures to ensure there is no significant increase in motorized disturbance, once the project is complete, are strongly recommended. We recommend installation and maintenance of the selected route without constructing additional roads that might lead to additional authorized or unauthorized travel by using track vehicle or helicopter access. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *We feel it is important that the line be installed and maintained in this reach (from Dry Valley to Upper Valley) without construction of additional roads that might lead to additional authorized or unauthorized travel. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: As discussed above, BPA's maintenance and reliability standards require year-round access to all structures either by wheeled vehicles. Tracked vehicles are sometime used in emergency situations during the winter in mountainous areas. BPA has, as mentioned above, designed the proposed access road systems for both the North and South alternatives and options to incorporate as many existing roads as possible.

Comment: *The ability of Idaho Department of Lands to manage the Endowment Assets for the maximum benefit of the beneficiaries will be impacted by this project. Among these impacts are:*

c. Increased trespass activity due to proximity of new roads to Endowment Land. [HSTP13 0010]

Response: As described above, BPA intends to work with all landowners and land managers including the Idaho Department of Lands concerning possible solutions to minimize unauthorized public access and use.

Comment: *Other problems with BPA Northern Alternative route include the 100-foot ROW, gravel/rocked roads for maintenance access, invasion of noxious weeds due to disturbances BPA creates along the ROWs, and potential unwanted trespass problems both on private and public lands. You fail to disclose BPA information on associated trespass problems with other projects, especially with ORVs, which you have experienced, such as with the I-5 corridor project near the coast. [HSTP13 0014]*

Comment: *Run a 100-ft ROW, open areas to weed invasion, and worse, to unwanted trespass problems that may include fences being cut and gates left open, leaving trash, and possible poaching of big game or cattle. Your 100-ft wide corridor would most likely turn into a winter BPA sponsored snowmobile trail. The EIS states that BPA plans to gate access areas, private and public, but I predict you will have limited or no success with that approach. In many winters, snows can be deep in the Wayan area and even the Forest Service has trouble containing cross-country travels in restricted areas, and the State Highway Department experiences problems maintaining open roads. Problems created by the BPA project would fall upon landowners and agency personnel to deal with. This would place additional burdens on Caribou County and local law enforcement. In my opinion, BPA should be held responsible for additional costs to the County created by messes left behind by the BPA project. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: As described above, BPA intends to work with all landowners and land managers concerning possible solutions to minimize unauthorized public access and use. All new access roads would be gated following construction of the project to prevent unauthorized access.

Public Health and Safety

Comment: *It is also unclear if the slash dispersal from regular maintenance will actually increase or decrease fuel risks. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Section 2.2.8, Maintenance, describes how BPA's vegetation management is guided by its Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. Managing vegetation includes the treatment of slash and debris disposal. There are four basic methods of disposing of the vegetative debris generated when vegetation is cut: chipping, lopping and scattering, burning, and mulching. BPA would employ the appropriate method to make sure fuel risk is not increased. Compliance with the landowner or land management agency requirements for fuel loading would be incorporated into all vegetation management prescription for the transmission line.

Comment: *Fire management and suppression activities may be severely hampered by the Transmission Line construction and operation and result in loss of Endowment Land productivity. Specific fire management plans should be a pre-construction requirement. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Section 3.13.4 describes how BPA would initiate discussions with local fire districts prior to construction and work with the districts to develop appropriate fire and emergency response plans.

Comment: *In the DEIS, BPA identified two issues related to mining especially for the South Alternative. Specifically:*

...2. Managing the risk associated with the potential release of contaminants from historical phosphate mines that are located along the South Alternative route.

...As for issue number two, construction of transmission lines and associated infrastructure (road) can likely be done in such a manner so as to minimize the potential release of any hazardous substances. The DEIS states that “if contaminants are disturbed, impacts on workers, the general public, and environmental features could be moderate to high.”¹ The DEIS provides no explanation of how the potential release of contaminants would rate “moderate to high” for impacts to humans and ecological receptors. There has been considerable study of potential risks to both human health and ecological receptors by both the phosphate companies and state and federal agencies. These studies concluded:²

...that regional human health and population-level ecological risks were unlikely due to the limited amount of area impacted by previous releases, however, selenium releases in specific locations needed to be addressed.

Simplot recently performed a hazard analysis for workers performing construction in a portion of the Conda Mine site.³ The construction includes extensive excavation and grading of residual mine materials. This hazard analysis found potential risks to workers due to contamination was low. No personal protective measures are required. The levels of contamination in the Old Tailings pond area are lower than in the construction area. In addition, access to the Conda Mine site for the general public is limited. Therefore the potential for impact to workers and the general public are low. These studies that have been conducted should be reviewed by BPA to more accurately estimate any potential risks that might arise from historical mining operations. [HSTP13 0010]

Response: Comment noted. BPA has held recent discussions with the mining companies and the USFS and has been provided detailed site investigation studies, which were only recently available. A review of sampling data indicates that the contamination is confined to disturbed areas of the mine sites and it may be possible, through close coordination with USFS, BLM and mining companies to site the transmission line and associated access roads through this area to minimize potential risk.

Comment: *Do you really believe that any of us think that that's true; that you are going to be -- if you plant a pole in a Super Fund site that Monsanto's going to go broke and all the other phosphate companies are going to go broke and you're going to have to pay to clean up the whole thing? That isn't believable to a single person sitting here. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Is there any way to obtain a waiver from the mines regarding... [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Whether or not a mining company would provide BPA with a waiver would be up to the management of that mining company. To date, BPA has not discussed obtaining a waiver from any of the mining companies. Recent cooperative discussions with the mining companies, USFS, and the State of Idaho however indicate that it may be possible to find an acceptable route for the South Alternative or one of its options through the mining leases.

Comment: *Another -- another item with Mr. Chatburn from the Energy Resources Department. He mentioned to me when we talked that -- that he would be really interested in having his office and along with the DEQ perhaps do a little negotiation with the EPA and see if there wasn't something to -- they could work out along with some legislators to ease the way for BPA to go through there on a hold harmless. Did he mention anything about that to you? Is this something that would interest you? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *You mentioned in your comments -- opening comments there were about four mining companies; that 1 of three of 'em are -- I picked up four. I don't know -- okay -- three of 'em have agreed to a hold harmless agreement, one of 'em isn't or hasn't given you that. From what I heard from the last meeting, most of that stuff's Monsanto and they spent upwards of a million bucks -- I don't know where I am getting my numbers from -- they've spent upwards of a million bucks to figure out a plan so you guys could go through that southern route and all of a sudden this is just null and void. And -- and then you're telling us that there are four of 'em involved. Who's the fourth one that's not playing ball here? Do you know the reason why they don't give you -- won't give you that hold harmless? [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *I'd be interested to find out if that was the -- and, you know, just a supposed possibility or if it was actual. I can't imagine that the EPA wouldn't be somewhat reasonable about giving you immunity from -- it would be, in my mind's eye, minimal disturbance compared to what's happened with the open-pit mining. It is not even close to being on the same scale, so I can't imagine that it wouldn't be a little bit within reason to work with those guys on that. But I don't know. Our dealings with EPA hasn't been real good with the county either on some issues that we have with 'em, but I would be really interested to find out what their perspective is on it if there -- if they would agree to any -- any kind of an alternative, you know, or -- or whatever was necessary to take this through an area that didn't impact so many private landowners, through some very scenic, pristine area. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Under CERCLA, there is no provision for EPA to offer a hold harmless agreement to BPA. However, Executive Order 12580 delegated non-emergency removal authorities to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as remedial authorities for CERCLA sites that are not listed on EPA's National Priorities List. The Secretary of Agriculture then delegated this authority to the USFS. As discussed above, fruitful discussions are underway with the parties involved.

Comment: *I just wanted for the record to kind of reiterate the same thing that I mentioned when we were meeting with the county commissioners. I noticed that sort of that general language made it into the draft EIS that said, oh, this is a CERCLA area that we can't touch. I kind of understand why BPA has that as a kind of cultural thing, because the strict joint and several liability provisions of CRECLA have been pretty tough on any entity that uses PCV's. And BPA is one such company, one such entity, that has used PCV's in general in the past.*

The thing that we're missing in this draft EIS is you're not going to be moving selenium bearing materials around. So, therefore, you're going to have no liability. There's no liability there whatsoever. It is as simple a process as going to EPA and saying we would like to route this line along the edge of one or your study areas. Can you assert for us that we won't be touching any contaminants of concern. They'll write you a letter saying, oh, yeah, there's no contaminants of concern there and you're okay. [HSTP13 0010]

Comment: *At the April 3, 2013 meeting in Soda Springs Trent Clark, of Monsanto, gave testimony that the BPA would not be liable for any contamination from selenium as the building of the transmission line would not move any phosphate rock.*

In the Draft EIS Volume 1, paragraph 3.5.3, page 3-103 it is written: Similar to the North Alternative, geotechnical investigation, including exploratory borings, would be conducted prior to construction of the South Alternative to ensure that excavation would not be deep enough to contact phosphate rock. Therefore, there would be little to no potential for release of selenium during project construction (see Section 3.13, Public Health and Safety).

Based on the above no justification or need for the North Alternative can be based on any issue of pollution by selenium caused by construction of the South Alternative. [HSTP13 0018]

Comment: *Commissioner, if I could just expand on something that Jim talked about and I wanted to correct some -- some misinformation I heard placed on the record at the beginning of the hearing here today. There are only two Super Fund sites in the area and neither one of them extend north of Monsanto or the (inaudible) so that's the limit of Super Fund sites in Caribou County. Neither one of those interfere with either the northern route or the southern route. And I wanted to make that clear because a lot of the ways that work is done is we'll use contractors to search national databases and one wouldn't find from a national database the nuances and the differences between various cleanup activity. So I just wanted to indicate that, as Jim said, what has been very productive is dialog. Dialog has been good. And -- and it's obvious to me that maybe even more dialog is needed because, for instance, at the mines, in virtually every case, the mines are actually not under Super Fund cleanup orders. No -- no hazard ranking system has been performed at any of those sites and there's no national priority list listing. And so, therefore, just strict or unseverable liabilities that I am sure BPA's concerned about does not automatically apply in those situations. In fact, at every one of those sites, the cleanup is actually proceeding under a voluntary cleanup order, which is an administrative order or a consent, that's entered into at a local court with two parties, EPA and the mining company. And if we need to amend those cleanup orders, we can -- that is actually something that's doable. And I actually think that even under the existing cleanup orders, you know, some -- some statement of what the work is to be done in and around the mine that, you know, good engineering practice applies. If it shows that the good engineering practice done is in the course of erecting a*

transmission line is not likely to impact any of the liabilities of that particular cleanup site, that's all that has to be done. You just have to show that you're not -- you're not going to be disturbing anything. [HSTP13 0029]

Response: The commenter is correct that BPA has incurred Superfund liability in the past at several sites because of the historic use of PCBs. However, as noted in responses above, through recent discussions with the USFS and with the benefit of detailed site investigation studies, undisturbed areas in the vicinity of the mine sites have been identified which may provide a pathway for the transmission line (the preferred alternative – Option 3A) through the area at a level of risk acceptable to BPA.

Comment: *I don't want to jump in out of turn, but didn't Monsanto already have that offered to BPA? It's my understanding that they had a pretty good sweet deal for BPA all cut and then they backed out of it. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Comment noted. The original South Alternative and its options were actually designed by LVE in cooperation with Monsanto.

Comment: *We recommended siting all new facilities and structures in previously developed corridors as much as possible. However, we do not have significant concerns regarding placing transmission lines in areas with past or proposed mining activity. Material from formerly reclaimed mining areas may need to be rehandled to help address selenium contamination issues. Transmission line construction could either mobilize contaminants or impair needed reclamation efforts. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: As noted in responses above, through close coordination with USFS, the BLM, State of Idaho, and the mining companies involved, the preferred alternative, Option 3A, avoids most of the previously disturbed areas and therefore the potential to remobilize contaminants is low. The route also would avoid interference with future reclamation efforts.

Comment: *Closer access to current mining operations. [HSTP13 0021]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The DEIS states that impacts could be moderate to high if project construction activities come into direct contact with waste dumps, seeps, or mine pits, exposing workers and the environment to contaminants, (p. 3-214). We recommend that the final EIS include a more in-depth discussion of the data and/or studies that support the conclusions. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Detailed remedial investigation studies provided by the USFS describe the contamination associated with waste dumps, seeps, surface water, groundwater, sediments, and wetlands. A summary of this information has been included in the supplemental draft EIS.

Comment: *The final EIS should clarify the use of the term “Superfund Site” by explaining that some of the mine sites are being addressed using CERCLA legal authorities, but are not on the Superfund National Priorities List. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Comment noted. Although CERCLA authorities are being implemented for remedial actions at particular sites, these sites are not on the EPA’s Superfund national Priorities List. Clarification has been provided in the supplemental draft EIS.

Comment: *Another thing that happens when you search national databases is your national database will say the mine is this big. And then what you do if you scratch the surface of it, it'll say, well, the mine is this big, but the lease is actually smaller because the mine has to be big enough to cover the lease. Okay. And so usually the lease is a -- is done naturally by geologists and then surveyors do the mine and they do it to the square, so the mine is always bigger than the actual lease, the lease is always bigger than the actual pit and the pit is actually always bigger than the actual placement of any selenium-bearing materials or any of those materials that you don't want to disrupt. So in Mr. Orenicia's question, the question was how far do you have to jump. It really requires dialog. And that's probably a lot of the work that Jim had done was you don't want to look at just the mine or even the lease or even the pit. You want to look at where is the material that you don't want to disrupt. And sometimes that will be a very narrow band. And it should -- again, like I said, dialog should enable us to work through those issues. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA has now initiated a dialog with the appropriate parties.

Comment: *We also recommend that the final EIS include additional clarifying information to support the statement that the project construction could encounter hazardous waste, since most mine wastes in the area are Bevill Exempt. [HSTP13 0015]*

Response: Comment noted. The supplemental draft EIS has been amended to clarify that hazardous waste is different from contamination.

Comment: *You mentioned -- and we were aware of this too -- that the proposed line to come across the now abandoned and reclaimed mines -- some are reclaimed, some not -- it sounded like that was discouraging because of the EPA; is that correct? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Then what exactly was the EPA's advice or their policy on that or do you have any copies of that? Or is it just the attorneys that had perceived a risk? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: As originally proposed in the EA for the South Alternative, EPA indicated that if there was an alternative route available it would be best to avoid going through the mine sites.

Comment: *And so there's no actual known threat from the EPA that you could become involved in a CERCLA project? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: The concern was based on the provisions of CERCLA and statements by a mining company regarding the originally EA proposed South Alternative.

Comment: *But no one has contacted the EPA or the DEQ or anyone to see if they would attempt to involve you with that? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: BPA has contacted and discussed the Project with both the EPA and the IDEQ during the NEPA process.

Comment: *One more question, if I may. You are worried about going through the mining thing and disturbing all the dirt from the soil and the pollution stuff there, but yet you don't mind going up through our property and doing the same thing. So isn't there a dichotomy there? [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Do you have a name for that route that you are -- or that area that you are concerned about that may have potential mining on it? Do you know which mines it is? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The route is now referred to as the South Alternative. Former and proposed mines in the South Alternative corridor include Conda/Woodall Mountain, Blackfoot Bridge, Ballard, Wooley Valley, North Maybe, and Husky-North Dry Ridge mines. Several options on this route have been identified.

Comment: *My second question is: You were concerned about the impact study with the mines that -- and having to move because of the proposed mining site. One is the mountains that you are going over in Wayan is also a proposed mining site. Has that been addressed if you go in and dig? And what with that, it's also proposed? So what if you put it there, just like you're saying you don't want to go the southern route, it would be the same issue with this northern route. If you go over that mountain that is a proposed mining, you will have to move the transmission line. And I was just curious on if you have done a study on that, where those -- where that line would go?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The North Alternative was designed to avoid future mining lease parcels in that area.

Comment: *And then lastly, there was mention that one particular mining company had sued the federal government. Well, that -- that, by the way, isn't Monsanto, but I know the -- I know the situation in that particular case. And it was one of those cases where an effort was made to come up with a joint cleanup agreement. And one party pointed out that, well, wait just a minute. A lot of what we did here was at the federal government's direction, so you should have at least a portion of the liability. That case, by the way, is not pending as was mentioned. That case has now been settled with the federal government agreeing to pick up 32 -- 30 percent of the cleanup costs. And so that's now a settled issue and there is no pending case raising questions about liability, so that's the current status of what...[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *And do you think that going through the Super Fund site and going down 10 feet would cause you to have liability for chemicals going down the creeks like selenium? Do you think that's a realistic assumption?[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Based on recent discussions with the USFS and mining companies, there is a potential for release of contaminants from excavation, depending on where on the mine site the line is located. However, it may be possible to avoid those areas through additional discussions and proper planning.

Comment: *You're talking about the mines and the pollution of selenium and stuff. But have you -- without going on private ground, have you dug any holes that deep to see if it would dig up any selenium in that area? Because we are a watershed up there, especially where we are in the south end, and all our water goes on down to Blackfoot and around, keeps going down -- down in that area, so that's why I was just wondering if you had done anything like that.[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: BPA has not conducted any test drilling to date, but would do so prior to a decision on whether to build the line and which alternative would be constructed. As noted above, the USFS has recently provided BPA with extensive test data from site investigations underway at the mine sites. Use of this information should be very helpful in determining the best alignment to avoid areas of contamination.

Comment: *Please have your environmental studies look at: Also radio frequency impact on humans. [HSTP13 0004]*

Response: Section 3.13, Public Health and Safety, provides an analysis of the potential electric field level impacts under all of the alternatives. These impacts are expected to be low.

Comment: *It is our understanding that the mining companies have found ways to eliminate most, if not all of the various mining area concerns that the draft EIS portrayed for the South Alternative. [HSTP13 0013] (*See Land Use)*

Response: As discussed above, all of the alternatives and options have been developed in cooperation with mining companies to determine the best possible route while minimizing impacts to the environment and the mining operations. As discussed in Section 3.13, there remain contamination issues associated with mining areas crossed by the South Alternative. It is also possible that unknown contaminated sites could be discovered during construction of the South Alternative, in mining areas crossed by the corridor. BPA would strive to mitigate potential impacts by avoiding excavation in areas of identified contaminants and conducting soil sampling in areas reasonably likely to be contaminated by mining waste containing selenium and other hazardous substances.

Greenhouse Gases

Comment: *We appreciate the analysis of greenhouse gas emissions during the construction and maintenance of this project, but this analysis fails to evaluate the increased greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity flowing through the transmission line. For this analysis, BPA should look at the current and projected suite of energy producing sites (coal fired power plants, natural gas, wind power, etc). In this manner, the public will be able to better assess the real greenhouse gas emissions produced and conveyed by this transmission line. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. However, while BPA's transmission lines do carry electricity generated by a number of different sources, BPA does not gather information on greenhouse gas emission from those sources.

Comment: *The Idaho Conservation League encourages the BPA to phase out intense greenhouse gas producing energy sources such as coal-fired power plants in favor of alternative energy sources such as wind power. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted. However, BPA is tasked with marketing and transmission of electrical power and has no regulatory jurisdiction over the sources of energy generation.

Cumulative Impacts

Comment: *A Supplemental EIS is also needed to examine the likelihood of additional transmission lines and associated cumulative effects within the new ROW. [HSTP13 0016]*

Comment: *In addition, a large number of other transmission line projects are being proposed across Idaho. We are concerned that once a ROW is established, that additional infrastructure will also be placed on this route. A Supplemental EIS should be developed to examine the impacts of multiple lines along each route. The EIS should analyze these cumulative effects more thoroughly and develop alternatives that avoid, minimize and mitigate these impacts. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Section 3.16, Cumulative Impacts, describes all the reasonably foreseeable actions currently known within the project area. BPA has no reasonably foreseeable future proposals to build additional lines in Caribou County, Idaho. Additionally, because BPA would proposed to build this line to address voltage stability and reliability concerns in the southern portions of LVE's transmission system, BPA is not aware of any reasonably foreseeable future transmission line projects to be built by LVE.

Comment: *As mentioned above, there are a number of other developments in this area, including exploration and expansion of phosphate mines, that may have cumulative environmental effects. We are particularly concerned about water quality, habitat fragmentation, noxious weed expansion, and loss of secure habitat by wildlife. For example, Monsanto is proceeding with the Blackfoot Bridge Mine development toward the west end of the project area and Agrium is continuing to construct temporary exploration roads just north of the project area. There was also discussion in the past of a natural gas pipeline in this area. [HSTP13 0016]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Please include more specificity in the vegetation, wetlands, and wildlife subsections of the cumulative effects analysis. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: BPA appreciates the comment; however without further information on what specific information is being requested, it is difficult to respond to this request.

Comment: *Please describe the differences in anticipated cumulative effects between the north and south alternatives. For example, please discuss in more detail cumulative impacts to wildlife from future mining activities in the southern alternative, particularly around the state WMA. [HSTP13 0020]*

Response: Section 3.16, Cumulative Impacts, describes the differences in cumulative impacts between the North and South alternatives. Section 3.16.3 has been amended to include mining as a reasonable foreseeable future action along the South Alternative and Option 3A that would be expected to impact wildlife through the loss and degradation of habitat.

Comment: *In addition, please include in the cumulative effects section discussion of the likelihood of future transmission line upgrades to carry additional electricity, or reasonably foreseeable sources of other energy development that may wish to use transmission in the area. [HSTP13 0020]*

Comment: *If the former, please address associated cumulative effects, such as a future need to upgrade existing lines to carry the additional power, as well as any obligations to encourage energy efficiency strategies prior to or in concert with implementing additional infrastructure development.[HSTP13 0020]*

Response: As described above, BPA is not aware of any reasonably foreseeable actions to build additional transmission lines or generation facilities in the project area. If BPA makes a decision to build the transmission line, the need for voltage stability and increased reliability in the southern portions of LVE's transmission system would be met. Responses above in Chapter 1 state BPA's actions to fund energy efficiency type programs to help lessen the load on the transmission system.

Comment: *Cumulative impacts on visual resources, recreation, wetlands, wildlife, and socioeconomic resources are not minor. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *In addition, the proposed transmission line may accelerate cumulative impacts from other energy developments that potentially have negative environmental impacts such as geothermal and wind energy. Both geothermal and wind energy have been proposed for exploration in the region. Although I generally support renewable energy sources, they can have negative environmental impacts that need to be evaluated. Therefore, analysis of cumulative impacts of the proposed ROW should include potential cumulative expansion and/or increased infrastructure development to transmit increased energy resulting from these foreseeable actions. [HSTP13 0017]*

Response: As described above, BPA is not aware of any reasonably foreseeable actions to build geothermal or wind energy facilities in the project area.

Comment: *Generally historic leks scattered along the Blackfoot River corridor above Blackfoot Reservoir have declined over the past forty years. In 1973 five leks were determined active. In 1999 there were three known active leks. As of 2012, only one active lek has been confirmed upstream of Highway 34. The BLM and USFS are currently developing sage-grouse conservation measures to incorporate into land use plans (National Greater Sage-grouse Land Use Planning Strategy). In September 2012, Governor Otter submitted an Idaho Alternative to be incorporated into that strategy. Both the federal and state strategies designate greater sage-grouse habitat in the vicinity of the upper Blackfoot River as “general”, as opposed to “important” or “core” habitat. The Idaho Alternative addresses stabilization of habitats and populations and states that wildfire, invasive species, and infrastructure are the primary threats to sage-grouse in Idaho, and points to focused management of these issues in general habitat in part as a buffer to encroachment of these effects to core and important habitats. Cumulative effects of infrastructure such as the proposed Southern Alternative may be having a significant impact on local populations and it is important to ensure that local population effects do not diminish range-wide population status and trend. While non-forested habitat in the area may be abundant, sage-brush habitat suitable for greater sage-grouse may not be sufficient to support local populations. The Idaho Alternative provides additional detail about management focus in general habitat. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: In Section 3.7, Wildlife, BPA included discussion of the October 2013 BLM and USFS sub-regional sage-grouse planning group’s Idaho and southwestern Montana draft land use plan amendment/EIS (*BLM 2013*), as well as discussions of the impact of the loss of sage-brush habitat on the sage grouse. Discussions regarding sage-grouse management and addressing habitat and populations concerns are occurring at the state and federal levels. BPA would continue to coordinate with its cooperating agencies as appropriate sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat conservation guidance is developed. Section 3.16.3 addresses cumulative effects of habitat loss more generally.

Comment: *Going on and quoting again, “However, the easement portions of both alternatives would pass through more undeveloped areas and require new cleared right-of-ways. These portions of both alternatives thus would have the potential to have a relative high level of contribution on cumulative visual impacts from vantage points along the transmission line right-of-way.”*

Well, these impacts are going to be tremendous compared to those little poles that you have going around the loop road and in that area. This statement is just – just has to be challenged. [HSTP13 0018]

Response: Additional detail has been provided in Section 3.16.3, Cumulative Impact Analysis, regarding the specific portions of the alternatives that would cross through undeveloped areas, the type of visual disturbances expected based on the physical characteristics of the structures and their contrast to the surrounding landscape. The analysis of impacts is based upon how the amount of expected visual contrast fits within the various thresholds for determining impacts.

Consultation, Review, and Permit requirements (Chapter 4)

Comment: *On page 4-7, Section 4-11 River and Harbors Act of 1899 should be removed. There are no waters in the project area considered navigable under the Rivers and Harbors Act. No Rivers and Harbors Act permit would be required for any of the proposed alternatives. [HSTP13 0002]*

Response: Comment noted. Reference to Rivers and Harbors Act permits in Chapter 4, has been removed.

Appendices

Forest Plan Amendment

Comment: *And then in the second volume of this impact study there was a part called Need For Amendment. It says, “The north alternative would impact approximately 38.8 acres of aspen-dominated forest.” It is unknown if this is in addition to the acres listed as 110. [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: The 38.8 acres of aspen-dominated forest is included within the approximately 110 acres of C-TNF land crossed by the North Alternative and is not in addition to that acreage.

Comment: *Caribou National Forest Standards and guidelines, guideline six: Avoid parallel corridors. Consolidate facilities within existing energy corridors where feasible.*”

And then they call it consistency. That’s the consistency with what BPA is considering here. “The project would avoid parallel utility corridors.” This project should be built along the already existing corridor that we know runs down the Lanes Creek cut off. [HSTP13 0018]

Response: There are no existing transmission line corridors within or near the North or South alternative corridors or their options where they cross the C-TNF. The closest existing transmission line to the North Alternative is LVE’s Tincup-Dry Creek line (the line referenced in the above comment), which enters LVE’s Lanes Creek Substation at the eastern end of the North Alternative. The South Alternative and its options would connect to this same line at the eastern border of the C-TNF in the project area.

Routing the new transmission line off C-TNF lands is not economically or environmentally feasible since the power must be transmitted from LVE’s Threemile Knoll Substation on the west side of the C-TNF to either LVE’s Tincup-Dry Creek transmission line or Lanes Creek Substation, both located on the east side of the C-TNF. BPA did look at routing the North Alternative to the north of the C-TNF lands along Highway 34. However, routing the line off the C-TNF would have placed it closer to Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and within a large wetland area to the south of the refuge. Placing the line in the wetland area would have increased the risk for bird collisions because many avian species likely use this area. An alternative that routed the line to north or south to avoid the C-TNF would be about 150 miles longer than the proposed transmission line routes, increasing project costs, environmental impacts, and impacts to private landowners. For this reason, an alternative that would avoid C-TNF lands was considered but eliminated from detailed study in this EIS. See Section 2.5.4 of the supplemental draft EIS document for further discussion.

Comment: *Next is the Gravel Creek right-of-way. “The right-of-way and danger tree clearing would result in the conversion of land cover on the property, which would not be consistent with the existing management of this parcel for wetland mitigation purposes; therefore, the establishment of a new right-of-way across this area would result in short term, high impact. BPA is currently working with the United States Forest Service to further avoid or minimize potential-related impact on this area.” I think that we need to know the status of this sooner than later. [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA has continued to consult with the C-TNF regarding routing of the North Alternative and potential impacts to the Gravel Creek Special Emphasis Area.

Other Comments and Responses

Comment: *Have you worked with Lower Valley at all? [HSTP13 0025]*

Response: BPA has coordinated closely with LVE throughout the proposal and planning phases for this proposed project.

Comment: *What percentage of landowners have given you permission to go on their property? I really haven't heard of anyone that's given you permission, so I just wondered if you have – the majority of the people are – [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *There's one other part I'd like to have clarified. I believe either you're misinformed or I misunderstand, but I would like to see by a show of hands all of the people in here that are affected landowners who have given their permission for the power company to go on their land. Just a simple raising your hand. I think that's a reverse majority.[HSTP13 0028]*

Response: BPA has obtained the permission to enter properties for about 80 percent of the parcels along the transmission line route alternatives and options.

Comment: *So the -- the public or the forest on the southern route has gave you permission, just like I guess you were saying they did in the Wayan area?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The USFS has allowed BPA access onto the C-TNF to perform environmental and civil surveys along both the North and South alternatives and their options.

Comment: *Would these landowners that have already given you permission, would that be farmers out here north of town that have possibly property lines down there that you will follow and it wouldn't be a great inconvenience or a distraction?[HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *Have you got any permissions, like -- which direction -- beyond Henry, up in that -- when you start getting into Wayan, have you gotten anybody that's given you permission up in there? I'm thinking everybody -- what is it -- south or -- that's south of Henry, they've probably given you permission because they don't really care. I'm thinking nobody – they don't live there is what we're saying. Nobody north of Henry has given you permission, I'll bet you anything on that. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Many of the farmers on the southern portion of both North and South alternatives and their options have given BPA permission to enter their property. The commenter is correct in that a majority of residents in the Wayan area have not provided BPA access to their property.

Comment: *But none of the other landowners that have got pristine property; is that accurate? What you called just the dry farmers, not the ones that's got the pristine property in the mountains? The ones that farm and not live here? Okay. Well, I think we have all kind of got the picture. [HSTP13 0028]*

Response: Many of the farmers that have given BPA permission to enter their property feel as strongly about protecting their property as residents in Wayan do. BPA would continue to work with each individual or group of landowners to obtain access for environmental surveys in an effort to conduct the most complete and accurate NEPA process possible.

Comment: *There's some things that really concern me and probably turn the public opinion against you .One is going on private property without permission. I know that has happened out in Grace. [HSTP13 0018]*

Comment: *Are you aware that some of your crew has been entering private property that hasn't been authorized and they've been cutting survey lines, pounding stakes, cutting trees? [HSTP13 0028]*

Comment: *And, also, if people would give you the names of landowners who have had people trespassing on their property without permission that you will contact the landowners and make sure you get that resolved. Did I hear that?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA does not allow or condone trespassing on private property and regrets any misunderstanding that may have occurred during field work conducted by BPA or contract staff.

Comment: *The other thing is they were surveying all over out by us and my husband went down to see what they were doing, if they were going to go in the field. And they didn't want to tell us who they worked for. They told us they were checking for underground utility services. I think this lying and sneaking around, you have developed a real negative feeling about this project. [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: Comment noted. BPA regrets any misunderstanding that may have occurred during field work conducted in the field by BPA or contract staff.

Comment: *So we kind of feel like you're coming in here and trying to cheat us. It doesn't make us want to work with you very much. You have to be upfront, honest, and you have to be fair. In this community that is what we expect. [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *I'm one of those guys that likes my lights to come on when I hit the switch, but I don't want a power line across my ranch.*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *I seriously oppose the Northern Route Alternative for the Hooper Springs Transmission Project. [HSTP13 0008]*

Comment: *Overall, I find your North Alternative route through the Wayan area poorly conceived and it has a number of major flaws that you have failed to identify and address. In some instances, you have alluded to some of these problems but provided only cursory or incorrect information. I urge you to abandon this ill-conceived alternative and select the South Alternative route if action is proven to be necessary. [HSTP13 0014]*

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: *The North Alternative would create a new transmission corridor resulting in degradation of the environment and lands. The South Alternative passes through lands with existing transmission corridors and the land has been impacted by mining activity. There does not appear to be any organized opposition to the South Alternative while the landholders opposed to the North Alternative are organized and there could be possible court action taken holding up or preventing construction of the transmission line if this alternative is selected. [HSTP13 0018]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *OER has been contacted by numerous residents of Caribou County and none of them believe the Hooper Springs line is necessary or beneficial. However, if the line is necessary, their nearly unanimous preference is for the southern route. [HSTP13 0022]*

Comment: *I strongly support the southern route. I do not see a future selenium issue. The longer (northern) route expense of construction and maintenance and private land rights of way issues far outweigh the selenium issue. Also the scenic values that would be destroyed along this historic route would be lost forever. [HSTP13 0011]*

Comment: *I support the southern route. [HSTP 13 0012]*

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: *So I make a motion that BPA follow up on this and that this be taken care of for a southern route (inaudible) on the southern route.[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *They told us that there was a lawsuit out on the southern route so they wouldn't go through that. And then was a superfund site and they couldn't go through there. IF they planted one pole in the superfund site they could be held responsible for the entire superfund site. That just is silly stuff, but that's what they told us and they're trying to insist on it.*

Now they have enough people giving them flak. I understand that BPA claims to never have gone to an easement to try to get it to condemn an easement, but they're going to have to this time if they think they're going to go out through Gray's Lake. Thank you. [HSTP13 0018]

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Simplot remains open to working with BPA and Lower Valley on providing access onto Simplot-owned land to assist with the successful completion of this project. [HSTP 13 0010]*

Response: Comment noted. Thank you.

Comment: *South Route Alternative – Environmental Benefits: The South Alternative does provide an environmental benefit in connection with Simplot's proposed Dairy Syncline Phosphate Mine project. The Dairy Syncline project will require the construction of an electrical power transmission line to serve the new mine. IF BPA chooses the South Route Alternative, and the transmission line is build timely, the route will result in disturbing three miles less than the alternative. The alternative is a connection to the Lower Valley transmission lines located at Diamond Creek (see Attachment A). [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Finally, EPA had an effort underway to foster development of renewable energy sources on CERCLA sites.⁴ EPA launched RE-Powering America's Land: Siting Renewable Energy on Potentially Contaminated Land and Mine Sites to encourage the siting of renewable energy facilities on thousands of currently and formerly contaminated properties across the nation. This management plan builds on the progress that's been made to date under this initiative, and lays out key areas that EPA will focus on. Thought this transmission line is not strictly a "renewable" energy project, it will carry electricity generated from wind turbines and the principles in EPA's initiative do apply to this situation. [HSTP13 0010]*

Comment: *Alignment of the Transmission Line to capture renewable resources along the route should be given greater attention. Location of the Transmission Line in potential wind energy corridors or too far away from renewable energy production areas will result in a loss of the ability to capture these resources for the benefit of Endowment Beneficiaries as well as all residents of Idaho. While biological, visual and cultural resources are very important, collection of renewable resources should be a serious consideration. The state understands that interconnection costs are substantial and that adjustment of transmission routes to accommodate small-scale projects is impractical. Accordingly, it is recognized that a value-based approach is necessary when evaluating transmission line placement near renewable resources. [HSTP13 0010]*

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: *I want to communicate. I don't like you in my area. How's that for communication?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment Noted.

Comment: *We've already given you a route. To have to find ways to take it is the problem. You have weird perceptions up there in Portland. And another thing, you're worried about all these birds and stuff. You're giving them more preference than you are us as people. I'm sorry, but that's the way I feel about this. Yeah, it's important that we worry about these birds and all that kind of stuff, but we've got people living in that place, too, and this stuff's coming right down through here. And I think she said last time, this is going to destroy that valley. But you people in Portland, it doesn't matter to you because you live in Portland. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Yes. And you are planning to take that right up over our hill. I don't want work with you. I don't have to work with you. Don't bring the line to my house. It's that simple. I hope it's impossible for you, if you want my honest opinion. You shove stuff down our throats when you have an alternative route and the only answer is questions of why you really can't go through there because of one mining company. That's (inaudible) answer these questions. You're trying to sidetrack us. You sidetrack us with other nonsense and you don't get there is a real issue of putting it in an area having less impact on people and less impact on the land, on private lands in particular, and less impact on the wildlife. And you don't seem to consider that. You sit up in Portland and come up with these ridiculous possible problems that are probably nonexistent. Like I say, I'd like to see your geological profile on that area through there to really discuss the issue of potential contamination as I hear from some of you people on it. Where is all that stuff? I don't see any of it. I don't hear you talking about it. the other route that doesn't impact the number of people, the wildlife or the private lands. There is a whole bunch of*

important issues right there and you have not addressed those. I find you guys typical government bureaucrats that tell us a bunch of gobbledegook nothing. Yeah. [HSTP13 0029]

Comment: *So you're the government is what you're saying, for the people, by the people and you're shoving this down our throats? [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: Comments noted.

Comment: *Three -- another issue -- I know I don't have much time -- but three weeks ago -- my home is fenced all in. And three weeks ago, 90 feet from my deck, I found a beautiful pine tree chopped down. I have pictures to show you. And that was planted probably 20 to 25 years ago by my husband. He is no longer here and each day that pine tree becomes just a little more valuable to me. No one has ever come to me and said -- a Mr. Brown or somebody came several months ago and I said, I'm not giving permission anywhere. I gave no permission to either individual. And how would you like to have someone coming 90 feet from your deck and cut off a beautiful pine tree and just leave it turned over? And I'd like to show the picture to you. It makes me so angry I just can't hardly contain myself. I never said anything to the -- to the surveyors because I didn't want to make any problems. But when I saw that pine tree, I was mad as you know what. [HSTP13 0029]*

Comment: *I thought I heard a commitment made to Mrs. Blockson was somebody is going to investigate a tree that was felled and that she will be reimbursed if there's evidence that it was your surveyors?[HSTP13 0029]*

Response: BPA regrets any misunderstanding that may have occurred. BPA real property services staff has been asked to aid Mrs. Blockson in determining what occurred.

Comment: *Is this as controversial as your I-5 corridor reinforcement project? This one has not spawned a website, though, yet, with No Way BPA. [HSTP13 0029]*

Response: The commenter is correct in that a website has not been set up for this project by members of the public.

Comment: *I used to believe that big oil companies were the biggest crooks in this country, but now I truly believe that title now belongs to BPA. You manipulate the price and supply of energy to keep your profits up, yet you half-heartedly promote conservation, all the while the wind turbines sit idle, there is no way you can justify not lowering rates when there is a surplus of power. This kind of criminal behavior is only allowed by government agencies, if a private company used these same kind of practices they would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. No matter how you try to spin this it is called price fixing! How long will it be until all the loop-holes that require you to purchase excess power from private individuals is closed? Luckily for you the current Dictator supports absolute control over tax payers, one method of which is to*

allow monopolies that conform to the administration agenda, For this reason I have and always will support expansion of private energy production, this is the only recourse private citizen have to recoup the money you steal from rate payers. [HSTP13 0001]

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Please continue to do all you can to stop those unsightly, unproductive and expensive wind generators. How is it the populace of this state ever allowed this to happen? [HSTP13 0003]*

Response: The proposed project would not involve the construction of any wind power generation facilities.

Comment: *Would support route that would make easiest to tie into green energy source wind, solar. [HSTP13 0005]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *The IDFG does not support or oppose this proposal. The purpose of these comments is to assist the decision-making authority by providing technical information addressing potential effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat and on how adverse effects might be mitigated. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

Comment: *Idaho supports the development of critical electrical infrastructure and the State encourages the project manager to move forward with the process for this project within the anticipated timeline. [HSTP13 0022]*

Response: Comment noted.

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4. Comment Letters

HSTP13 0001 - harris

I used to believe that the big oil companies were the biggest crooks in this country, but now I truly believe that title now belongs to BPA. You manipulate the price and supply of energy to keep your profits up, yet you half-heartedly promote conservation, all the while the wind turbines sit idle, there is no way you can justify not lowering rates when there is a surplus of power. This kind of criminal behavior is only allowed by government agencies, if a private company used these same kind of practices they would be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. No matter how you try to spin this it is called price fixing! How long will it be until all the loop-holes that require you to purchase excess power from private individuals is closed? Luckily for you the current Dictator supports absolute control over tax payers, one method of which is to allow monopolies that conform to the administrative agenda. For this reason I have and always will support expansion of private energy production, this is the only recourse private citizens have to recoup the money you steal from rate payers.

HSTP13 0002 - Joyner/US Army Corps of Engineers

On page 4-7, Section 4-11 River and Harbors Act of 1899 should be removed. There are no waters in the project area considered navigable under the Rivers and Harbors Act. No Rivers and Harbors Act permit would be required for any of the proposed alternatives.



Proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Project

"I'd like to tell you . . ."

HSTP13 0003

Please have your environmental studies look at:

SIRS:

THE CONSUMPTION OF HYDROPOWER WILL CONTINUE TO GROW, MEET THE NEED BUT BE ACCOMMODATING TO IRRIGATION SYSTEMS AND OTHER AGRICULTURE.

POWER LINES HAVE LITTLE OR NO IMPACT ON WILD LIFE AND THE WOLVES, BEAR, LIONS, COYOTES, EAGLES, CROWS AND RAVENS HAVE PRETTY WELL TAKEN CARE OF USEABLE WILD LIFE ANYWAY SO THAT'S NO ISSUE.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO DO ALL YOU CAN TO STOP THOSE UN SIGHTLY, UNPRODUCTIVE AND EXPENSIVE

I have these other comments:

WIND GENERATORS. HOW IS IT THE POPULACE OF THIS STATE EVER ALLOWED THIS TO HAPPEN?

Please tell us your preference for receiving the draft EIS by selecting from the following:

- Compact disc (CD) of the EIS (2203)
- Printed copy of the EIS, approximately 755 pages (2204)
- Notification letter that provides the Web address for accessing the EIS online
 - by mail (2201)
 - by e-mail; please provide your e-mail address _____ (2202)
- Please remove my name from the mailing list for this EIS
- Please put me on your project mailing list. (You are already on the mailing list if you have received mailed notices.) (2201)

Fax to BPA at (503) 230-4019 or return your comments by **April 22, 2013.**



Proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Project

"I'd like to tell you . . ."

HSTP13 0004

Please have your environmental studies look at:

ANIMAL, BIRD + FISH
IMPACT.
ALSO RF IMPACT ON
HUMANS.

I have these other comments:

[Empty lines for other comments]

Please tell us your preference for receiving the draft EIS by selecting from the following:

- Compact disc (CD) of the EIS (2203)
- Printed copy of the EIS, approximately 755 pages (2204)
- Notification letter that provides the Web address for accessing the EIS online
 - by mail (2201)
 - by e-mail; please provide your e-mail address _____ (2202)
- Please remove my name from the mailing list for this EIS
- Please put me on your project mailing list. (You are already on the mailing list if you have received mailed notices.) (2201)

Contains sensitive information

Fax to BPA at (503) 230-4019 or return your comments by **April 22, 2013.**



Proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Project

"I'd like to tell you . . ."

HSTP13 0005

Please have your environmental studies look at:

Effect on winter range for Deer Elk cat.

I have these other comments:

would support route that would make easiest to tie into green energy source wind, solar.

Please tell us your preference for receiving the draft EIS by selecting from the following:

- Compact disc (CD) of the EIS (2203)
- Printed copy of the EIS, approximately 755 pages (2204)
- Notification letter that provides the Web address for accessing the EIS online
 - by mail (2201)
 - by e-mail; please provide your e-mail address _____ (2202)
- Please remove my name from the mailing list for this EIS
- Please put me on your project mailing list. (You are already on the mailing list if you have received mailed notices.) (2201)

Fax to BPA at (503) 230-4019 or return your comments by **April 22, 2013.**

HSTP13 0006 - Brown/Farmer

My family is involved in farming north of Soda Springs, ID. The proposed "Northern Route" as originally proposed crosses nearly 6 miles of our land. We are probably, by far, the most effected farmers in the area. Given that we as a human race need and depend on a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of electrical power, we do not oppose the "Northern Route" as originally proposed. We would ask, as landowners, that the power line be placed ON the property line where two different landowners join, and that the poles be placed as close as possible to rural county roads. We would ask that the poles, where possible, be placed on or boarder natural rock outcroppings, in an effort to minimize the impact on our farming operations. We would also request that when crossing thru the middle of a field, that you run the pole line "true" north and south, or "true" east and west, as to facilitate our use of GPS guidance systems on our equipment. Respectably, Clarke and Nina Brown Scott and Diane Brown Matthew and Cui Brown Stacy and Steve Samowitz

HSTP13 0007 - Bauer

I would like to see a map with the alternatives.

HSTP13 0008 - Eichhorst/Idaho chapter Oregon-California Trails Association

To whom it may concern: I seriously oppose the Northern Route Alternative for the Hooper Springs Transmission Project. This route will closely follow the Lander Road, an emigrant route of great historical value. Placing the transmission project along the Lander Road and/or very close to the route will destroy the viewshed of the route which still today is one of the few places that people can experience the same environment that emigrants to Oregon and California experienced in the late 1850's and 1860's. There are numerous historical sites and graves along the Lander Road and I am also concerned about possible damage to these sites with the Northern Alternative. Again, I am opposed to the Northern Alternative of the Hooper Springs Transmission Project. Sincerely, Jerry Eichhorst President, Idaho chapter Oregon-California Trails Association

HSTP13 0009 - Knutsen/OCTA and an Independent Trail Mapper

Concerning: Hooper Springs Transmission Project The path now being considered for the transmission lines is near the old Lander Trail, used by many in the pioneer days to cross this area. The construction of towers will have trucks and equipment crossing the old trail or even using it in places. If this happens, the trail, graves, noon resting areas and night camping areas have the potential to be destroyed. And there are places associated with a trail history that are not even known at this time. When those who want to experience this area as the pioneers did, they want to experience the view as it was. There are so few places left when this can be done. Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns.

HSTP13 0010

CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS

April 19, 2013

SENT VIA EMAIL TO: www.bpa.gov/comment
ORIGINAL SENT VIA CERTIFIED MAIL #7009 0080 0001 0391 6761
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs Office - DKE-7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR, 97293-4428

Dear Sir/Ma'am:

The Bonneville Power Administration ("BPA") is proposing to build a new 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line that would extend from BPA's proposed Hooper Springs Substation near the City of Soda Springs, Idaho, to a proposed BPA connection facility that would connect with the existing transmission system of Lower Valley Energy, a Cooperative Utility Corporation ("Lower Valley") located in northeastern Caribou County. The new 115-kilovolt transmission line would extend for a distance of approximately 22 to 32 miles depending on the routing alternative. BPA also would construct an approximate 0.5-mile-long 138-kV transmission line between the proposed Hooper Springs Substation and PacifiCorp's existing Three Mile Knoll Substation to connect the electrical facilities to the regional transmission grid. The project is needed to improve voltage stability on the transmission grid to meet future load growth in southeast Idaho and northwestern Wyoming.

BPA has released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") on the Hooper Springs Project and is soliciting comments on two routing alternatives that are being considered for the proposed line from the Hooper Springs Substation to the connection with LVE's transmission system: a North Alternative, including two route options and a South Alternative, including four route options. BPA is also considering a No Action Alternative, that is, BPA would not build the transmission line.

The J.R. Simplot Company (Simplot) has phosphate operations in Caribou County that are directly affected by electrical supply reliability and the location of electrical transmission facilities. These operations include an existing phosphate mining operation near the Idaho-Wyoming border, an existing and related pumping operation at Conda, Idaho, a large ranch along the Idaho-Wyoming border and a proposed mine in the Slug Creek drainage to be located northeast of Soda Springs. Simplot has the following comments on this proposed project.

Introduction

Simplot became aware in 2008 that a new electrical transmission line was under consideration for a route north and east of Soda Springs, Idaho. As a business owner accustomed to electrical service outages for our operations and with employees who are members of the communities in Caribou County, we welcomed the opportunity for improving electrical service and capacity for the southeastern corner of Idaho. [Eventually, this project became known as the “Hooper Springs Transmission Project”.] Simplot, as described below, favors the South Alternative. However, we believe that either route would be preferable to the “No Action” Alternative. Simplot does not support the No Action Alternative.

Property Access and Considerations

Both routes (North and South) being considered by BPA cross private property. We believe that it is very important for BPA to work carefully with private landowners to address concerns regardless of the ultimate route chosen.

Simplot was involved in providing access for an earlier version of this project. During the summer of 2008, Simplot was approached by Lower Valley Energy, requesting an easement across Simplot land for the purpose of constructing the new electrical transmission line in connection with the Hooper Springs Transmission Project. This request ultimately resulted in Simplot granting to Lower Valley a 100 foot wide easement across Simplot land for the purpose of constructing, operating, maintaining, rebuilding and replacing a 115-kV double circuit power line to serve this region. This easement was recorded in the official real property records of Caribou County, Idaho on October 15, 2008 as instrument no. 181787.

Soon after the recording of this easement, Lower Valley approached Simplot again requesting permission to use a parcel of Simplot land near Conda, Idaho to stage equipment and to park vehicles that would be used to build the transmission line. In response to this request, Simplot and Lower Valley executed a Lease Agreement for Parking Equipment and Material Staging on May 4, 2009.

Simplot remains open to working with BPA and Lower Valley on providing access onto Simplot-owned land to assist with the successful completion of this project.

South Route Alternative – Environmental Benefits

The South Alternative does provide an environmental benefit in connection with Simplot’s proposed Dairy Syncline Phosphate Mine project. The Dairy Syncline project will require the construction of an electrical power transmission line to serve the new mine. If BPA chooses the South Route Alternative, and the transmission line is built timely, the route will result in disturbing three miles less than the alternative. The alternative is a connection to the Lower Valley transmission lines located at Diamond Creek (see Attachment A).

Southern Route Alternative – Addressing Mining Related Issues

In the DEIS, BPA identified two issues related to mining especially for the South Alternative. Specifically:

1. Accommodating new mining operations that may be built along or adjacent to the South Alternative route.
2. Managing the risk associated with the potential release of contaminants from historical phosphate mines that are located along the South Alternative route.

Issue number one can be resolved by coordinating closely with the phosphate mining operations that are planned for Caribou County regardless of the ultimate route chosen. As for issue number two, construction of transmission lines and associated infrastructure (road) can likely be done in such a manner so as to minimize the potential release of any hazardous substances. The DEIS states that “if contaminants are disturbed, impacts on workers, the general public, and environmental features could be **moderate to high**.”¹ The DEIS provides no explanation of how the potential release of contaminants would rate “moderate to high” for impacts to humans and ecological receptors. There has been considerable study of potential risks to both human health and ecological receptors by both the phosphate companies and state and federal agencies. These studies concluded:²

...that regional human health and population-level ecological risks were unlikely due to the limited amount of area impacted by previous releases, however, selenium releases in specific locations needed to be addressed.

Simplot recently performed a hazard analysis for workers performing construction in a portion of the Conda Mine site.³ The construction includes extensive excavation and grading of residual mine materials. This hazard analysis found potential risks to workers due to contamination was low. No personal protective measures are required. The levels of contamination in the Old Tailings pond area are lower than in the construction area. In addition, access to the Conda Mine site for the general public is limited. Therefore the potential for impact to workers and the general public are low.

These studies that have been conducted should be reviewed by BPA to more accurately estimate any potential risks that might arise from historical mining operations.

Also, a correction is needed on page 3-199. A statement is made that the new tailings pond at the Conda Mine is a source of contaminants; that statement is incorrect.

¹ BPA. 2013. Hooper Springs Project DEIS. P.3-124.

² Tetra Tech EM Inc. 2002. Final Area Wide Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment, Selenium Project, Southeast Idaho Phosphate Mining Resource Area.

³ Formation Environmental. 2013. Pedro Creek Overbuden Disposal Area Early Action Design and Implementation Plan, Appendix G, Health and Safety Plan.

Finally, EPA had an effort underway to foster development of renewable energy sources on CERCLA sites.⁴ EPA launched RE-Powering America's Land: Siting Renewable Energy on Potentially Contaminated Land and Mine Sites to encourage the siting of renewable energy facilities on thousands of currently and formerly contaminated properties across the nation. This management plan builds on the progress that's been made to date under this initiative, and lays out key areas that EPA will focus on. Though this transmission line is not strictly a "renewable" energy project, it will carry electricity generated from wind turbines and the principles in EPA's initiative do apply to this situation.

Summary

Simplot remains a strong advocate for the construction of the Hooper Valley Transmission Project, regardless of the ultimate route chosen. Although we believe it is most appropriate that a project intended to serve the public is better placed on public land where possible, Simplot is committed to provide the rights to use Simplot land if necessary to build the infrastructure that will improve the economic sustainability of this region.

Please contact Don Stutevant at 208.389.7306 if you have any questions regarding these comments.

Sincerely,



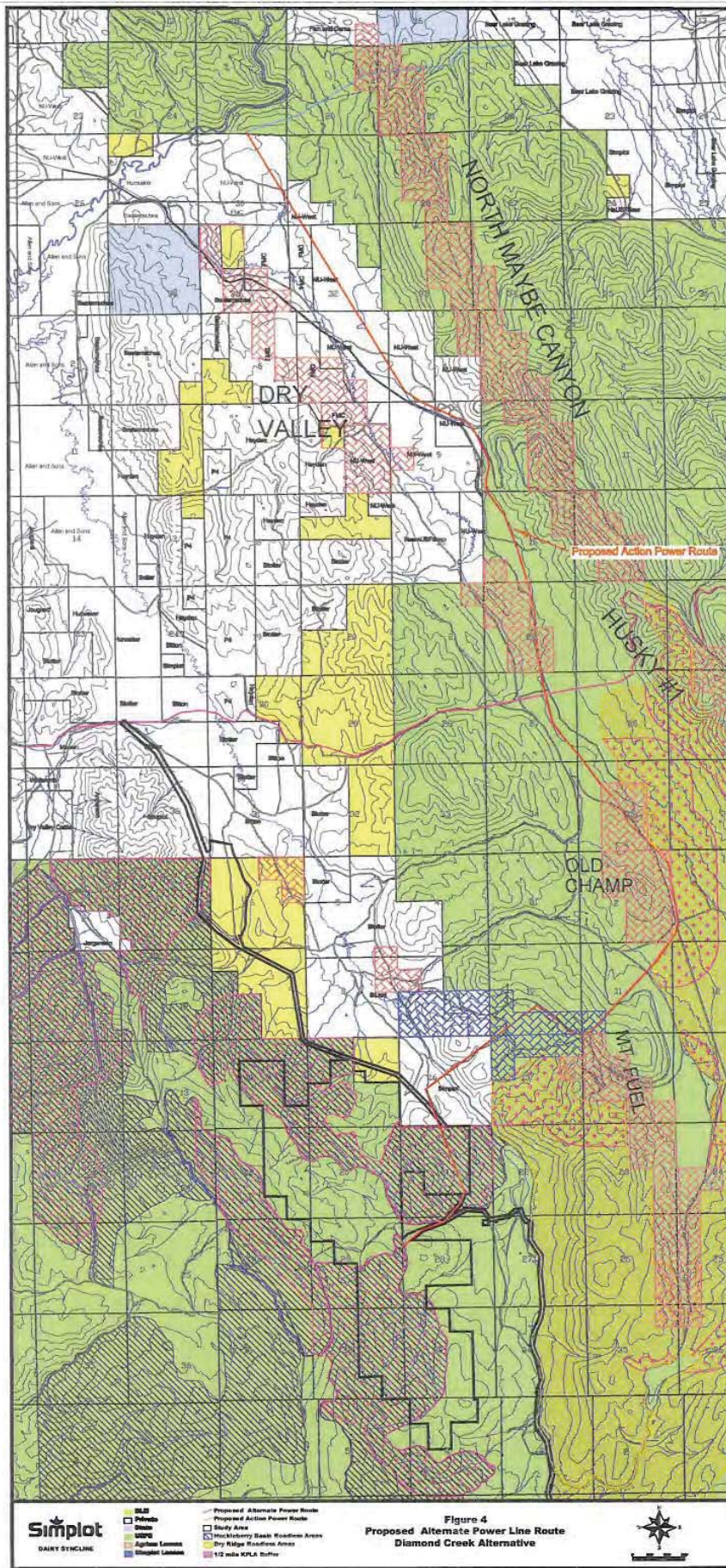
Alan L. Prouty
Vice President, Environmental & Regulatory Affairs

Attachment

C:

Erich Orth, BPA (etorth@bpa.gov)
Vic Conrad, J.R. Simplot Co.
Lori Hamann, J.R. Simplot Co.
Scott Lusty, J.R. Simplot Co.

⁴ EPA. 2010. Re-Powering America's Land Initiative Management Plan.



HSTP13 0011 - miller

I strongly support the southern route. I do not see a future selenium issue. The longer (northern) route expense of construction and maintenance and private land rights of way issues far outweigh the selenium issue. Also the scenic values that would be destroyed along this historic route would be lost forever.

HSTP13 0012 - miller

I support the southern route. The northern route would impact scenic and historical routes.

HSTP13 0013 - Shea/The Trumpeter Swan Society

The Trumpeter Swan Society strongly urges BPA to reject the North Alternative due to the potential impacts to Trumpeter Swans, which are classified as Critically Imperiled in Idaho, impacts to many other avian species, and impacts to two Important Bird Areas of Global Significance. Our detailed comments are provided in the attached file.



THE TRUMPETER SWAN SOCIETY
12615 County Road 9 – Suite 100, Plymouth, Minnesota 55441
763-694-7851 • ttss@trumpeterswansociety.org

Idaho Field Office:

Summer: 3934 Call Lane, Wayan, ID 83285 Ph/fax: 208/574-2455
Winter: 3721 Hope Road, Vale, OR 97918 Ph/fax: 541-473-2187
(rshea@trumpeterswansociety.org)

Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs Office - DKE-7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR, 97293-4428

Dear Sirs:

On behalf of The Trumpeter Swan Society (TTSS), I am submitting comments on the draft EIS regarding the proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Line. TTSS is a 501c3 organization that works across North America to assure the vitality and welfare of Trumpeter Swan populations. The swans that nest in Eastern Idaho and adjacent portions of Montana and Wyoming comprise the most vulnerable nesting group in North America and have been a primary focus of our conservation and management efforts for 45 years. In the past 25 years they have twice been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

TTSS has comprehensive and very detailed knowledge of Idaho's nesting Trumpeter Swans, in part because I have resided seasonally in Wayan, Idaho since 1990 and we have studied Idaho's swans since 1976.

On behalf of TTSS, I submit the following comments:

1. **We strongly urge you to select the South Alternative and emphatically reject the North Alternative.** The North Alternative creates a needless risk of direct mortality to a breeding group of Trumpeter Swans that is classified as “Critically Imperiled” in Idaho. This route would needlessly and permanently impact the avian resources of two Important Bird Areas of Global Significance, Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Blackfoot Reservoir, and the impacts cannot be reasonably mitigated.

2. It is shocking that BPA would give serious consideration to developing a new transmission line corridor through an area that has high scenic values, is relatively “pristine”, and that is globally renowned for its high concentrations of birds, when the South Alternative provides a viable way to avoid the highest avian conflict areas and confine the transmission corridor primarily to an area that already has a relatively high level of human activity and disturbance. It is our understanding that the mining companies have found ways to eliminate most, if not all of the various mining area concerns that the draft EIS portrayed for the South Alternative.

3. The North Alternative (32 miles) is about 50% longer than the South Alternative (22.5 miles) and impacts to wildlife, particularly birds, are much higher. The draft EIS provides no data at all to substantiate the assertion that despite this difference in length, both the North and South Alternatives would cost “about \$51 million”. The EIS also fails to explain why the projected costs of the South Alternative jumped from \$9.3 million in the 2009 Preliminary EA to the current \$51 million estimate. **This nearly 500% increase in projected price of the South Alternative in less than 4 years** is not credible. If something as tangible as cost projections can change by over \$40 million (5-fold) so quickly with no supporting facts, why should the public believe any of the much less tangible projected environmental impacts mentioned in this draft EIS?

4. The draft EIS provides a superficial and erroneous description of Trumpeter Swan use of the project area. Some of the omission and errors include:

a. The draft EIS completely fails to disclose that Trumpeter Swans are classified as a **Species of Greatest Conservation Need** in Idaho and that our nesting population has been designated as “**Critically Imperiled**”. Instead, the draft EIS merely says that IDFG classifies it as a “game bird”. Technically its designation under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 is indeed “game bird”, however that is totally irrelevant to its conservation status. It is the current conservation status in Idaho of vulnerable species that is (or should be) of paramount interest in this EIS. **The EIS should have clearly disclosed that Trumpeter Swans are classified in Idaho as Critically Imperiled, with only 97 adults and about 24 nesting pairs occurring state-wide.**

from <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/cwcs/pdf/Trumpeter%20Swan.pdf>

Trumpeter Swan

Cygnus buccinator

Aves — Anseriformes — Anatidae

CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide: Apparently secure (G4)

Statewide: **Critically imperiled breeding/Imperiled non-breeding** (S1B,S2N)

ESA: No status

USFS: Region 1: No status; Region 4: Sensitive

BLM: Regional/State imperiled (Type 3)

IDFG: Game bird

BASIS FOR INCLUSION

Low productivity in Idaho breeding population; regional threats.

In Appendix G, the draft EIS erroneously reported the IDFG classification of virtually every sensitive species by focusing on whether it was game or non-game, rather than giving its

conservation status (State Rank or SRank) of “vulnerable”, “imperiled” or “critically imperiled”. Whoever put this appendix together apparently did not understand how to use the State Rank system in Idaho which is readily available and explained at:

(<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/docs/compWildStrategy/appendixB.pdf>)

- b. The draft EIS also fails to disclose that Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge is the single-most important Trumpeter Swan nesting area in Idaho and supports about 1/3 of all of the adults and nesting pairs in the entire state.
- c. The draft EIS also fails to disclose that throughout the year, these “Critically Imperiled” swans move back and forth on low level local flights between Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Chubb Flats, Meadow Creek, Goose Lake, Blackfoot Reservoir, and winter at various sites from Blackfoot Reservoir southward. Much of the North Alternative route, from Mile Marker 1 to about Mile Marker 20 poses a collision hazard for these swans at various times of year. Much of this stretch also poses high collision risk to Sandhill Cranes as they stage in late summer in this area. It would be impossible to attempt to mark these 20 miles of line sufficiently to reduce bird strikes. If this was physically possible, it would be visually objectionable and a maintenance nightmare.
- d. The draft EIS also fails to reveal that Trumpeter Swans are unusually vulnerable to power line collisions due to their massive body size and weight, and their inability to maneuver quickly. Trumpeters are the heaviest flying bird in North America. Powerline collisions are one of the leading documented cause of death of Trumpeter Swans in the US despite the frequent use of line markers. Because of their great weight (20–30 lbs) and huge wingspan (7+ feet) collision frequently results in damage to the line and power loss, as well as the death of the swans.
- e. The draft EIS fails to reveal that powerline marking devices **do not minimize** mortality from avian powerline strikes. At best, they reduce mortality by varying degrees, depending upon a multitude of factors. Utility industry and regulatory agency guidelines clearly state **that not siting a new transmission line in heavily used avian flight paths is the only reliable way to minimize avian mortality.**
- f. The draft EIS failed to utilize the most up to date information regarding reducing avian powerline collisions. This is widely available and use should be mandatory on this and all other BPA projects. It also appears that BPA has never developed an Avian Protection Plan (APP), as recommended by APLIC and others.

REDUCING AVIAN COLLISIONS WITH POWER LINES: STATE OF THE ART IN 2012

Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines (Collision Manual) was first published by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) and Edison Electric Institute (EEI) in 1994 under the title *Mitigating Bird Collisions with Power Lines*. The 2012 edition of this manual provides electric utilities, wildlife agencies, and other stakeholders with guidance for reducing bird collisions with power lines based on the most current information. This is especially important given the need to reduce bird injury and mortality from collisions, comply with bird protection laws, and enhance the reliability of electrical energy delivery. The 2012 edition was co-authored by members of U.S. and Canadian utilities; wildlife biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service, the USDA Rural Utilities Service, and the U.S. Department of Energy; and representatives from the consulting firm Normandeau Associates.

5. The draft EIS fails to reveal that both Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Blackfoot Reservoir have been designated as **Important Bird Areas of Global Significance** by Bird Life International and the National Audubon Society. The EIS fails to describe the diversity and the abundance of the avian populations whose flight paths would be traversed by the North Alternative route

a. Grays Lake NWR (IBA Site 556) (<http://netapp.audubon.org/iba/site/556>):

Site Description

Grays Lake NWR is in a high mountain valley, with probably the largest hardstem bulrush marsh in North America. This marsh is surrounded by tall grass wet meadows. Grays Lake supports the world's largest breeding population of Greater Sandhill Cranes. Small components of surrounding habitat include tall wet meadow, aspen, willow, and mountain brush.

Ornithological Summary (<http://netapp.audubon.org/iba/site/2328>)

Waterfowl and waterbirds are the primary avifauna at Grays Lake. Besides the 250 pairs of nesting Sandhill Cranes, numerous waterfowl species nest here, including Trumpeter Swans, as well as shorebirds (Killdeer, Long-billed Curlew, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, Wilson's phalarope, Wilson's Snipe), waterbirds (American Coot, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Bittern), and Northern Harriers. Colonial species at Grays Lake include: Eared Grebes, White-faced Ibis, Franklin's Gulls, Black Terns, and Forster's Terns. During migration, shorebirds (Greater Yellowlegs, American Avocet, Sandpipers) are abundant. Tall grass wet meadows around the marsh support Bobolinks, and Savannah Sparrows, while the willow patches support Willow Flycatchers and Yellow Warblers. There is a hack tower on the refuge that is used annually by nesting Peregrine Falcons.

b. Blackfoot Reservoir (IBA Site 2328) <http://netapp.audubon.org/iba/site/2328>:

Site Description

The habitat surrounding Blackfoot Reservoir is a mix of dryland grain fields and native sagebrush steppe with aspen pockets and basalt outcrops. The reservoir has several islands, covered mostly with native sagebrush habitat, but also with some willow riparian. Gull Island is used by nesting American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, California Gulls, and herons. The reservoir is storage for irrigation water, thus can experience low water by late summer. The reservoir is also important as a fishery for stocked rainbow trout and native Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Ornithological Summary

Gull Island, a 2.5 hectare island in Blackfoot Reservoir, supports the largest nesting colony (1400 nests in 2005) of American White Pelicans in Idaho. This island also supports one of the largest nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants (300+ nests) and California Gulls (6,000+ nests) in the state. An active Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-heron, and Snowy Egret rookery can be found here as well. The reservoir itself is also used by waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds during the summer, and possibly migration.

In addition to the facts in the IBA description, in August-September there is a very large staging area for Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, and other waterfowl in the grain fields and wetlands along the east side of Blackfoot Reservoir along the North Alternative route. The draft EIS

should have discussed these unusual avian concentrations and recognized the high risk of bird strikes that a transmission line through this area will cause.

6. Lastly, in addition to the errors and omissions regarding impacts to swans and other birds, the EIS shows similar problems with regard to its analysis of impacts to big game in the project area. Contrary to Appendix F, which states that white-tail deer are more abundant in the area than mule deer, anyone familiar with that area knows that is nonsense. Mule deer and elk are the abundant big game species.

The North Alternative route in Miles 21-26 will traverse the primary migration route that elk and mule deer follow as they migrate between lower elevation winter areas to the west and summer habitat east of Grays Lake. Currently this migration route in this area has very little 4 wheeler access and is well protected. Creation of a powerline maintenance road through the heart of the migration path will open the area up to much greater human access, by foot, horse and illegal motorbikes and 4 wheelers. USFS has been unable to control illegal access on many of the existing closed roads. There is no reason to believe that BPA could possibly enforce road closures on the powerline ROW in this area. They do not have the funds nor the manpower. The assertions in the draft EIS that BPA can effectively prevent illegal use of the ROW have no basis in fact. They are wishful thinking.

For all the reasons mentioned above, we ask that you reject the North Alternative and select the South Alternative if action is proven to be essential. Selection of the North Alternative would cause permanent damage to the globally significant avian resources of this area.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Ruth E. Shea

Greater Yellowstone Coordinator

HSTP13 0014 - Drewien

The draft EIS contains many errors and omissions BPA should reject the North Alternative due to its unacceptable impacts on wildlife, particular on avian species. See my comments in the attached file.

Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs Office - DKE-7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR, 97293-4428

HSTP13 0014

April 22, 2013

Sirs:

I have reviewed your Draft EIS (Mar 2013) on the Hooper Springs Transmission Project and have a number of comments. I have lived in the Wayan, Idaho area for over 40 years during spring-fall and a few winters. I am now retired from the University of Idaho where I spent 30 years as a Research Biologist working on a variety of off-campus avian wildlife studies, including at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and vicinity, other regions in the Rocky Mountains, and elsewhere. During some of these studies, I caught and banded numerous waterfowl and captured and marked over 1,700 sandhill cranes, including over 1,100 in the Grays Lake area, placed radio transmitters on some, and studied their geographical distribution, habitat use patterns, and behaviors. I was also involved in several studies of mortalities suffered by cranes, waterfowl, and other birds from striking power lines in Colorado and published findings in peer-reviewed journals (Brown, Drewien, and Bizeau 1987, Brown and Drewien 1995).

Overall, I find your North Alternative route through the Wayan area poorly conceived and it has a number of major flaws that you have failed to identify and address. In some instances, you have alluded to some of these problems but provided only cursory or incorrect information. **I urge you to abandon this ill-conceived alternative and select the South Alternative route if action is proven to be necessary.**

I was dismayed at the arrogant behavior exhibited by some BPA employees or contractors while working in the Wayan area marking your proposed transmission line route. I have yet to talk to any landowners that authorized trespass on their properties by BPA people, yet I heard a number of landowner complaints and in several cases landowners caught trespassing BPA employees/contractors on their properties. I was appalled to learn a BPA survey crew cut down a pine tree near a widow lady's home. The pine tree had been planted by her late husband. Was the removal of the pine tree on a proposed but yet undecided and unapproved route necessary? Do you normally locate transmission lines so near rural homes? Is it standard operating procedure for BPA to barge through private lands against wishes of landowners in this fashion within proposed project areas?

It is incomprehensible that your voluminous draft EIS completely failed to reveal that both Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Blackfoot Reservoir are both classified as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Global Significance by Bird Life International, US Partners in Flight, and the National Audubon Society. It is completely irresponsible for BPA to propose a North Alternative transmission line in this area of exceptionally important avian habitat.

Your proposed North Alternative route virtually encompasses the spring and fall migration routes to and from Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent environs. The routes are used by thousands of cranes, waterfowl, and many of the other of the 150+ avian species that inhabit this superlative 22,000-acre marsh and associated upland habitats. The draft EIS showed no awareness of the daily spring, summer, and fall low altitude foraging/feeding flights to and from Grays Lake Valley by cranes, some waterfowl, and other colonial nesting birds. These movements, which occur daily, involve anywhere from hundreds to several thousand birds of different species, which pass on a broad front southeasterly through Gravel Creek drainage, Hwy 34 corridor, Williamsburg, Lanes Creek, and Tincup Creek with some continuing on to WY. Smaller numbers of birds also move southwesterly from Grays Lake Valley to the Blackfoot Reservoir area and return in these same low altitude flights. Most all of these bird flights would be forced to cross your North Alternative transmission lines.

The draft EIS also fails to reveal that Blackfoot Reservoir, in conjunction with the grain fields to the east of the reservoir where the North Alternative would run, comprise one of the more heavily use Sandhill Crane fall staging areas in Idaho, and the area also receives considerable use by geese and ducks.

Our past research on avian powerline strikes found that 115kv lines can cause major avian mortalities on low flying birds, particularly cranes, waterfowl, and especially the vulnerable trumpeter swans which also nest at Grays Lake. The static wires pose the biggest problems and can contribute to large numbers of mortalities and injuries. I also reviewed the bird list for Species of Special Concern in Idaho (Appendix G) and found more than 35 bird species that occur along or near the North Alternative transmission line route. In addition, during autumn migrations, snow geese, tundra swans, cranes, and other birds from areas further north that normally stop overnight in route to other destinations, would also be subjected to the BPA net of wires in the Grays Lake and Blackfoot Reservoir vicinities.

In your analysis of Avian Disturbance and Collisions (3-140-141) you acknowledge there are a number of areas, based upon BPA use of an Avian Collision Model (Heck 2007) that present high risk for avian species and result in long term impacts that could be moderate to high. BPA states it would (3-141) “minimize collision risk through installation of visibility enhancement devices in the area of highest collision risk.” Based upon my 40+year knowledge of the area and routes of daily bird flights, it would require over 7 miles (from near mile 25 to mile 32) of marking lines with devices to enhance visibility, making your Transmission Line corridor look as if the Eastern Idaho State Fair and Carnival at Blackfoot had moved to rural State Scenic Hwy 34 near Wayan. This demonstrates no regard whatsoever by BPA for the social/economic value of the Pioneer Scenic Byway along State Hwy 34. In addition, much of the line through the ag lands east of Blackfoot Reservoir where crane and waterfowl use occurs would also require extensive marking.

Frankly, I find it difficult to believe you studied the potential problems seriously prior to proposing to locate a Transmission line in such close proximity to such large bird

concentrations. The evidence available suggests BPA only gave this route a cursory inspection prior to selecting it as the North Alternative route. One of the major criteria in the Avian Collision Model (Heck 2007:117) that BPA used was: “**NEW POWER LINES SHOULD NOT CROSS PERPENDICULAR TO MAJOR FLIGHT CORRIDORS.**” BPA obviously did not read this section or took the information lightly, and instead, offered up a superficial but nonviable remedy. Your proposed route puts BPA in direct conflict with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918), and possibly the Eagle Protection Act (1940), and other laws. It also opens doors for lawsuits by interested parties.

Other problems with BPA Northern Alternative route include the 100-foot ROW, gravel/rocked roads for maintenance access, invasion of noxious weeds due to disturbances BPA creates along the ROWs, and potential unwanted trespass problems both on private and public lands. You fail to disclose BPA information on associated trespass problems with other projects, especially with ORVs, which you have experienced, such as with the I-5 corridor project near the coast.

Much private lands that occur on the northern end of the North Alternative are in pastures and some hayfields. A number of ranches are multi-generational, including lands originally homesteaded, and you wish to intrude on their traditional livelihood and rural lifestyle, run a 100-ft ROW, open areas to weed invasion, and worse, to unwanted trespass problems that may include fences being cut and gates left open, leaving trash, and possible poaching of big game or cattle. Your 100-ft wide corridor would most likely turn into a winter BPA sponsored snowmobile trail. The EIS states that BPA plans to gate access areas, private and public, but I predict you will have limited or no success with that approach. In many winters, snows can be deep in the Wayan area and even the Forest Service has troubles containing cross-country travels in restricted areas, and the State Highway Department experiences problems maintaining open roads. Problems created by the BPA project would fall upon landowners and agency personnel to deal with. This would place additional burdens on Caribou County and local law enforcement. In my opinion, BPA should be held responsible for additional costs to the County created by messes left behind by the BPA project.

The ROW created across Blue Mtn. (approx. miles 22-24.5) would be devastating to migration and wintering Big Game animals because it opens access to what has been up to now a relatively rugged and secure area with very limited human intrusion and which has served as important winter range.

Overall, there are a number of errors in the draft EIS, however, I do not have the time to correct errors and omissions. (example: white-tailed deer are abundant in forested areas-nonsense).

Dr. Rod Drewien
Wildlife Biologist, retired
3934 Call Lane, Wayan, Idaho 83285



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101-3140

HSTP13 0015

OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS,
TRIBAL AND PUBLIC
AFFAIRS

April 22, 2013

Tish Eaton
Project Environmental Lead
Bonneville Power Administration-KEC-4
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208

Re: Comments on the DEIS for Hooper Springs Transmission Project.
EPA Project Number 10-034-BPA.

Dear Ms. Eaton:

In accordance with our responsibilities under the Clean Air Act §309 and the National Environmental Policy Act, the US Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Bonneville Power Administration Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed **Hooper Springs Transmission Project** CEQ no. 20130052, in Caribou County, Idaho.

The DEIS analyzes potential environmental impacts of a proposal to construct, operate, and maintain a 115-kV transmission line and a 138/115-kV substation on a site adjacent to the PacifiCorp's existing Threemile Knoll Substation near the City of Soda Springs, Caribou County, Idaho. Construction of the 32-mile power line would involve public lands administered by the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, and other lands under State and private ownership. Project activities would include access road construction and improvements, right-of-way vegetation clearance and earth moving during site preparation for structures and other facilities. There would also be hillside cuts or fills where construction activities would occur in steeply sloped terrain and blasting in rocky areas. If implemented as proposed, the project would address current concerns about power stability and reliability in southeastern Idaho and help to meet ongoing and future power needs in southern Idaho and surrounding areas.

Analysis of impacts from the project considered two action alternatives i.e., a North Alternative, including two route options; a South Alternative with four route options; and a No Action. Each alternative would begin at the proposed Hooper Spring Substation and end at the proposed connection facility with Lower Valley Energy's existing transmission system in northeastern Caribou County. The draft EIS does not identify a preferred alternative and route option(s).

We note with appreciation that the DEIS addresses many of the issues we raised during the project scoping period in August 2010, including analysis of cumulative and climate change effects. Thus, we commend BPA staff for working with a variety of stakeholders and considering public comments in the NEPA analysis for the project. The DEIS document includes a good description of resources in the project area, anticipated impacts, and mitigation measures to offset the impacts. In particular, we appreciate information provided in section 2.6 (p. 2-33) comparing alternatives, their impacts to various resources and associated mitigation measures, and cost. Overall, most impacts by the project would be due to construction activities, which would generate both temporary and permanent impacts related to the project

footprint and long-term operations and maintenance. Our concerns with the project relate to its potential impacts to water quality, land use and farmlands, and other resources as discussed below.

Water Quality Impacts

The DEIS indicates that water quality may be adversely affected if the project construction activities (blasting, surface grading, excavation, and surface pavement) alter the hydrology of springs and surface runoff such that erosion carries sediment and pollutants to local drainages (p. 3-115), accelerating infiltration and migrating through soils to the underlying aquifer. We note that mitigation plans would include implementation of erosion and sediment controls. However, the project will cross many drainages and the combination of riparian vegetation and other vegetation removal, earth moving activities and associated erosion and sediment loading could exacerbate water quality conditions in streams already on the State of Idaho's 303(d) list due to exceedances of water quality standards for temperature, sedimentation and other pollutants (p. 3-111). In addition, groundwater extraction in the area, land disturbance, material storage, waste disposal, inadvertent chemical or hazardous liquid spills, and compaction produced by vehicular traffic can all affect recharge to the local aquifer and groundwater quality.

Because of such potential impacts to water quality, we recommend that BPA continue to coordinate with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and Tribes affected by the project to assure that the state and tribal water quality standards will be met during implementation of the project, and monitor as appropriate to assure protection of water quality. We also recommend that the final EIS include information about compliance with Water Quality Restoration Plans that function as BPA's share of implementing relevant Total Maximum Daily Loads, such as the Blackfoot River TMDL, designed to meet State and Federal water quality rules and regulations in the planning area. Since the project also anticipates obtaining Clean Water Act § 401 and 404 authorizations, and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for planned construction activities likely to disturb one or more acres, the final EIS should include updated information on those permit application processes and recommended measures to protect water quality.

We note that BPA will consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, as moderate, long-term fish habitat impacts are anticipated in fish-bearing streams during implementation of this project (p. 3-158). We recommend that the final EIS include outcomes of that consultation and recommended measures to reduce risks to species within the analysis area to protect biota and habitat.

Land Use and Farmland Impacts

The DEIS indicates that the proposed project would impact federal, state, tribal and private lands and their associated uses, including lands that have been designated as prime farmland and lands managed under the United States Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program (p. 3-27). Even though some areas would be disturbed temporarily and restored afterwards, other impacts would be permanent because of structure footing and access road beds and structures. As an example, under the South Alternative, the transmission line ROW for Option 3 would impact about 126 acres of prime farmland, while Options 1 and 2 would affect 33 acres each and almost 77 acres for Option 4 (p. 3-104). We note that BPA will be consulting with the Farm Service Agency in assessing the project impacts to prime farmlands and CRP lands. We recommend that the final EIS include outcomes of those consultations and recommended measures to avoid and reduce impacts to those lands.

Regarding mining land use within the project corridor and vicinity, the DEIS states that the project would cross several existing or proposed mines, some of which are currently under investigation as Superfund

sites under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (p. 3-17). Section 3.13 further discusses the areas and potential public health and safety impacts (p. 3-211). The DEIS states that impacts could be moderate to high if project construction activities come into direct contact with waste dumps, seeps, or mine pits, exposing workers and the environment to contaminants, (p. 3-214). We recommend that the final EIS include a more in-depth discussion of the data and/or studies that support the conclusions. The final EIS should clarify the use of the term "Superfund Site" by explaining that some of the mine sites are being addressed using CERCLA legal authorities, but are not on the Superfund National Priorities List. We also recommend that the final EIS include additional clarifying information to support the statement that the project construction could encounter hazardous waste, since most mine wastes in the area are Bevill Exempt. For more information on Superfund Sites, please feel free to consult the EPA Superfund Program. Our Remedial Project Manager in Idaho is Mr. Dave Tomten who can be contacted at (208) 378-5763 or tomten.dave@epamail.epa.gov. Physical hazards may also pose a risk to the public if dangerous areas such as pit highwalls are accessible; mitigation for such hazards could include control measures such as gates, fences, or signs.

Vegetation and Wildlife

Section 3.4.2 and 3.4.3 discuss impacts to vegetation resources and indicate that the proposed project would directly affect vegetation communities through trampling and removal due to construction of the transmission line, access roads and workspaces. Some impacts would be temporary, while others would be permanent. Since thermal modification and sedimentation are the primary cause of streams not supporting beneficial uses in the project area, we are concerned that vegetation removal along waterways could result in streambank scouring, erosion, poor drainage and loss of soil and wildlife habitat. Therefore, we recommend that such areas be targeted for active restoration to increase vegetation cover and improve thermal conditions in stream channels.

Transmission Line Monitoring

The proposed project has the potential to impact resources within the proposed corridor for a long time. Therefore, we recommend that the final EIS describe a monitoring program designed to assess both impacts from the project and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures for the impacts. The document should also indicate how the program would use an effective feedback mechanism to assure environmental objectives would be met throughout the project lifespan.

Based on concerns discussed above and missing or unclear information, we are assigning a rating of EC-2 (Environmental Concerns – Insufficient information) to this DEIS. A copy of the rating system used in conducting our review is enclosed for your reference.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. If you have question about our comments, please contact me at (206) 553-1601 or by electronic mail at reichgott.christine@epa.gov, or you may contact Theo Mbabaliye of my staff at (206) 553-6322 or electronic mail at mbabaliye.theogene@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



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

Enclosure

EPA Rating System

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.



Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs Office-DKE-7
PO Box 14428
Portland, OR
97293-4428

April 22, 2013

RE: Hooper Springs Transmission Project

Dear BPA,

Thank you for considering our comments on the Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project DEIS. Since 1973 the Idaho Conservation League has had long history of involvement with both habitat protection and statewide energy issues. As Idaho's largest statewide conservation organization, we represent over 25,000 supporters who want to ensure that energy development and related infrastructure are consistent with natural resource protection.

We support timely improvements and expansion of transmission infrastructure where needed, but in the case of the Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project, we are deeply concerned that the proposed route does not strike the appropriate balance between minimizing costs and minimizing environmental effects. In particular, we have concerns regarding the urgency as well as the adverse environmental effects from all the proposed alternatives. We appreciate the additional "non-wires alternative" which demonstrated that the project could be deferred until 2016 or 2020. While Phase 1 and 2 studies of this alternative showed that the transmission line project could not be entirely eliminated, it demonstrated it could be deferred. We believe that this alternative should have been fully developed. This would give the BPA time to reassess the project through a Supplemental EIS.

This reassessment is critically important as the EIS needs to conduct a more thorough analysis on avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts to sage-grouse. The project area appears to contain either Preliminary General Habitat or Preliminary Priority Habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse.

We recommend siting all new facilities and structures in previously developed corridors as much as possible. However, we do have significant concerns regarding placing transmission lines in areas with past or proposed mining activity. Material from formerly reclaimed mining areas may need to be rehandled to help address selenium contamination issues. Transmission line construction could either mobilize contaminants or impair needed reclamation efforts. A Supplemental EIS is also needed to examine the likelihood of additional transmission lines and associated cumulative effects within the new ROW.

Please send us any subsequent documents for this project. We look forward to continuing to work with the BPA on this project and others in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Robison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Robison
Public Lands Director
(208) 345-6942 x 13
jrobison@idahoconservation.org

Idaho Conservation League comments on Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project DEIS

Purpose and need

As stated above, we have concerns regarding the apparent urgency of this project as well as the adverse environmental effects from all the proposed alternatives. We appreciate the additional “non-wires alternative” which demonstrated that the project could be deferred until 2016 or 2020. While Phase 1 and 2 studies of this alternative showed that the transmission line project could not be entirely eliminated, it demonstrated it could be deferred while the project is reassessed through a Supplemental EIS. Given the recent slowdown in the regional and national economy, the BPA should again reassess the urgency for this project and factor in additional increases in efficiency and alternate routes from power generation sources to consumers. We believe that this alternative should be fully developed in a Supplemental EIS. As part of this effort, the BPA should show the locations of all these transmission lines along with the Westwide Energy Corridor.

Sage grouse

A Supplemental EIS is needed to conduct a more thorough analysis on avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts to sage-grouse. Greater sage-grouse suffer from the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of habitat throughout the west. It’s estimated that only 50-60% of the original sagebrush steppe habitat remains in the west (West 2000), and in 2007, the American Bird Conservancy listed sagebrush as the most threatened bird habitat in the continental United States.¹ As such, we cannot stress enough how important it is for agencies to consider impacts to sage-grouse and for public land managers to conserve existing habitat and actively restore altered sagebrush steppe habitats.

Depending on location and design specifics, the construction of transmission lines within sage-grouse habitat could constitute “nonlinear infrastructure” under the *Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho (Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee 2006)*. Nonlinear infrastructure is defined as “human-made features on the landscape that provide or facilitate transportation, energy, and communications activities...including wind energy facilities.”² The *Conservation Plan* lists infrastructure such as this as the second greatest threat for sage grouse, with wildfires as the greatest risk. Road construction and use associated with transmission line maintenance represents high risk for loss of lek areas, nesting locations, and brood-rearing habitats (Braun 1986, Connelly et al. 2004).^{3,4} In addition, sage-grouse have been shown to avoid transmission lines, presumably because of potential predation.

¹ West, N.E. Synecology and disturbance regimes of sagebrush steppe ecosystems, p. 15-26. In P.G. Entwistle, A.M. DeBolt, J.H. Kaltenecker, and K. Steenhoff, Proceedings: sagebrush steppe ecosystems symposium. USDI Bureau of Land Management Publication BLM/ID/PT-001001+1150, Boise, ID.

² Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee. 2006. *Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho*.

³ Braun, C.E. 1986. Changes in sage-grouse lek counts with advent of surface coal mining. Proceedings, Issues and technology in the management of impacted western wildlife. *Thorne Ecological Institute 2*: 227-231.

⁴ Connelly, J.W., Knick, S.T., Schroeder, M.A., and S.J. Stiver. 2004. Conservation assessment of greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitats. Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Unpublished Report. Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Based on the habitat guidelines for sage-grouse management presented in Connelly et al. (2000),⁵ we recommend siting the transmission line in such a way to avoid impacts to sage-grouse.

Furthermore, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found the greater sage-grouse warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act and has committed to a final listing decision in 2015; BLM is in the process of rangewide planning to design conservation measures and regulatory mechanisms that would avoid listing. BLM's Instruction Memorandum (IM) 2012-043 "provides interim conservation policies and procedures to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) field officials to be applied to ongoing and proposed authorizations and activities that affect the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and its habitat."

The project area appears to contain either Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) or Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) for Greater Sage-Grouse (see map below). PPH, as identified in BLM's Greater Sage-Grouse Interim Management Policies and Procedures, IM 2012-043 (12/27/2011), "comprises areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable Greater Sage-Grouse populations" that "have been identified by the BLM in coordination with respective state wildlife agencies." For pending projects in PPH (including those for which a Draft EIS has been issued and would likely have more than minor adverse effects on sage-grouse), the IM provides that the agency must:

_Ensure that **reasonable alternatives** for siting the ROW outside of the PPH or within a BLM-designated utility corridor are considered and analyzed in the NEPA document.

_Identify technically feasible best management practices, conditions, etc. (e.g., siting, burying powerlines) that may be implemented in order to **eliminate or minimize impacts**. (emphasis added)

IM 2012-043 requires additional procedures for pending right-of-way applications that would affect more than one linear mile of sage grouse habitat. These procedures include a high-level interagency review process for any right-of-way project that would fail to "cumulatively maintain or enhance sage-grouse habitat." The sage-grouse habitat that will be affected by proposed project routes has been acknowledged by the BLM as potentially important for protection. Allowing development of a transmission line through this landscape could result in harmful, and potentially irreversible impacts to important greater sage-grouse habitat, both by damaging sage-grouse habitat through the construction and maintenance of power lines and by providing "perches" for raptors and other birds of prey to more easily prey on sage-grouse. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has found that transmission lines have a range of adverse impacts on sage grouse and their habitats. 75 Fed. Reg. 13909, 13928-29 (March 23, 2010). The Service's 12-month finding on sage grouse noted the many transmission line proposals pending in the western states and explained "If these lines cross sage grouse habitats, sage grouse will likely be negatively affected." Id at 13929.

More recently, the BLM's Sage-grouse National Technical Team reached the same conclusion and recommended that the BLM "[m]ake priority 4 sage grouse habitat areas exclusion areas for new [right-of-way] permits" with narrow exceptions. Id. Consequently, transmission lines should be avoided in PPH, and the BPA has not made the requisite findings or considered measures to avoid or offset damage to the habitat that would be affected by this project. If these routes receive further consideration, BPA must disclose these impacts and consider mitigation measures, including offsite

⁵ Connelly, J.W., Schroeder, M.A., Sands, A.R., and C.E. Braun. 2000. Guidelines to manage sage-grouse populations and their habitats. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 28(4): 967-985.

mitigation.

The BPA analysis should recognize that sage-grouse are a landscape-scale species and that individuals may move dozens of miles between required habitats. Thus, a significant challenge in managing and conserving sage-grouse populations is the fact that they depend upon different types of habitat for each stage of their annual cycle (Connelly et al. 2009), and upon the ability to move between the different habitats throughout the year. Each seasonal habitat must provide the necessary protection from predators, required food resources, and thermal needs for the specific stage of the annual cycle. Breeding-related events and habitat needs during the proposed management activities from summer 2011 through December 2012 will include:

- 1) Late brood-rearing period in July through September. Late brood-rearing is focused in wetter areas, especially riparian and spring-associated meadows closely associated with nearby sagebrush.
- 2) Movement to winter habitat.
- 3) Occupation of winter habitat from November through February. The primary requirement of winter habitat is sagebrush exposure above the snow, and is generally characterized by dense sagebrush, often including areas of wind-swept ridges.
- 4) Lekking, which may begin as early as late February, and may extend into May. Lekking requires open expanses of sagebrush within a large area of sagebrush cover. Lek persistence has been affected by disturbance activities within 3.1, 11.2, and 33.5 mile radii (Swenson et al. 1987, Johnson et al. 2009, Knick and Hanser 2009).
- 5) Female movement to nesting sites and nesting between March and June. Nesting females commonly move 3-5 miles or farther from the lekking site. Females select areas with more sagebrush canopy than is generally available in the surrounding landscape (Holloran et al 2005, Hagen et al. 2007)
- 6) Hatching and early brood-rearing in May and June. Females continue to use relatively dense stands of sagebrush for earliest brood-rearing habitat if native forbs and insects are available. When vegetation desiccates, females and broods move to wetter areas in search of the native forbs and insects required by chicks.

Knick and Hansen (2009) analyzed factors in lek persistence of over 5,000 leks. They used three radii to test for landscape disturbance effects on lek persistence – radii of 3.1 miles, 11.2 miles, and 33.5 miles. Previous studies had shown behavioral effects on sage-grouse related to sagebrush disturbance at the 33.5 mile radius (Swenson et al. 1987, Leonard et al. 2000). Knick and Hansen’s study showed adverse effects on lek persistence from wildfire at the 33.5 mile radius. At least one lek has been documented near the proposed routes.

Avoiding and minimizing human footprint at a 3.1 mile radius from leks is an important first step in protecting sage-grouse populations, but sage-grouse will be engaged in nesting and brood-rearing, rather than lekking, for most of the planned activity period. Recent studies have shown that only 64% of nesting sites occur within 3.1 miles of leks, but 80% of nests are found within five miles, and 20% of nests occur at distances greater than five miles from leks. Nest success is also greater the farther a nest occurs from a lek, indicating a disproportionate potential importance of these more important nests for population recruitment. Aldridge and Boyce (2007) and Doherty et al. (2010) identify a buffer of 6.2 miles to protect important nesting and brood-rearing habitats.

Given the considerations of year-round habitat use and known impacts of human activity on sage-grouse populations, mitigation will be needed for disturbance to sagebrush near lekking areas; disturbance and loss of sagebrush and native forbs used for early brood-rearing; and disturbance and impacts to hydrologic function of wet areas used for early to late brood-rearing. A conservative

estimate for the nesting and brood rearing area affected will include buffers with radii of 6.2 miles around known leks. Mitigation specifics could be based on a mitigation template recently created for the Lesser Prairie Chicken, a ground-nesting species facing similar threats (Horton et al. 2010).

The BPA should consult closely with the Forest Service, BLM, Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Local Sage-grouse Working Group to determine appropriate measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts in the Supplemental EIS. With the additional comments received, the BPA should design the transmission line to minimize the potential impacts described above. As stated above, we recommend reducing roads and trails in identified sensitive areas to preserve existing habitat. Where impacts are unavoidable, the BLM should implement on and off-site habitat mitigation to offset any impacts to sage grouse.

The Supplemental EIS should show the proximity of all routes with historic and currently active leks, as well as lek counts over the last several years. Where predation on sage grouse by predators is a concern, towers should minimize perching structures.

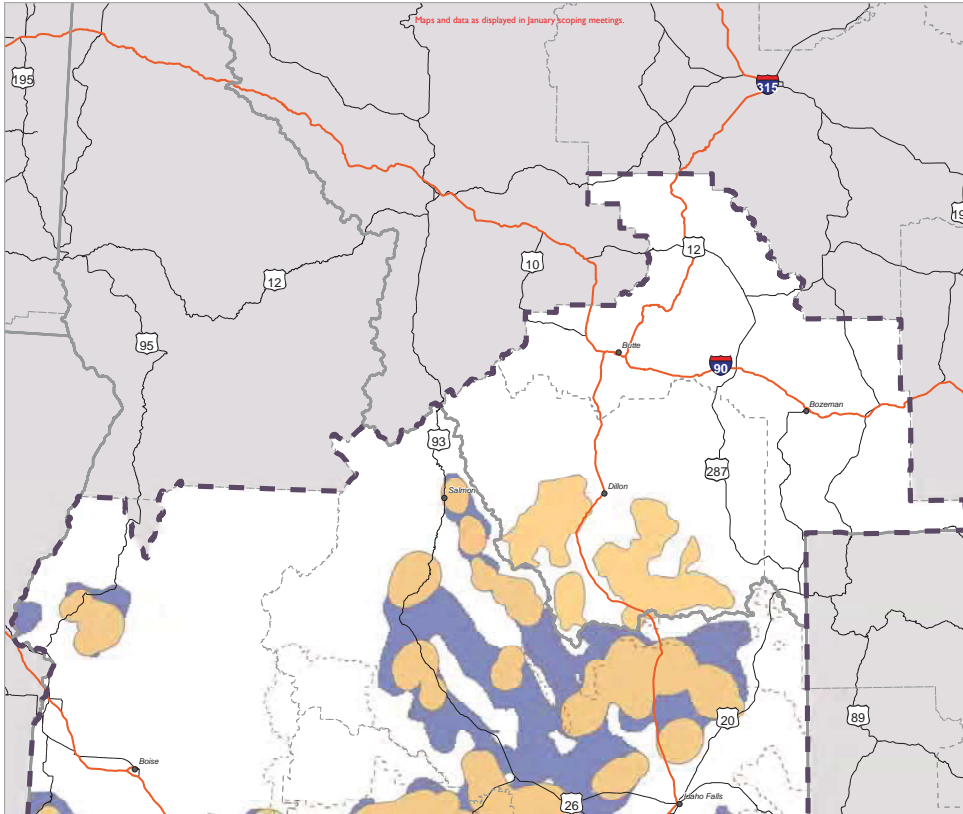


National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat



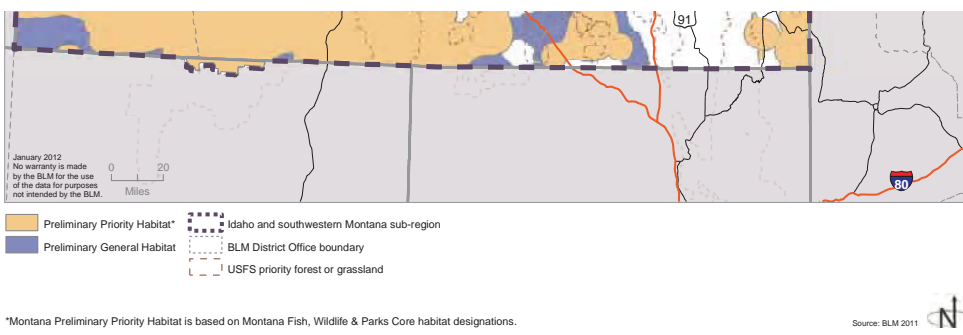
Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH) and Preliminary General Habitat (PGH) are shown for Idaho, while Sage-grouse Core Habitat is shown for Montana. PPH includes areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable greater sage-grouse populations. These areas include breeding, late brood-rearing, and winter concentration areas. PGH includes areas of occupied seasonal

or year-round habitat outside of priority habitat. Both PPH and PGH have been identified by the BLM in coordination with the Idaho Fish and Game Department. Core Habitat in Montana is roughly equivalent to PPH, and includes habitats associated with 1) Montana's highest densities of sage-grouse, based on male counts and/or 2) sage-grouse lek complexes and associated habitat important to sage-grouse distribution.



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http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/id/wildlife/sensitive_species/sg_scoping_meeting.Par.31.240.File.dat/ID_PPH_508.pdf

Mitigation measures

As stated in our previous comments, the list of proposed mitigation measures are measures to *minimize* impacts, and not to *mitigate* them. Additional descriptions are needed.

Alternatives

We appreciate the analysis of the Northern Route along Highway 34. We would like to see additional analysis of ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts along this route. The EIS should also analyze the feasibility of burying certain sections of powerlines which has been done routinely in Europe.

Waterfowl and raptors

In airspace regularly traversed by waterfowl, BPA should use single poles without guy wires to reduce mortality from collisions. The EIS should provide additional information on how powerlines will be designed to minimize electrocutions of raptors.

Timber clearing

The EIS proposes to clear large acres of timber for the transmission line. Unlike regular timber sales which are replanted or regenerate naturally, this clearing and the accompanying maintenance road will have to be maintained in perpetuity, making this an irretrievable and irreversible commitment. It is also unclear if the slash dispersal from regular maintenance will actually increase or decrease fuel risks. BP should take additional steps to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to natural resources along these routes.

Temporary roads

All alternatives require construction of over twenty miles of permanent roads. Previous management activities have already resulted in extensive road and right-of-way densities throughout our public lands. This density compromises the ability to support wildlife and fish by promoting further human disturbance, fragmenting habitat, accelerating sedimentation, spreading noxious weeds, and encouraging Off Road Vehicle use. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between roads, even temporary ones, and human-caused wildfire ignitions. We recommend that the

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We are particularly concerned about construction of transmission facilities across wetlands, floodplains, unroaded areas and in sensitive wildlife habitat, particularly in the region of the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) when more appropriate routes exist. The Woodall Wetland complex should be avoided entirely. Additional mitigation is needed if the Gravel Creek Special Emphasis Area is impacted at all.

Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area

We appreciate the fact that the southern routes appear to avoid directly impacting the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area (WMA), but are still concerned about the southern route's proximity to the WMA. Given the large amount of fragmented habitat in the area associated with mining infrastructure and the importance of the remaining habitat, further fragmenting the area near of the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area appears needless and unacceptable. Our specific comments are attached below.

Habitat, habitat fragmentation, and migration corridors

Portions of the project area contain habitat that is crucial to fish and wildlife species such as Yellowstone cutthroat trout, sage-grouse and other species. Such habitat has been severely fragmented and reduced through a variety of land management practices, including road construction and development of rights of way corridors. Construction activities should be suspended during elk and deer migration. Under the Bald Eagle Protection Act, the transmission line should be sited to avoid any impacts to bald eagles.

Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area

The EIS does not address concerns to the Blackfoot Wildlife Management Area. The 2,400-acre Blackfoot WMA was purchased in 1994 by IDFG. The WMA encompasses 9 km of the upper Blackfoot River, bordered on the north by Spring, Lanes, and Diamond creeks and to the west by the Narrows. Historically, the Blackfoot River was an important stream for Yellowstone cutthroat trout and IDFG has taken steps to restore the Fishery. -Idaho Department Of Fish And Game Fishery Management Annual Report

<https://Research.Idfg.Idaho.Gov/Fisheries%20research%20reports/08-103.Pdf>

The Blackfoot WMA is also listed as Idaho birding trail and includes the following bird species:

Mountain Bluebird, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows, Yellow Warbler, Cliff Swallow, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, and Ruffed and Blue Grouse breed in the area. Bald Eagle and Trumpeter Swan are frequently seen in early spring and late fall. Waterfowl including Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Canada Goose, and teal nest on the WMA. Courtship displays of several pairs of Sandhill Crane can be seen in the spring, along with shorebirds such as Wilson's Snipe, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Spotted Sandpiper, Sora, and Killdeer. Forest areas provide habitat for Great Gray Owl and Blue and Ruffed Grouse. Yellow, Yellow-rumped, and MacGillivray's Warblers, Vesper, Chipping, and Savannah Sparrows, American Goldfinch, Lazuli Bunting, Western Kingbird, Evening Grosbeak, Green-tailed Towhee, Steller's Jay, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Willow Flycatcher can be seen. Bald and Golden Eagles, Swainson's, Red-tailed, and Rough-legged Hawks, and Northern Harrier also frequent the area.

- <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/IFWIS/ibt/site.aspx?id=SE26>

In addition, the Blackfoot WMA and surrounding area has important aesthetic characteristics that many Idahoans want to maintain. Blackfoot Bridge WMA attracts visitors from all over Idaho to fish and to enjoy the scenery. The impacts of the southern routes on the undeveloped nature of the area do not appear capable of being mitigated and these southern alternatives should be rejected.

Additional Wildlife

In addition to sage-grouse, we believe that other wildlife such as pygmy rabbits, sage thrasher, sage sparrow, birds of prey, and so forth should be of concern in planning. New construction and infrastructure will also change crucial habitat for these species. The BLM should avoid construction in any designated areas or lands for special management of these species.

OHVs

New temporary roads for construction and maintenance of transmission lines will provide more access for motorized recreation in areas without a current road system and more opportunities for illegal offroad riding. The devastating impacts of Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) on terrestrial ecosystems are well established. Irresponsible ORV users degrade water quality, spread noxious weeds, fragment

habitat, disturb wildlife, increase fires, and displace non-motorized recreationists. While the EIS states that OHVs will not be allowed on closed roads, the Supplemental EIS needs to describe the ability for the BPA to monitor and control ORV use as permitted by land management agencies.

Noxious Weeds

The most cost-effective way to deal with noxious weeds is to protect strongholds of native vegetation from activities which either spread noxious weeds directly or create suitable habitat by removing native vegetation and disturbing the soil. BPA activities should limit road use and the exposure of mineral soils where weeds may become established. Roads, trails, and rivers serve as the primary routes for noxious weed species expansion. Special care should be taken to safeguard ecologically intact areas that are not currently infested. The Supplemental EIS needs to analyze the effects of noxious weeds in transmission corridors and describe BPA management of weeds in these areas.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

We appreciate the analysis of greenhouse gas emissions during the construction and maintenance of this project, but this analysis fails to evaluate the increased greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity flowing through the transmission line. For this analysis, BPA should look at the current and projected suite of energy producing sites (coal fired power plants, natural gas, wind power, etc). In this manner, the public will be able to better assess the real greenhouse gas emissions produced and conveyed by this transmission line. The Idaho Conservation League encourages the BPA to phase out intense greenhouse gas producing energy sources such as coal-fired power plants in favor of alternative energy sources such as wind power.

Cumulative effects

As mentioned above, there are a number of other developments in this area, including exploration and expansion of phosphate mines, that may have cumulative environmental effects. We are particularly concerned about water quality, habitat fragmentation, noxious weed expansion, and loss of secure habitat by wildlife. For example, Monsanto is proceeding with the Blackfoot Bridge Mine development toward the west end of the project area and Agrium is continuing to construct temporary exploration roads just north of the project area. There was also discussion in the past of a natural gas pipeline in this area. In addition, a large number of other transmission line projects are being proposed across Idaho. We are concerned that once a ROW is established, that additional infrastructure will also be placed on this route. A Supplemental EIS should be developed to examine the impacts of multiple lines along each route. The EIS should analyze these cumulative effects more thoroughly and develop alternatives that avoid, minimize and mitigate these impacts.

HSTP13 0017

22 April 2013

Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs Office – DKE-7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97293-4428

Re: Hooper Springs Transmission Project, Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Sir/Madam:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hooper Springs Transmission Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). My comments are explained below.

Alternative Considerations

Given that the purpose of the Hooper Springs Transmission Project is to “improve the stability and reliability of the transmission system in southeastern Idaho,” the Draft EIS should include an analysis of constructing an underground transmission system, which are generally more reliable than overhead transmission systems (Hall 2012). Because of this omission, the current Draft EIS does not adequately evaluate all potential alternatives. A detailed cost-benefit analysis, including monetary and non-monetary costs/benefits, of overhead transmission lines and underground transmission lines should have been included in the Draft EIS.

Underground transmission systems have 1) increased reliability during storms and high winds (which frequently occur throughout the project area), 2) reduced exposure to lightening (which also frequently occur throughout the project area), and 3) newer underground cable systems tend to be more reliable and require less maintenance than overhead installations (Hall 2013). In addition, underground systems result in less exposure to wildlife, mitigate the negative impacts on visual resources, and have better public safety (Hall 2013). One of the main challenges associated with installation of underground transmission systems is their monetary cost; however technologies and cost-effectiveness have improved, making their construction more feasible. For example, a 333-mile underground electric transmission line from Quebec to New York City was recently approved by their state Public Service Commission (Rulison 2013). Because of numerous public comments related to visual resources, wildlife, and rural land uses, during the scoping period and at the public information meeting it is important for BPA to consider underground power transmission for the entire length of the north and south alternatives. If constructing the entire length of the transmission line underground is not feasible, then constructing a portion of the route underground where negative impacts to wildlife, land uses, and/or visual resources occur should also be considered.

Proposed Alternatives – Cost

The construction cost for the north and south routes is estimated at \$51 million for both routes. However, no supporting information is provided. Although materials for the lower voltage line along the north route are cheaper than those for the higher voltage line along the south route, the north alternative is approximately 50% longer (9.5 miles longer) than the south alternative, requiring more labor, access roads, vegetation removal, and materials. A detailed explanation of

how these cost estimates were obtained should be provided for the north and south alternatives and the various routing options for the public adequately evaluate the costs associated with the project.

In addition, the cost of the proposed action along the south alternative in the 2009 Environmental Assessment was \$27.3 million (\$18 million for the substation and 9.3 million for the transmission line). Although costs have likely increased since 2009, it does not seem reasonable that costs have nearly doubled in the past 4 years to the currently estimated \$51 million as stated in the Draft EIS. BPA should include a rationale as to why the estimated cost for the south alternative has increased by 46% since 2009.

Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation

Descriptions of affected resources, environmental consequences, and mitigation in the current EIS are too general. In addition, complete information on some resource concerns are lacking. Therefore it does not afford adequate public review and comment to evaluate the specific mitigation actions proposed for specific impacts as required by policy of the Environmental Quality Improvement Act 43 FR 55990, Section 1500.2 and Department of Energy NEPA Implementing Procedures Title 10 CFR § 1021.313. Examples of these general descriptions and resource analyses that lack sufficient information in the Draft EIS, are provided below.

Land Use

As stated in the Draft EIS, the construction of the transmission line and access roads along the north route is not consistent with the Corridor Management Plan for Highway 34, the Pioneer Historic Byway, which is designated as a State of Idaho and National Scenic Byway. Because of this, the resulting impacts should be classified as high, not moderate.

As stated in the Draft EIS, construction of the transmission line along the north route crosses a portion of the Gravel Creek Special Emphasis Area and is also not consistent with the management goals identified by the USFS Caribou-Targhee National Forest. However, no mitigation measures are stated in section 3.1.4 for this negative impact, classified as high for both short and long-term impacts. It is not adequate to state that "BPA is currently working with USFS to further avoid or minimize potential project-related impacts to this area." Under federal NEPA law, BPA is required to analyze the short and long-term high impacts to the Gravel Creek Special Management Area and describe how these impacts will be mitigated. The fact that the USFS Caribou-Targhee National Forest is listed as a cooperating agency in preparation of this EIS further supports that these impacts and mitigation measures should be specified.

Please also refer to comments below under *Socioeconomic Resources* related to land use.

Visual Resources

All photo-simulation photos (Figures 3-11, 3-12, 3-13, 3-14, 3-15, 3-17, 3-18) appear to have been taken with a wide angle camera lens and only depict visual simulations of the proposed transmission line from far distances. No photo simulations are included where the transmission line is adjacent to or crosses Highway 34 or local roads. The evaluation of environmental consequences is therefore biased and does not sufficiently evaluate impacts to visual resources where the transmission line is near and/or crosses Highway 34 and local roads.

Please also refer to comments below under *Socioeconomic Resources* related to visual resources.

Vegetation

Habitat fragmentation resulting from vegetation cleared for the proposed transmission line should be analyzed in more detail to assess its impact on native vegetation, noxious weeds, and wildlife resources. This analysis should include life history strategies of all affected plant and animal species and how they are expected to respond to increased fragmentation and soil disturbance from vegetation removal. The overall impacts to noxious weeds for both alternatives are classified as low in subsection introductory paragraphs; however, low and moderate impacts are referenced in the subsequent text. Therefore impacts to and risk of spreading invasive species should be considered moderate based on existing analysis. This ranking should be reevaluated in light of life-history characteristics of plant and animal species affected.

Wildlife Resources

The affected environment description for wetlands and special status species does not include a complete list of wildlife species that have been documented using wetlands along the affected area of the north and south alternatives.

Avian species that occur in wetland habitats along the proposed north and south alternatives, but are NOT listed as species in the section describing wetland wildlife habitat in the Draft EIS are:

- Geese: Canada geese.
- Dabbling ducks: northern pintail, mallard, northern shoveler, cinnamon teal, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, American widgeon, gadwall.
- Diving and sea ducks: lesser scaup, greater scaup, ring-necked duck, canvasback, redhead, bufflehead, ruddy duck, hooded merganser, red-breasted merganser, common merganser.
- Grebes, rails and other marshbirds: eared grebe, western grebe, Clark's grebe, American coot, sora, Virginia rail, American bittern, Wilson's phalarope.
- Shorebirds: long-billed curlew, spotted sandpiper, willet, Wilson's snipe, white-faced ibis, upland sandpiper, black-necked stilt, American avocet, greater and lesser yellowlegs, long-billed dowitcher.
- Gulls and terns: Franklin's gulls, Forester's tern.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) is legally mandated to protect and manage all of the state's fish and wildlife resources and as a result coordinated the development of a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for the State of Idaho (CWCS) (IDFG 2005). The CWCS provides "a common framework that will enable conservation partners to jointly implement a long-term approach for the benefit of Species of Greatest Conservation Need" (IDFG 2005). However, the impacts of the proposed transmission line on the Species of Greatest Conservation Need that occur in the project have not been addressed in the Draft EIS.

Avian species listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the State of Idaho and known to occur in wetland habitats along the north and/or south route alternatives, but NOT included in Table 3-18 include:

- Northern pintail
- Lesser scaup
- Hooded merganser
- Western grebe

- Clark's grebe
- American white pelican
- White-faced ibis
- Sandhill crane
- Black-necked stilt
- American avocet
- Long-billed curlew
- Wilson's phalarope
- Franklin's gull
- Forester's tern

Other avian species listed as species of Greatest Conservation Need by the State of Idaho and known to occur in other habitats along the north and/or south route alternatives, but NOT included in Table 3-18 include:

- Swainson's hawk
- Short-eared owl

In addition to IDFG Status (column labeled State Status in Table 3-18), the Statewide Rank should also be included for each special status species. For example, trumpeter swans have a rank of S1B,S2N meaning that the statewide breeding population is critically imperiled and the statewide non-breeding population is imperiled. Several other protected nongame species not currently included in Table 3-18 have a statewide rank of S3B meaning that breeding populations within the state of Idaho are vulnerable.

Due to the large body mass of trumpeter swans and known collision hazards with power lines, the project impact on trumpeter swans in Table 3-19 should be moderate to high as stated in the text. Similar resource impacts occur for sandhill cranes, a species not even listed in Table 3-19. Flight patterns of birds, including migratory pathways and daily flight patterns between roosting, foraging, and/or nesting areas should be analyzed. In addition, the Draft EIS does not include the most recent information on bird collisions with power lines published in October 2012 by the Edison Electric Institute (Avian Power Line Interaction Committee 2012).

No bats, insects, or gastropods are listed in Section 3.7 Wildlife, but several species that are listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need occur in southeast Idaho. Impacts to species that occur or are likely to occur along the north and south route alternative should be analyzed.

No information was provided on when wildlife surveys were completed or the methods used. Wildlife surveys of the project area should be completed during spring, summer, fall, and winter in order to account for species that may use the area during different life history stages (e.g., spring migration, breeding, molting (birds), fall migration, and wintering).

Impacts to all of these special status species identified by the State of Idaho and known to occur within wetland and other habitats along the north and south alternatives should be analyzed. Because these species are lacking, the analyses of environmental consequences and mitigation are not sufficient to evaluate.

In addition, mitigation for negative impacts to wildlife should be identified for each alternative and the various routing options. The north alternative is nearly 50% longer than the south

alternative and is in closer proximity to Blackfoot Reservoir and Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, both of which have been identified as globally significant Important Bird Areas (<http://netapp.audubon.org/iba/state/US-ID>). Although both transmission line alternatives cross migratory bird pathways, it is likely that the impacts to birds and other wildlife along the north alternative would be significantly higher because it is a longer transmission line. The increased environmental impacts of the north are not currently addressed in the mitigation section of the Draft EIS.

Socioeconomic Resources

This section does not address livability principles identified through an interagency partnership that are important in rural communities (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2011). The proposed overhead transmission line is in direct opposition to two of these livability principles, including 1) leveraging unique natural and land-based resources to raise the standard of living and 2) conserving and building upon unique historic features and iconic rural landscapes. In addition to the interagency partnership cited above, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endorsed Strategic Habitat Conservation, which includes "landscapes and system sustainability," as their approach to conservation in support of their mission: "working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for *the continuing benefit of the American people*" (emphasis added). The proposed transmission line, ROW, and access roads compromise the natural features, ecosystem integrity, and iconic rural landscape of southeast Idaho.

The iconic rural landscape of southeastern Idaho is defined by farmsteads & ranchlands, historic barns, public lands that support native habitats and wildlife, and working agricultural structures that are visual representations of agricultural, hunting, and natural resource traditions in the State of Idaho and throughout America. Farms, ranches, and recreational amenities such as national forests, national wildlife refuges, and state wildlife management areas all have economic value for rural communities. "Rural American communities are largely defined by their relationship to the agricultural and natural landscape, so conserving working and natural lands is a key strategy for protecting quality of life and the long-term economic viability of farming, forestry, tourism, and other natural resource-based activities" (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2011). The economic value of the natural and historic resources along the proposed transmission routes is not included in the draft EIS. Therefore, impacts and proposed mitigation to this economic resource cannot be evaluated by the public.

Fishing, hunting, wildlife watching, and other outdoor recreation contribute over \$2 billion of Idaho's \$5.3 billion natural resource industry (Wendland and O'Laughlin 2013). When all forms of outdoor recreation activities (non-motorized and motorized) are considered, outdoor recreation created \$6.3 billion in consumer spending, \$1.8 billion in wages, and \$461 million in state and local tax revenue (Outdoor Industry Association 2013). Developments, such as the proposed transmission line, which negatively impact the natural resources of southeastern Idaho need to evaluate the impacts on the recreation economy within Caribou and adjoining counties. Based on personal experience and that of friends and neighbors, people are less likely to recreate in areas disturbed by development, therefore negatively affecting the local economy.

In a 14 February 2013 news release, the Idaho Outdoor Business Council stated that "preservation of prime wildlife habitat in Idaho.... is a sound investment in Idaho's recreation-based economy" and cited programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as

important to preserving and increasing public access to natural areas. LWCF have been used in Caribou County to conserve the natural rural landscape. Rural communities that conserve and build upon these natural and historic resources will be better positioned to enhance quality of life for their residents (Partnership for Sustainable Communities 2011).

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts on visual resources, recreation, wetlands, wildlife, and socioeconomic resources are not minor. Once a ROW is secured additional development, including larger and/or more transmission lines, could occur in the foreseeable future, especially since BPA has not included any "non-wires" measures (e.g., energy conservation) to address energy use and reliability. BPA dismisses energy conservation entirely as only a short-term solution, rather than incorporating it into a long-term sustainable energy use plan. In addition, the proposed transmission line may accelerate cumulative impacts from other energy developments that potentially have negative environmental impacts such as geothermal and wind energy. Both geothermal and wind energy have been proposed for exploration in the region. Although I generally support renewable energy sources, they can have negative environmental impacts that need to be evaluated. Therefore, analysis of cumulative impacts of the proposed ROW should include potential cumulative expansion and/or increased infrastructure development to transmit increased energy resulting from these foreseeable actions.

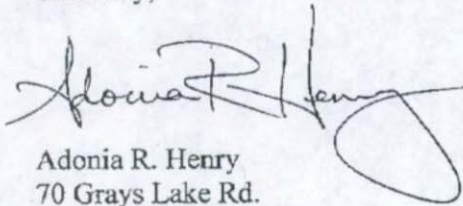
In Summary

As described above, the increased impacts that result from the north alternative need to be more thoroughly and accurately described so that 1) BPA can make more informed decisions and 2) local residents, visitors to the region, the general public, and local, state, and federal agencies can evaluate the impacts of all feasible alternatives.

Because the Draft EIS does not address all feasible alternatives, does not accurately present resources and detailed mitigation actions for the public to comment on, and does not included a preferred alternative, BPA should prepare a supplemental draft EIS according to § 1021.314 before a final EIS is published.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Adonia R. Henry
70 Grays Lake Rd.
Wayan, ID 83285

Enclosure: References cited in this comment letter

References cited in this comment letter:

- Avian Power Line Interaction Committee. 2012. Reducing avian collisions with powerlines: the state of the art in 2012. Edison Electric Institute, Washington, D.C., USA.
- Hall, K. L. 2013. Out of sight, out of mind, 2012: an updated study on the undergrounding of overhead power lines. Edison Electric Institute, Washington, D.C., USA.
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- Partnership for Sustainable Communities. 2011. Supporting sustainable rural communities. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, and Environmental Protection Agency, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC., available on-line at http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/pdf/Supporting_Sustainable_Rural_Communities_FINAL.PDF.
- Rulison, L. 2013. \$2B Quebec power line advances. Times Union, 18 April 2013, available on-line at <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Quebec-to-NYC-transmission-line-gets-thumbs-up-4445248.php/>.
- Wendland, K. and J. O’Laughlin 2013. Economic contribution of Idaho’s natural resources. Policy Analysis Group Fact Sheet #7, University of Idaho, College of Natural Resources, Moscow, ID.

April 10, 2013

PLEASE HAVE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES LOOK AT:

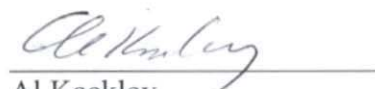
At the April 3, 2013 meeting in Soda Springs Trent Clark, of Monsanto, gave testimony that the BPA would not be liable for any contamination from selenium as the building of the transmission line would not move any phosphate rock.

In the Draft EIS Volume 1, paragraph 3.5.3, page 3-103 it is written: Similar to the North Alternative, geotechnical investigation, including exploratory borings, would be conducted prior to construction of the South Alternative to ensure that excavation would not be deep enough to contact phosphate rock. Therefore, there would be little to no potential for release of selenium during project construction (see Section 3.13, Public Health and Safety).

Based on the above no justification or need for the North Alternative can be based on any issue of pollution by selenium caused by construction in the South Alternative.

I HAVE THESE OTHER COMMENTS:

The North Alternative would create a new transmission corridor resulting in degradation of the environment and lands. The South Alternative passes through lands with existing transmission corridors and the land has been impacted by mining activity. There does not appear to be any organized opposition to the South Alternative while the landholders opposed to the North Alternative are organized and there could be possible court action taken holding up or preventing construction of the transmission line if this alternative is selected.


Al Kackley



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Eastern Idaho Field Office
4425 Burley Dr., Suite A
Chubbuck, Idaho 83202
Telephone (208) 237-6975
<http://IdahoEIS.fws.gov>



HSTP13 0020

In Reply Refer To: 01EIFW00-2013-CPA-0058

April 22, 2013

Erich Orth, Project Manager
Bonneville Power Administration
Public Affairs Office
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, Oregon 97293-4428

Subject: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Project

Dear Mr. Orth:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), dated March 2013, for the proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Project (project). The proposed project is located northeast of the city of Soda Springs, Caribou County, Idaho. The northern alternative of the proposed project is approximately a mile south of Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR; Refuge). Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) would need to issue right-of-way (ROW) grants authorizing the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed project. We provide comments here on behalf of Gray's Lake NWR and the Eastern Idaho Field Office.

The primary concern and mandate of the Service is the protection of public fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The Service has legal responsibility for the welfare of migratory birds, anadromous fish, and endangered animals and plants occurring in the United States. As such, we are responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*); the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668); the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712); and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 661-667e). In addition, we administer approximately 150 million acres of public land in the National Wildlife Refuge System, pursuant to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997.

Based on our review of the DEIS we offer comments on four categories of concern: (1) potential project impacts to sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*), trumpeter swans (*Cygnus buccinator*), and other migratory birds, and the need to better identify a strategy for avoidance, minimization, and compensation for those impacts; (2) a comparison of the potential biological consequences

associated with the two proposed routes; (3) the adequacy of the level of detail of analysis of impacts presented in the DEIS; and (4) general comments on proposed project actions and potential impacts. Our specific comments, concerns, and recommendations are identified below.

IMPACTS TO MIGRATORY BIRDS

Both alternatives of the proposed project cross important breeding, wintering, and migratory habitats for migratory birds. The area around Gray's Lake NWR and Blackfoot Reservoir are of particular importance to sandhill cranes and trumpeter swans, both of which are highly prone to collisions with power lines because of their long legs, large body size, wing shape, tendency to flock, and flight characteristics (Bevanger 1998, APLIC 2012, Morkill and Anderson 1991). Gray's Lake NWR hosts the largest breeding population of nesting greater sandhill cranes in North America. Annually, approximately 700 sandhill cranes, including 200 to 250 breeding pairs, use shallow flooded wetlands at Gray's Lake NWR and the surrounding areas within in valley, including seasonally flooded meadows approximately a half mile from the proposed northern alternative. As many as 3,000 migratory sandhill cranes use the area within the Grays Lake basin, proximate to the identified northern alternative, as they stage for the migration to wintering areas. Farther south, anywhere from several hundred to a few thousand cranes may use the area near Woodall Springs and the proposed southern alternative in the fall, when they come to feed in nearby grain fields prior to migrating south for the winter. Some of these cranes feed at the grain fields during the day and travel north to roost at the Blackfoot Reservoir each evening. These daily movements cross the proposed project area. Given that the probability of collisions increases when birds cross a transmission line area frequently (APLIC 2012), it is concerning that both alternatives bisect the area between the grain fields and wetlands used by cranes.

In addition, the proposed project is in close proximity to areas where young cranes fly as part of daily movements to feeding and roosting areas near the Refuge, Blackfoot Reservoir, and Woodall Springs. Younger birds are known to be less agile fliers, with a correspondingly lower ability to maneuver to avoid power lines (Crowder 2000, APLIC 2012). Although a larger percentage of the northern alternative is in close proximity to short cover wetlands and grain fields used by cranes, both alternatives could have a potentially large impact on the local population of cranes.

The DEIS does not take into account the effects of the proposed transmission line on ongoing efforts to alleviate sandhill crane depredation of crops in the area. For several years participating landowners have agreed to let cranes use portions of their fields in return for payment from an endowment set up through the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It is imperative that the proposed action not limit the effectiveness of ongoing actions to minimize crop depredation by cranes or cause additive mortality from collisions to cranes currently being managed or hunted in the depredation area. We suggest BPA develop a coordinated strategy to assure the transmission line route does not conflict with the management goals of lure crop plantings or IDFG-managed hunting locations, and that crane strikes do not increase within proximity to lure crop plantings.

Trumpeter swans also use the area surrounding Blackfoot Reservoir. Approximately one third of the adult trumpeter swans in Idaho use Gray's Lake NWR, including for nesting. Approximately

two to 20 swans from the Fivemile Meadows Complex may winter and travel throughout the area, to Woodall Springs (just east of both alternatives), Blackfoot Reservoir, and Gray's Lake NWR. Tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) also occasionally pass through the area. Because swans generally travel parallel to the proposed transmission line, collision risk is likely lower than for sandhill cranes. However, risk still exists, as the majority of flights in the area are daily movements at low flight heights.

Numerous American white pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) use the south end of the Blackfoot Reservoir, in close proximity to both alternatives. Pelicans are also prone to transmission line collisions.

Finally, numerous species of waterfowl use the seasonal wetlands and sedge flats at Goose Lake, west of Gray's Lake NWR. These wetlands attract hundreds of waterbirds and provide vitally important seasonal waterfowl staging areas during spring migration. The proposed northern alternative passes through and immediately adjacent to these wetlands. Waterfowl tend to have high wing loading (small wings), and therefore have limited flight maneuverability, or ability to avoid unseen obstacles such as the shield wires on power lines. Consequently, it is reasonable to anticipate a seasonal high probability of waterfowl collisions along the northern alternative.

Section 3.7: Although the DEIS mentions cranes and swans, it does not quantify the extent of bird use of the area (including the exceptionally large number of cranes that use Gray's Lake NWR) or describe patterns of bird use and behavior, as they relate to the risk posed by the proposed project. The DEIS also does not describe waterfowl use. Please include such discussion in subsequent NEPA analysis for the project. Please also describe resultant population impacts expected from the proposed action.

The DEIS describes applying an avian collision model (Heck 2007) to the northern alternative. We would recommend applying the same model to the southern alternative, and using it to compare the two alternatives in a similar way to how collision risk was compared across different sections of the northern alternative. The Service would be interested in seeing the modeling output. Further, we would encourage BPA to include in the Final EIS (FEIS) graphic and written descriptions of model outputs and how they inform selection of a preferred alternative or any micrositing done along the proposed power line route.

The collision risk model is based on site-specific application of a number of factors that contribute to overall risk (Heck 2007). In subsequent NEPA analysis, please discuss those factors, as well as the additional ones identified in APLIC 2012, and how they apply to each of the proposed alternatives.

Transmission lines provide perches for common ravens (*Corvus corvax*) and raptors, species that commonly predate on other birds or their eggs. Infrastructure facilitates expansion of raven populations into areas where they were previously absent or in low abundance. Ball (2003) noted that most crane nests at Grays Lake are lost to predators and recent nest success witnessed from 1997-2000 was much lower as compared to Steel (1952) and Drewien (1973). Researchers attributed this at least in part to changes in the predator community, most likely increased raven and coyote populations (Austin 2007). Sandhill cranes, geese, and long-billed curlews

(*Numenius americanus*) that nest on the Refuge are large birds that nest relatively early, before wetland vegetation has grown tall enough to provide shelter. They thus are quite conspicuous to predators while sitting on their nests. Currently, there are few perches along the proposed northern alternative. Fencing is limited on the Refuge, and there are no existing transmission lines and few distribution lines. Increasing the availability of perches in the vicinity of wetland complexes with nesting birds may negatively impact the nesting success of birds on the Refuge and surrounding lands. Please discuss in subsequent NEPA analysis the impacts associated with the proposed line as a perch for predators.

Under both alternatives, the proposed action would include construction of new access roads in order to construct and maintain the proposed transmission line. In many cases, these roads are difficult to close to subsequent public use, despite use of gates, boulders, or other barriers. As acknowledged in section 3.2, roads increase human access, including illegal use by people on ATVs. Increased access can disturb nesting birds, displace wildlife, lead to illegal take, or cause other issues. Please address in the wildlife section of subsequent NEPA analysis the wildlife impacts of new road construction and potential increased human activity in the area, compared to baseline conditions.

To minimize bird collisions and electrocutions, we encourage BPA to implement the 2012 APLIC guidelines, which reflect the current best available scientific information about injury or death of birds from electrocution by and collision with power lines, instead of older versions of the guidelines, as described in the DEIS.

In addition to implementing the APLIC guidelines, we recommend revising the mitigation measures proposed in the DEIS to be more specific. As stands, many are too vague to understand what will be implemented on the ground or their effectiveness in avoiding and minimizing impacts to resources. Where these measures pertain to Federal trust resources, including migratory birds and their habitats, we would be happy to assist BPA develop appropriately-specific best management practices and mitigation measures for inclusion in the FEIS.

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Section 3.7: As discussed above with regard to avian impacts and as reflected in Table 3-19 of the DEIS, commonalities exist in the anticipated resource impacts of the two alternatives. However, we have some concerns about resource impacts unique to each alternative that were not well reflected in the DEIS.

First, the northern alternative passes within approximately a mile of Gray's Lake NWR. Gray's Lake was established in 1965 to protect and restore habitat for ducks, geese, and other species. It includes the largest hard bulrush marsh in the world, and hosts the largest population of nesting sandhill cranes in the world. The Refuge is surrounded by seasonal wetlands managed by BLM, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and private landowners that provide additional habitat for migratory and nesting waterfowl, cranes, swans, and other avian species. The northern alternative also crosses private lands of high resource value near Blackfoot Reservoir and Goose Lake. The northern alternative transmission line would be in close proximity to two globally

recognized Audubon Society Important Bird Areas (IBA), designated at Gray's Lake NWR and the Blackfoot Reservoir because of the value of local habitats to cranes and other avian species. We are concerned this juxtaposition would place large numbers of birds at high risk for being injured or killed by colliding with the proposed transmission line. Please thoroughly address potential impacts to the avian populations that use the Refuge and surrounding lands.

In addition to potential avian impacts, the northern alternative would impact wetlands and more than four times as much aspen-dominated vegetation as the southern alternative. These two communities provide disproportionately high resource value to wildlife. Numerous species, including migratory birds, elk, deer, and bears use aspen riparian areas for forage and shelter. Wetlands provide important habitat for waterfowl, cranes, swans, and other avian species. Although the DEIS describes impacts to vegetation in section 3.4, it does not discuss in section 3.7 the corresponding impacts to wildlife. Please describe the wildlife impacts that would result from clearing aspen and riparian vegetation, including the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation. Please discuss effects anticipated from filling wetlands to install the proposed project, including hydrologic effects to the surrounding area, and resultant potential impacts to the resources available for wildlife use. Finally, please describe any possibility for micrositing of the transmission line along the northern alternative to avoid and minimize impacts to aspen and wetland vegetation.

Finally, the northern alternative would cross farmland enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP program is designed to encourage uses of environmentally sensitive land that have conservation benefits. Please discuss current agricultural practices on the CRP land along the northern alternative and any existing associated wildlife benefits. Please discuss the wildlife impacts that could result from construction of the proposed project across lands intended for conservation. We recommend including in this discussion the impacts of access road construction, vegetation clearance (if any), and potential for avian collisions.

In contrast, much of the southern alternative crosses land already subject to disturbance. The portion of the southern alternative that runs east-west is largely within a corridor of existing linear disturbances. Currently there are multiple distribution lines, a transmission line, paved roads, and the railway and multiple haul roads that serve the surrounding mines. Fragmentation, especially by linear features, is a major concern for many wildlife species. Co-locating linear disturbances, such as the proposed project, is an effective way to minimize wildlife impacts. We strongly recommend BPA consider this when selecting a preferred alternative and when micrositing the proposed line.

The southern alternative does, however, pass near the mouth of the Blackfoot River narrows. While we do not have data on numbers of migratory birds that use that area, birds migrating through the area likely include pelicans, ducks, geese, and osprey. We recommend that BPA coordinate with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to assess use of the area by these species and include in subsequent NEPA analysis a discussion of potential impacts.

Based on the above, we suggest there are differences between the two action alternatives in impacts that could result from construction and maintenance of the proposed project, and recommend revising Table 3-19 of the DEIS to reflect those differences. In addition, we

recommend BPA consider these differences in impacts to vegetation and wildlife when selecting a preferred alternative.

ANALYSIS IN THE DEIS

Sections 3.1 & 3.7: We understand that at least one option under consideration for the southern alternative would cross a Wildlife Management Area (WMA) administered by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). Ownership of the WMA is split between IDFG and the Idaho Department of Lands. Section 3.1 of the DEIS briefly mentions state lands on the southern alternative, but does not identify where those lands are or identify the WMA. As acknowledged in section 3.2, the WMA is administered to provide for public recreation, to improve Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii bouvieri*) habitat, and to provide upland and riparian habitat for the benefit of wildlife, including wintering elk, deer, and moose. Construction of new roads and infrastructure as part of the southern alternative likely would impact the resource values the WMA is designed to protect. Consequently, we encourage BPA to explicitly address impacts to the WMA and the wildlife that uses it in the land use and wildlife sections of subsequent NEPA analysis.

The northeastern portion of the northern alternative crosses lands donated by the Kakley family in 2006 to the Idaho Foundation of Parks and Lands for preservation in perpetuity under a conservation easement. These lands provide habitat for sharp tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*), sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), sage sparrow (*Artemisiospiza belli*), Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), and other grassland and sagebrush species. Please address the easement in subsequent NEPA analysis, including an explanation of the proposed transmission line's compatibility with the terms of the conservation easement. Additionally, several Land Trusts, including the Teton Regional Land Trust and the Sagebrush Steppe Regional Land Trust have identified conservation values for protection within the proposed project area, particularly within the rural ranching lands of northern Caribou County. Please address how the conservation and wildlife values of private lands and the potential for conservation land acquisition, donation, or purchase of easements could be affected by the proposed northern alternative.

Section 3.16: Please include more specificity in the vegetation, wetlands, and wildlife subsections of the cumulative effects analysis. Please describe the differences in anticipated cumulative effects between the north and south alternatives. For example, please discuss in more detail cumulative impacts to wildlife from future mining activities in the southern alternative, particularly around the state WMA. In addition, please include in the cumulative effects section discussion of the likelihood of future transmission line upgrades to carry additional electricity, or reasonably foreseeable sources of other energy development that may wish to use transmission in the area.

Appendix F: The species list provided in the DEIS as species documented during project surveys seems improbable for the area. For example, Columbian ground squirrels (*Urocitellus columbianus*) are not otherwise known to occur in southeastern Idaho, yet are described as being present in "high" abundance. Additionally, hunting records and previous observations show mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) as significantly more abundant than white-tailed deer

(*Odocoileus virginianus*) in the project area, yet the species list identifies the former as moderately abundant and the latter as highly abundant. Please check that the correct species list is included in the FEIS.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Chapter 1: Please better define the purpose and need for the project. Please identify whether the proposed line is designed primarily to accommodate additional electrical demand, or to provide redundancy in the grid. If the former, please address associated cumulative effects, such as a future need to upgrade existing lines to carry the additional power, as well as any obligations to encourage energy efficiency strategies prior to or in concert with implementing additional infrastructure development. If the latter, please explain how the proposed project accomplishes the goal of increased transmission system reliability (i.e. the relationship between redundancy and reliability).

Section 3.3: The mission of the Service is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The unprecedented scale and complexity of biological and ecological challenges of the 21st century led the Service to develop a vision of Strategic Habitat Conservation (SHC), based on landscape-level planning for multiple resource values and partnerships (USFWS 2006). The SHC approach adopted by the Service establishes self-sustaining populations of fish and wildlife, in the context of landscape and system sustainability.

Pursuant to our mission and the framework of SHC, we recognize the value of providing for the needs and values of people when considering project impacts. As expressed by the public at the April 3, 2013, meeting in Soda Springs, visual impacts across the proposed northern alternative are of concern to local landowners and those who recreate in the area, including at Gray's Lake NWR. The northern alternative is not consistent with the rural and natural visual experience of the area, including Gray's Lake NWR. Please address in subsequent NEPA analysis the potential visual impacts of the northern alternative to Gray's Lake NWR. Pursuant to the SHC framework, we urge BPA to consider when selecting a preferred alternative the compatibility of the project with the overall rural and natural character of the landscape, including wildlife and visual resources.

SUMMARY COMMENTS

Executive Order 13186 (66 Fed. Reg. 3853, January 17, 2001), entitled "Responsibilities of Federal agencies to Protect Migratory Birds," directs Federal agencies to integrate migratory bird conservation practices into agency activities, and to promote the conservation of migratory bird populations and their habitats. Pursuant to this executive order, the Department of Energy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Service in 2006, which BPA also operates under. That MOU requires BPA to "avoid or minimize, to the extent practicable, adverse impacts on migratory bird trust resources when conducting agency actions." In addition, it compels BPA to "ensur[e] that migratory bird protection and conservation is considered in NEPA project reviews." In keeping with these obligations, we recommend BPA integrate the

additional analyses described above into subsequent NEPA analysis for the proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Line project.

Outside the framework of the EIS, we recommend that BPA prepare a Bird Conservation Strategy (BCS), in coordination with the Service. We recommend the BCS describe how the project complies with the MBTA and the DOE/FWS MOU described above. The BCS should outline measures that BPA would take to avoid, minimize, and compensate for impacts to avian species during all phases of the project. Given that either alternative of the proposed transmission line likely would pose a threat to migratory birds, we encourage BPA to coordinate with the Service on ways to “protect, restore, enhance, and manage habitats of migratory birds,” as agreed to in the MOU and as is being implemented on other transmission lines proposed for construction in Idaho and neighboring states.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed project. For further information or questions, please contact Nisa Marks of this office, at (208) 237-6232 extension 121, or William Smith of Gray’s Lake National Wildlife Refuge, at (208) 574-2755.

Sincerely,



David Kampwerth
Field Supervisor



Tracy Casselman
Refuge Project Leader

Cc:

Jim Mende, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Pocatello, Idaho
Jack Isaacs, United States Forest Service, Soda Springs, Idaho
Dave Pacioretty, Bureau of Land Management, Pocatello, Idaho
Earl Somsen, Caribou County, Soda Springs, Idaho

WORKS CITED

- Austin, J. E., J. R. Keough, and W. H. Pyle. 2003. *Effects of habitat management practices on plant cover types of uplands and wetlands at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, 1997-2000*. U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, Jamestown, ND. Final report to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service May 2003.
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- Steel, Paul E. 1952. *Factors affecting waterfowl production at Gray's Lake, Idaho*. M.S. thesis, Univ. Idaho.
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Proposed Hooper Springs Transmission Project

"I'd like to tell you . . ."

HSTP13 0021

Please have your environmental studies look at:

If northern route through Grays Lake there is possibility of migratory bird strikes, i.e., cranes, swans and whooping cranes. They are highly susceptible to wire strikes.

I have these other comments:

Extended costs of longer distance through the north Grays Lake route.

More private property transversed.

BPA should be able to get exemption from any Super Fund proper crossed.

Closer access to current mining operations

Please tell us your preference for receiving the draft EIS by selecting from the following:

- Compact disc (CD) of the EIS (2203)
- Printed copy of the EIS, approximately 755 pages (2204)
- Notification letter that provides the Web address for accessing the EIS online
 - by mail (2201)
 - by e-mail; please provide your e-mail address _____ (2202)
- Please remove my name from the mailing list for this EIS
- Please put me on your project mailing list. (You are already on the mailing list if you have received mailed notices.) (2201)

OFFICE OF ENERGY RESOURCES

C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER
Governor



304 N. 8th Street, Suite 250, P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0199

JOHN CHATBURN
Interim Administrator

HSTP13 0022

(208) 332-1660
FAX (208) 332-1661

April 26, 2013

Erich Orth
Project Manager
Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project EIS
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97293-4428

RE: Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Orth:

The state of Idaho appreciates the opportunity to comment on the project referenced above. Idaho's submission includes general statements as well as specific, project related comments regarding impacts to various resources and activities.

The Idaho Office of Energy Resources (OER) is located in the Executive Office of the Governor and serves as the state entity responsible for coordinating energy policy and planning development within the state of Idaho. Idaho supports the development of critical electrical infrastructure and the State encourages the project manager to move forward with the process for this project within the anticipated timeline.

While Idaho appreciates the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) efforts thus far in this process, we would like to register our strong objection to the fact that BPA did not designate a Preferred Alternative in the Draft EIS. BPA's decision to not designate a Preferred Alternative creates a strain on state agency and local government resources, as well as Idaho citizens, as they attempt to review the proposed routes.

General Comments

OER submits this material to assist the established process in making the appropriate determinations. It is also important to note that Idaho's overall best interest is served by balancing energy resource needs with land use, environmental impacts, and historic preservation considerations.

OER has been contacted by numerous residents of Caribou County and none of them believe the Hooper Springs line is necessary or beneficial. However, if the line is necessary, their nearly unanimous preference is for the southern route. It is incumbent on BPA to provide a thorough explanation of the need for this transmission line to the citizens in Caribou County.

OER objects to BPA's failure to disclose various alternatives in the Draft EIS. This includes BPA's consideration of the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area as alternative on the southern route. Understanding that BPA has certain time restrictions, OER believes that a complete and full discussion of all relevant options is necessary for high-quality decision-making. By not including this, and potentially other alternatives, interested stakeholders are limited in the amount of helpful feedback they can provide to BPA.

If any routing option selected by BPA crosses state land, there will be a need for BPA to work with the relevant state land authority as well as OER on appropriate site specific mitigation.

Specific Comments Related to Impacts on State Endowment Land

Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), at the direction of the Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners, manages the Endowment Trust Lands within the State. In December 2007, the Land Board adopted the *State Trust Lands Asset Management Plan* addressing the overall management of Endowment Lands within Idaho.

State Trust Lands are not managed for the public at large and should not be referred to as "public lands" or "open space," either specifically or in a generic sense. These are working lands producing revenue for the Beneficiary Institutions.

The South Alternative crosses state endowment trust land located in section 28 Township 7 South, Range 43 East, between markers 14 and 15. Option 3 and Option 4 are more direct routes, have fewer bearing changes, are shorter, and do not cross state endowment land. It is IDL's preference that this project avoids state endowment lands.

The North Alternative crosses state endowment trust land between markers 11 and 15. The Long Valley road option does not cross state endowment land. It is IDL's preference that this project avoids state endowment land.

Any routes that cross state endowment land must be located to minimize impact to the remainder of the parcel. A 20-year term easement would be the authorizing instrument issued to allow the project on trust land. Application for use can be obtained from any IDL office.

Comments Related to Wildlife Considerations

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), acting under the supervision of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission is the state agency charged with carrying out the statutory authority to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all fish and wildlife in Idaho (Idaho Code § 36-103(a)). IDFG's specific comments regarding impacts to wildlife are attached.

Again, the state of Idaho appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the Hooper Springs Transmission Line Project Draft EIS and we look forward to working with you as this process continues.

Sincerely,



John Chatburn, Interim Administrator
Idaho Office of Energy Resources



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
SOUTHEAST REGION
1345 Barton Road
Pocatello, Idaho 83204

C.L. "Butch" Otter / Governor
Virgil Moore / Director

Hooper Springs Transmission Project, DOE/DEIS - 0451
Idaho Department of Fish and Game Comments, April 23, 2013

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), acting under the supervision of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission is the state agency charged with carrying out the statutory authority to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all fish and wildlife in Idaho (Idaho Code§ 36-103(a)).

The IDFG does not support or oppose this proposal. The purpose of these comments is to assist the decision-making authority by providing technical information addressing potential effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat and on how adverse effects might be mitigated.

We previously submitted two comment letters on the 2006 proposed Caribou 138/115-kV Substation and Caribou Long Valley 115-kV Transmission Line (August 1, 2006 and September 13, 2006) and participated in a site visit on September 11, 2006. Those earlier comments remain valid as do our comments incorporated into the May 28, 2009 letter from Administrator Kjellander. We offer the following additional comments regarding the March 2013 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

We reiterate our past encouragement for any routing decisions to minimize effects to the visual and wildlife resources of Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA was acquired in 1995 and has been maintained since with the assistance from partners including Ducks Unlimited, The Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Trout Unlimited, and the North American Moose Foundation. The primary goals are to benefit aquatic and terrestrial wildlife through the improvement of vegetation communities, and to provide wildlife related public use opportunities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and viewing. We request continued consultation and early opportunity to work with BPA on minimization and mitigation if the preferred route is to cross the WMA.

Increases in motorized access due to construction or maintenance may lead to reduction in big game security. Measures to ensure there is no significant increase in motorized disturbance, once the project is complete, are strongly recommended. We recommend installation and maintenance of the selected route without constructing additional roads that might lead to additional authorized or unauthorized travel by using track vehicle or helicopter access. However, if temporary roads are necessary, they should be properly reclaimed to prevent unauthorized access as well as preclude noxious weeds. Female elk and mule deer are particularly sensitive to disturbance during calving and fawning and we request a construction window that avoids activity during the critical period from late May to late June. We are particularly concerned with the reach for the South Alternative from Dry Valley to Upper Valley, which has been identified as an elk calving area by recent radio-telemetry studies. Currently this area has no

Keeping Idaho's Wildlife Heritage

BPA Hooper Springs Transmission Project Supplemental Draft EIS
Comments and Responses to the Draft EIS

U.S. Forest Service identified roads or trails.

IDFG has identified aspen as an important direct and indirect habitat component for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species. We are particularly aware of the benefits of aspen habitats to mule deer and elk for annual recruitment. Our current Mule Deer Initiative focuses on fawning habitat and overall forage production associated with aspen stands. The positive impacts of healthy aspen communities on watersheds also benefits fisheries. Where possible, aspen community disruption should be avoided and disturbed aspen communities should be regenerated or mitigated.

Large numbers of mule deer annually migrate from the north end of the Aspen Range/Wood Canyon higher elevations, across the valley to winter in Soda Hills and the Ninety Percent range. This migration corridor includes the area partially occupied by the Monsanto Soda Springs Phosphorous Plant and the PacifiCorp Substation. Although the proposed Hooper Springs Substation would cover a relatively small area (5.4 acres), the perimeter fencing (page 2-1) would impede mule deer movement through this area. We request actions to reduce and or mitigate potential impacts in consultation with our regional staff.

The timing of construction and maintenance activity could have adverse impacts on nesting raptors. At risk species such as bald eagle, great gray owl, northern goshawk, and peregrine falcon are known to occur in the area. There have been two confirmed great gray owl nesting territories along Rasmussen Ridge and numerous additional sightings throughout the area of the alternative routes. Additional surveys should be conducted to determine the extent of breeding raptors in the area of all alternatives and disturbance during the breeding through fledging periods should be avoided.

The Blackfoot River/Reservoir (North and South Alternatives), Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge (North Alternative), and Woodall Lakes (South Alternative) all involve heavily used flight corridors for a variety of birds. Bird use includes migratory birds such as ducks, geese, American white pelican, sandhill crane and trumpeter swans. Raptors include bald eagle and peregrine falcons and upland game birds include sharp-tailed grouse and greater sage-grouse. Many of these species are categorized as sensitive by federal agencies or Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by Idaho and we believe the DEIS would be strengthened by reflecting Idaho's SGCN conservation status for these species (<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/wildlife/cwcs/>).

Our August 1, 2006 comment letter referenced adherence to an Avian Protection Plan (APP) and the Avian Power line Interaction Committee (APLIC) guidelines during this project. The DEIS is unclear as to whether the reference to APLIC indicates an adoption of both the APP and the APLIC guidelines, which should be clarified. We strongly encourage BPA to use widely recognized, contemporary methods to reduce powerline collisions, particularly important for the northern alternative. Bird strike diverters should be installed according to recommended protocol and their effectiveness should be monitored and reported with modifications deployed as needed.

As pointed out in the DEIS, greater sage-grouse have been designated as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act. It is unclear from the DEIS whether a sage-grouse lek was “observed” or “discovered” adjacent to the South Alternative (P. 3-135, Appendix G-3). If a lek has been confirmed in the vicinity of the eastern end of the South Alternative, it is significant so we request clarification of the lek reference. Generally historic leks scattered along the Blackfoot River corridor above Blackfoot Reservoir have declined over the past forty years. In 1973 five leks were determined active. In 1999 there were three known active leks. As of 2012, only one active lek has been confirmed upstream of Highway 34. The BLM and USFS are currently developing sage-grouse conservation measures to incorporate into land use plans (National Greater Sage-grouse Land Use Planning Strategy). In September 2012, Governor Otter submitted an Idaho Alternative to be incorporated into that strategy. Both the federal and state strategies designate greater sage-grouse habitat in the vicinity of the upper Blackfoot River as “general”, as opposed to “important” or “core” habitat. The Idaho Alternative addresses stabilization of habitats and populations and states that wildfire, invasive species, and infrastructure are the primary threats to sage-grouse in Idaho, and points to focused management of these issues in general habitat in part as a buffer to encroachment of these effects to core and important habitats. Cumulative effects of infrastructure such as the proposed Southern Alternative may be having a significant impact on local populations and it is important to ensure that local population effects do not diminish range-wide population status and trend. While non-forested habitat in the area may be abundant, sage-brush habitat suitable for greater sage-grouse may not be sufficient to support local populations. The Idaho Alternative provides additional detail about management focus in general habitat.

Both greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse are known to occur in the area of both alternatives. In addition to the concerns with avian collision addressed above, appropriate methods should be employed to avoid providing additional perch or nesting sites for predators of greater-sage grouse.

The following are comments specific to information provided in the DEIS:

It is difficult to assess the utility of the avian collision model (Heck 2007) used to analyze the collision potential along the North Alternative and we question why a model that is not commonly found in the literature was used; providing the rationale for use of this model rather than other published models would strengthen the DEIS. To allow for our evaluation of this model, please provide information as to where and how the model has been previously applied and the specific inputs used in this application. If the methodology is acceptable, we suggest that the avian collision model also be used to assess the Southern Alternative to adequately compare the two alternatives.

Appendix F (Wildlife Species Documented Within the Project During Wildlife and Vegetation Surveys) appears to contain errors. Columbian ground squirrels have not been documented in southeast Idaho. The common ground squirrel in the project area is the Uinta ground squirrel. White-tailed deer occurrence in the project area is known to be very low while mule deer abundance would be considered high. Harvest data and recent surveys suggest black bear numbers are relatively low in the project area. Based on our recent surveys, northern leopard frog numbers would be considered moderate to low. Clarification of the methods employed to

obtain abundance and species identification is requested.

At the elevations of the project, we recommend that project activity be curtailed until mid-May (not “the beginning of May” – Table 2.4, p. 2-50) to protect greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse leks.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding this project. Please contact Jim Mende or Paul Wackenhut at 232-4703 if you have any further questions about technical issues we have raised.



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

SOUTHEAST REGION
1345 Barton Road
Pocatello, Idaho 83204

James E. Risch / Governor
Steven M. Huffaker / Director

September 13, 2006

Mark Korsness, Project Manager
Bonneville Power Administration, Public Affairs Office – DKC – 7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97293-4428

**RE: Proposed Caribou 138/115-kV Substation and Caribou-Lower Valley 115-kV
Transmission Line – Mill Canyon portion**

Dear Mark:

Paul Wackenhut of our regional staff attended a meeting and field tour regarding the eastern portion of this proposed transmission line on Monday, September 11, and has reported back to me on his assessment of the possible alternatives. Given our understanding that this general routing of the transmission line up the Blackfoot River corridor is the only practical choice, we offer these follow up comments.

In our letter on July 12, 2006, we expressed our desire that this portion of the line avoid the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and what we consider to be some important wildlife habitat on the WMA and Caribou-Targhee National Forest lands. At that time we were not fully aware of limitations on the route selection posed by severity of the slope on the west side of Dry Ridge. Because that steep face necessitates approaching the ridge at a saddle overlooking the mid-point of Mill Canyon, and because any route down the Mosquito Creek drainage would involve more vegetation alteration and maintenance (disturbance) of the corridor, we no longer see an advantage to pursuing a route down Mosquito Creek. The saddle that the line will approach and cross over is along the southern edge of the unroaded and secluded refugia that we were hoping to protect. Once the disturbance reaches that point, any route that impacts more habitat in the short term or long term is not logical. We agree that following down along the less vegetated Mill Canyon proper, either on the open south-facing slope, or along the road on the north-facing slope, makes more sense for minimizing impacts to wildlife.

We appreciate efforts to keep the line as far away from the WMA property as possible, and particularly routing that prevents visual impacts from the river valley in the middle of the WMA. We feel it is important that the line be installed and maintained in this reach (from Dry Valley to Upper Valley) without construction of additional roads that might lead to additional authorized or unauthorized travel. We stand by all recommendations in the July 12 letter referring to guidelines in the Avian Protection Plan, wildlife sightings, needed surveys, and critical wildlife activity periods. As stated previously, bird avoidance devices should be utilized and we would encourage

any possible steps to minimize sight distances within the cleared corridor through timber. Avoiding long straight stretches where possible, minimizing the width of the corridor, and removal of only taller vegetation all would help maintain the security values for big game and other wildlife.

Again, we appreciate the BPA's efforts to solicit input regarding these projects. Please contact Jim Mende or Paul Wackenhut at 232-4703 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,



Mark Gamblin
Regional Supervisor

MG/PW/JM

Cc: Darren Olsen, Soda Springs Ranger Dist., USFS
Damien Miller, USFWS
Bob Bramer, IDL
NRPB

Email: Carl Anderson, Brandon Chamberlin, Tom Maeder, IDFG



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

1345 Barton Rd.
Pocatello, ID 83204

James E. Risch / Governor
Steve Huffaker / Director

August 1, 2006

Mark Korsness, Project Manager
Bonneville Power Administration, Public Affairs Office – DKC – 7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97293-4428

**RE: Proposed Caribou 138/115-kV Substation and Caribou-Lower Valley 115-kV
Transmission Line**

Dear Mark:

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), acting under the supervision of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission is charged with carrying out the statutory policy to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all fish and wildlife and will advocate for fish and wildlife to receive equal treatment with all other resources in land and water management decisions (Idaho Code § 36-103(a)). In this charge Southeast Region personnel have considered your request for available information and offer the following comment:

We have no particular concerns with the construction of the proposed substation though we have little information on the detail of the project. Our observation is that substations typically encompass fairly insignificant acreages. However, the general area of the site is heavily traversed by mule deer in the early winter and late spring migrating to and from the Soda Hills wintering area. This migration corridor is already heavily impacted by Highway 34, county roads, railroad lines, residential housing and the Monsanto phosphate production plant. Any further impediments should be avoided or mitigated by improving passage through this bottleneck area. Both the substation and the proposed transmission line should be constructed to be 'avian safe' according to guidelines of the Avian Protection Plan (APP) and the Avian Powerline Interaction Committee (APLIC).

Regarding the Caribou-Lower Valley transmission line we have some concerns with the routing of the line. It is well documented that power lines create hazards for wildlife directly through collisions and electrocution. Construction details should follow guidelines according to the APP and APLIC as above (see Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Powerlines and Mitigating Bird Collisions With Powerlines). More indirectly, power lines and the associated roads, vegetation removal and visual effects may alter daily and seasonal use by a variety of wildlife. Security for big game during fawning/calving and especially hunting seasons may be affected significantly by increased sight distances. This is especially true at the easterly extent of the proposed transmission line route where it traverses Dry Ridge. This area adjacent to the

Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is heavily used by deer and elk through the spring, summer and fall. Of 25 cow elk radio-collared in the Soda Hills winter range complex (winter '05-'06), six were recently relocated in this vicinity just south of the WMA and have likely calved in the area. Sage and sharp-tailed grouse (both listed as 'species of greatest conservation need' – Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, 2005) have been sighted on the WMA in recent years. Mill Canyon Creek and other minor tributaries to the Blackfoot River and Diamond Creek are occupied by Yellowstone cutthroat trout (also a 'species of greatest conservation need') and are potential spawning streams for that species. In 2004 a great grey owl was sighted in the timbered habitat at the south end of the WMA and there is a possibility of a nest site in the vicinity. Other nesting territories of great grey owl have been identified to the north and south of this location. There is limited motorized access and therefore limited disturbance to this portion of the WMA and adjacent Forest Service (USFS) land. It would be preferable to maintain this refuge situation and keep the existing habitat in tact. For aesthetic values, we would prefer that the transmission line not be visible from any portion of the WMA.

We recommend that the transmission line be routed as far south of the WMA as possible while still avoiding the Inventoried Roadless Area (Dry Ridge) on the USFS. The line should avoid Mill Canyon in section 21, and instead, after crossing Dry Ridge should follow a course due east or southeast into the next drainage to the south. This drainage seems to be unnamed but may have been referred to as Mosquito Creek on the May 17 field tour. The drainage has a road and open to motorized vehicles 'less than 50" in width' on several trails according to the current USFS Travel Plan Revision. Impacts to wildlife habitat would be lessened in this drainage that already has a road and is disturbed.

Surveys should be conducted in the spring and fall to determine the extent of the mule deer migration in the proximity of the proposed substation. Raptor populations should be monitored throughout the year to determine level of use and possible hazards from collision and electrocution in the vicinity of the substation and the transmission line. In the vicinity of timbered sections and particularly the area of Dry Ridge, a concerted effort should be made to locate nest sites of forest raptors such as owls and goshawks so nesting sites are avoided. On the ridgeline itself and adjacent to any wetland areas, bird avoidance devices should be considered to lessen chances of collisions especially during seasonal migrations. Work to install the transmission line in the Dry Ridge vicinity should occur outside of calving, fawning, and fledging periods from late May through early August. We would recommend that no new roads/trails be constructed for the placement or maintenance of the line (as per the intent expressed on the May 17 tour) and mountain brush communities should be preserved to the extent possible. If possible, any timber removal should favor the enhancement of aspen communities.

We appreciate the BPA's efforts to solicit input regarding these projects and thank you for giving the Idaho Department of Fish and Game this opportunity to provide information regarding fish and wildlife concerns. Please contact Jim Mende at 232-4703 if you have any further questions.

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April 5, 2013

Certified Return Mail

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)
Hooper Springs Transmission Project
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, Oregon 97293

RECEIVED
MAY 7, 2013

HSTP13 0024

Subject: Hooper Springs Transmission Project
ref.: South Alternative

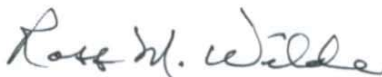
To Whom,

This letter is in reference to BPA's proposed transmission project's South Alternative and the effect and impact this specific route alternative will have pursuant to the farm and ranch property owned by the Mark J. & Beth Carter Family.

Accompanying this letter are copies of three Aerial Photomaps showing pole and transmission line locations which were presented by BPA at the April 3, 2013 meeting held in Soda Springs, Idaho; ref. Sheets 13, 14, and 15: 4/1/13. At this meeting, Ross Wilde (Carter Family representative) reviewed and discussed these maps with various BPA members of staff. Ross expressed some of the Carter Family concerns and discussed the previous farming history that is visibly obvious. Given the route and pole locations as drawn on these three maps it appears the Carter Family could accept this plan. Of concern is the initial and extended impact to the ranch's homestead which is located close to the power line.

The Carter Family owns two full sections (640 acres ea.) of property that would be effected by the line route as shown on the Aerial Photomaps. The East section would have one pole in the S/E corner of the section and the West section would have four poles in the S/W corner of that section near the homestead. Considering the variety of agricultural options and potential with the land and water, any other route option or pole location effecting these two sections of Carter property is not acceptable and will be adamantly opposed.

Respectfully,



Ross Wilde, Family Representative



Beth Carter, Family Trustee

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PUBLIC HEARING, SODA SPRINGS, IDAHO
HOOPER SPRINGS TRANSMISSION PROJECT
BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

April 3, 2013

Soda Springs High School

Transcription of Public Comment Session During Open House.

Rodney Felshaw
Court Reporter.

1 MR. LYNAM: Good evening. I'm Kurt Lynam. I'm
2 with BPA, their public affairs team.

3 We have a court reporter here who will be
4 capturing your comments tonight. He will capture your
5 comments and the comments that you make here during this
6 presentation, or afterwards, will actually become part of
7 the official record for the project. That's one of the
8 important things that BPA needs to do here tonight is to
9 listen to and hear what you have to say about this
10 project. So we're very serious about giving people lots
11 of different opportunities to comment and lots of
12 different ways to comment, based on how you're most
13 comfortable with.

14 Obviously you're here for the presentation.
15 Outside we've got a couple of different stations with
16 subject matter experts who are prepared to share specific
17 information with you based on what we know about the
18 project to date and to talk with you about your specific
19 questions or concerns on the project.

20 Just outside the library here we've got the
21 land and realty section. Back over towards the entrance
22 we've got NEPA, the National Environmental protection Act
23 station. They've got a simulation tool out there so they
24 can show you what the proposed power line would look like.
25 And then other on the far side of the entryway is the

1 engineering station. They'll be able to talk about things
2 like the project schedule, what the appearance of the
3 power line would look like, if it's built, and specific
4 issues like that. At the back of the entryway area
5 there's a place for refreshments. There's some cookies
6 and water and stuff. In the little hallway that goes off
7 the entry area are the restrooms.

8 For the presentation here tonight, when I get
9 done with this overview, Erich will give a short overview
10 and kind of a summary of the project. He'll talk about
11 the need for the project, possible routes, the process of
12 what will happen from today through the time when a
13 decision is made on the project.

14 We'll try and keep questions while he's
15 talking to a minimum. I want to cap his time on the stage
16 to about 20 minutes. The rest of the time I want to
17 allocate for those of you who have taken your time to come
18 to this meeting today to have a chance to share your
19 comments. When I recognize you -- I'll kind of facilitate
20 the process. I'll ask you to stand up, state your name,
21 make your comment. And in this public forum here,
22 depending on how many people want to comment, we may have
23 to cap the time for each comment somewhere in the three to
24 five minute range. But not to worry. We'll wrap this up
25 about 6:30. If those of you who want to make formal

1 comments don't really want to make a comment in front of
2 your friends or neighbors, or if your comment might take
3 longer, I'd like you to check in with my colleague in the
4 back of the room, Colleen. She's right back there in the
5 white blouse. Coleen will schedule you for some time with
6 our reporter. I think we'll probably have enough time
7 that if you have more in-depth comments you could probably
8 have about 10 minutes or so so that your comments will
9 become part of the record for the project.

10 That's the other thing I wanted to talk about
11 is how you can share your comments. Some people are not
12 shy about saying what they have to say in public. You can
13 comment now during the public meeting portion of the open
14 house. You could also speak with the reporter from 6:30
15 to 8:00. We have a comment table out in the entryway.
16 You can write your comments on one of our comment forms.
17 And if you would like some comment forms I have some spare
18 ones here. Those comments become part of the public
19 record.

20 We have a website that is listed in your
21 project orientation guide. I have about a dozen or so
22 here. There's instructions on how to comment online. You
23 can call BPA and give us your comments on the phone or fax
24 them to us.

25 Regardless of how you share your comments and

1 your feedback on the project, all of your comments become
2 part of the public record and they will be posted on the
3 project website.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When does the comment period
5 terminate?

6 MR. LYNAM: April 22. If it will take you -- if
7 you've got comments that you plan to submit and you think
8 it may take you longer than our comment deadline of April
9 22nd, please check in with me before the end of today's
10 meeting so that I know to expect your comments. They
11 might not make it in by the deadline otherwise.

12 But regardless, we will make sure that all of
13 the comments we receive are reflected in the official
14 project record. And you'll be able to review all of the
15 comments on the website probably within about a week of
16 the end of the comment period. So certainly I would think
17 by the end of April we'll have the comments posted.

18 If you have general questions about the
19 project based on Erich's presentation, feel free to ask
20 those in our public meeting here. If you have specific
21 comments that deal with your land or your business, or
22 something that is better dealt with by a subject matter
23 expert, I would ask you to take those comments to one of
24 our subject matter experts at the different stations
25 outside and that way we can provide a maximum amount of

1 time for people to share comments and feedback in the
2 meeting here.

3 Any questions about those kind of general
4 guidelines at this point?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm concerned. We have
6 people here who have had property in their families for a
7 hundred years. I don't think it's very fair to limit them
8 to a three to five minute presentation. I think you
9 should be prepared to stay here a little bit longer so
10 these people can be heard in a group audience that affects
11 them very much.

12 MR. LYNAM: That's a good perspective. I'd like to
13 throw that out for the rest of the group here. What do
14 you all think about that guideline of having people in
15 this public forum limit their comments to three to five
16 minutes? Do you think that's reasonable or would you
17 prefer a longer comment period even if it means staying
18 longer?

19 (General consensus agreed to longer.)

20 MR. LYNAM: We can certainly do that. I just want
21 to be sure that as I'm facilitating the process I don't
22 have one or two people that monopolize everyone else's
23 time. So can we agree on that ground rule? Okay. I'm
24 comfortable with that, then. Thank you. That's a good
25 point.

1 Any other questions or comments before we get
2 started with Erich's presentation?

3 All right. Thank you. Welcome. I really
4 appreciate the time that you all have invested to attend
5 our meeting tonight and I'm looking forward to a
6 productive and interesting conversation. So with no
7 further remarks on my part, Erich, over to you.

8 (Presentation by Mr. Orth not transcribed.)

9 MR. LYNAM: Okay. At this point Erich has given a
10 short and pretty high level overview of the project.
11 Really, our intent for the rest of this time here this
12 evening is to give you all who have taken your time to
13 attend a chance to share your comments.

14 Who would like to comment first? I would just
15 ask you to stand up and speak loud enough for the reporter
16 to hear what you are saying and make sure you identify
17 yourself so we know who said what when it becomes part of
18 the record.

19 MR. KACKLEY: I'm Al Kackely. I have some comments
20 about the easements and other thing. I may take a little
21 bit longer than three to five minutes. If I speak too
22 long just tell me to shut up and sit down.

23 One thing on the easement, "The north
24 alternative would require a 100 foot easement for the new
25 single-circuit 115 kV transmission line, a 150 foot wide

1 right-of-way for the new the 138 kV, and an additional 50
2 foot easement for access roads." This means a 150 to 200
3 foot easement that will be going across the property.

4 "Guy wires would generally be within the north
5 alternative right-of-way, and no further than 50 feet from
6 the right-of-way center line." This means that probably
7 they could also probably be outside of the right-of-way, I
8 would assume. This was taken from the draft EIS.

9 "Tall trees that grow outside of the
10 right-of-way that could fall into the line must be
11 removed." And then later on in this -- I have this by
12 page number. Later on in that page it says that "On
13 either side of the new corridor, danger trees that pose a
14 hazard to construction activities and reliable operation
15 of the transmission line would be removed." So the impact
16 on the land can be far outside the right-of-way.

17 "The north alternative would require the
18 permanent removal of approximately 110.6 acres of native
19 vegetation." I take that to mean clear cutting. "The
20 north alternative would result in the removal of 54.7 more
21 acres of forested vegetation compared to the south
22 alternative."

23 And then in the second volume of this impact
24 study there was a part called Need For Amendment. It
25 says, "The north alternative would impact approximately

1 38.8 acres of aspen-dominated forest." It is unknown if
2 this is in addition to the acres listed as 110.

3 The draft goes on to say, "Some impacts on
4 property values and salability might occur on an
5 individual basis as a result of a new transmission lane.
6 However, these impacts would be highly variable,
7 individualized, and unpredictable. Neither alternative is
8 expected to cause long-term, negative impacts on property
9 values along the proposed route or in the general
10 vicinity. Impacts unrelated to the project, along with
11 other general market factors, are already reflected in the
12 market value of properties in the area."

13 I was a licensed real estate broker in the
14 state of Arizona for 30 years and I can guarantee you that
15 a new transmission corridor through your property is going
16 to adversely impact your property. That statement there
17 can't be true and I didn't see a real estate appraiser
18 listed as having anything to do with this.

19 It goes on to say, "Visual Resources:
20 Overall, the western portion of both alternatives would
21 contribute incrementally, though in a relatively minor
22 way, to potential cumulative visual impacts in that area
23 due to their location in an already developed area
24 generally in the vicinity of existing transmission lines."

25 My comment on that, those transition lines are

1 the lines going around Wayan Loop Road that bring your
2 domestic electricity into your farms and ranches. Those
3 are good transmission lines. They do increase the value
4 of your property because you have electricity on your
5 property.

6 Going on and quoting again, "However, the
7 easement portions of both alternatives would pass through
8 more undeveloped areas and require new cleared
9 right-of-ways. These portions of both alternatives thus
10 would have the potential to have a relative high level of
11 contribution on cumulative visual impacts from vantage
12 points along the transmission line right-of-way."

13 Well, these impacts are going to be tremendous
14 compared to those little poles that you have going around
15 the loop road and in that area. This statement is just --
16 just has to be challenged.

17 And then it says, "All pictures in section
18 39.3. These pictures are small and of poor quality,
19 possibly from being printed. They give a false impression
20 of how the lines will appear. Figure 3.3 was taken
21 several hundred yards east of the Kackley Ranch gate. To
22 the north you can see the Crawford Ranch and Badger Noll.
23 The draft EIS states, 'Evidence of human presence along
24 this portion of Lanes Creek Road includes low fencing,
25 wooden utility lines and residential homes.'"

1 Well, I can tell you that there's no utility
2 lines visible from where this picture was taken. In the
3 1970's, when the Kackleys and the Crawfords contracted for
4 power, they paid to have the lines buried. To view the
5 lines along Highway 34 from the location you would need
6 field glasses and you can hardly see Highway 34. And I
7 know from firsthand experience that it's hard to see the
8 cars unless there's light flashing off the windshields.

9 "Figure 3-10 shows an existing non-BPA
10 transmission line in the north alternative corridor in a
11 similar configuration as the proposed steel single pole
12 structures. This transmission line is more closely
13 related to the south alternative than the north
14 alternative. It follows the Lanes Creek cutoff road that
15 BPA has identified as the south alternative."

16 I think we all know that when you turn and it
17 goes to the power station over there to where I call Tin
18 Cup.

19 "BPA would not permit any uses of the
20 transmission line right-of-ways that are unsafe or might
21 interfere with construction, operating or maintaining the
22 transmission facilities."

23 "The ability to have vegetation growing within
24 the north alternative right-of-way is a use that would be
25 reviewed by BPA to determine whether the use is safe, if

1 there is adequate clearance under the conductor, and
2 whether the use creates interference with the operation or
3 maintenance of the transmission facilities. If BPA
4 determines that the use is compatible, a written agreement
5 could be entered into between BPA and the landowner. Most
6 non-woody, low growing crops less than four feet high
7 could be grown safely under the transmission line.
8 However, shrubs, brush or other vegetation, such as
9 orchards," and I know you grow a lot of those out there,
10 "Christmas trees, all tall growing landscape or natural
11 vegetation would require a BPA review of special
12 consideration, but would not likely be allowed within the
13 right-of-way. Agricultural operations would not be
14 restricted, but certain precautions would be necessary.
15 For example, no object would be higher than 14 feet above
16 the ground within the right-of-way." That is when
17 irrigation pipes are moved, then should be kept low and
18 parallel to the ground. Ground elevation should not be
19 altered, such as piling of dirt within the right-of-way.
20 Irrigation spraying should not create a continuous stream
21 onto the conductors or structures. Fences should be
22 grounded. And the installation of underground pipes and
23 cables through the right-of-way would require coordination
24 with BPA to avoid interference with transmission line
25 grounding systems."

1 Lots and lots of restrictions on this
2 right-of-way, folks.

3 "Caribou National Forest Standards and
4 guidelines, guideline six: Avoid parallel corridors.
5 Consolidate facilities within existing energy corridors
6 where feasible."

7 And then they call it consistency. That's the
8 consistency with what BPA is considering here. "The
9 project would avoid parallel utility corridors." This
10 project should be built along the already existing
11 corridor that we know runs down the Lanes Creek cut off.

12 Next is the Gravel Creek right-of-way. "The
13 right-of-way and danger tree clearing would result in the
14 conversion of land cover on the property, which would not
15 be consistent with the existing management of this parcel
16 for wetland mitigation purposes; therefore, the
17 establishment of a new right-of-way across this area would
18 result in short term, high impact. BPA is currently
19 working with the United States Forest Service to further
20 avoid or minimize potential project-related impact on this
21 area." I think that we need to know the status of this
22 sooner than later.

23 "Upgrade of line or increase of corridor:
24 Electricity use in these has been increasing at a rate of
25 about three percent a year." This line will not have to

1 be -- the line will have to be increased or expanded in
2 about 34 years, meaning more right-of-way or that
3 something will have to happen there. And I assume that
4 they're going to try to parallel the right-of-ways.

5 MR. LYNAM: Excuse me, sir. We're at eight
6 minutes.

7 MR. KACKLEY: Is anybody complaining?

8 MR. LYNAM: I just wanted to check.

9 MR. KACKLEY: Okay. My mother told me to sit down
10 more than once.

11 "Public involvement: Verbal comments were
12 also submitted" -- this is from the draft still. "Verbal
13 comments were also submitted by multiple individuals and
14 organizations during the July 29th, 2010 public meeting."
15 This is the last meeting I could find in this document
16 that showed that there was a public meeting where input
17 was recorded. I know that I attended one meeting and I
18 know there was a meeting afterwards that my brother and
19 others that I've spoken to attended that has not been
20 mentioned in this document at all. And some very fine
21 concerns were raised at that meeting.

22 "The Pioneer Historic Byway: The north
23 alternative corridor crosses Highway 34 in seven
24 locations. The south alternative crosses Highway 34 in
25 one location. The sensitivity of local residents to the

1 visual impact of the project may be mitigated by exposure
2 to other existing transmission lines and associated
3 facilities and other dissonant features such as phosphate
4 mines already within the viewshed." That's their word.

5 "Local residents can be highly sensitive to
6 changes in the landscape that can be viewed from their
7 homes and neighborhoods.

8 "Drivers tend to be occupied with traffic and
9 navigation and are to a much lesser degree concerned with
10 off-road views. Passengers would have a greater occasion
11 for off-road views. The exception to this assessment is
12 scenic roads and byways, which are considered to provide
13 scenic value as part of the driving experience for drivers
14 as well as passengers."

15 The last page now. "The ability of a
16 landscape to absorb or incorporate alterations with
17 limited reductions in scenic integrity depends on the
18 landscape's character, complexity, and other environmental
19 factors. A new transmission line next to an existing line
20 provides less contrast, and therefore can be absorbed into
21 that landscape better than introducing a transmission line
22 as a new feature in an undeveloped area." Which this
23 project on the north alternative is going to do.

24 I've never seen an environmental impact study
25 before. I was shocked at the easements. And you're going

1 to get one bite at the apple when you give up the
2 easement. This will be on your land forever. I want to
3 just warn you, from all of these restrictions, make sure
4 that it's a big apple and that you get a damn big bite,
5 because there won't be any second bite. They have it when
6 they take that easement.

7 Thank you very much.

8 MR. LYNAM: Mr. Kackley, thank you for your
9 comments. I appreciate you being the lead off.

10 JIM SMITH: My name is Jim Smith. I wear a lot of
11 hats in this community, one of which starts in about 10
12 minutes so I'm sure I'll be done by then. My job, I work
13 at Monsanto. I'm not a spokesman for Monsanto. My job is
14 energy management procurement. Mr. Clark is the
15 spokesman.

16 BPA contractors met with us in regards to
17 accessing some of our property along the southern option.
18 Monsanto understands the difficulty of sometimes
19 permitting things. We will work with you in good faith to
20 allow you access to that property, provided when you pay
21 the bill on the last effort that we did. But we stand
22 willing to help you.

23 If I put on my school board hat I have a huge
24 problem with the project. Let me explain. You're right,
25 you do serve -- everybody who comes into our community is

1 expected to carry their fair share. As a school board
2 member, funding efforts for the community come from
3 property taxes that those people in the community that
4 come and live here bear.

5 My understanding of the EIS is that these are
6 exempt from property taxes. So in essence you come into
7 our community, you impact our community. You say you
8 benefit us and I would recognize that. I think the city
9 of Soda Springs is the only entity in Caribou County that
10 does buy BPA power. Everybody else buys it from somebody
11 else. So I can't say that you don't have an influence if
12 you live in city of Soda Springs. But clearly you're
13 impacting the whole county.

14 What do you give back for that impact? We
15 live here, we hunt here. We drive those roads for scenic
16 pleasure. We choose to live here for all of the good
17 things that we get, but now you're going to come in and
18 impact that. What do you give back?

19 The mines pay property taxes. They contribute
20 to our schools, they fund things. Even Artic Circle and
21 Subway have come in and helped with the schools and tried
22 to contribute in some way. And not only with property
23 taxes but with their contributions.

24 You're talking about coming in and spending a
25 couple of years of intense building. You'll impact our

1 area and then you'll be gone and what do you leave? That
2 is a big concern for me. I think you have an obligation
3 to leave something. You're going to be here, you'll be
4 part of the community. Those lines will be here forever.
5 What do you give back? That's a big concern.

6 From a personal side, taking the school board
7 hat off, this is the area that I drive in the summer to
8 relax, the northern route. I don't drive the southern
9 route. But that northern route is an area that is scenic
10 and is enjoyable to drive. I'm concerned about that and
11 the impact that will have.

12 I also read in your EIS that you're going to
13 cross some water fowl areas. One of the reasons we live
14 here is because we like to hunt and fish. When I read in
15 there that you're going to put some gadgets on the poles
16 and wires, and you'll cut down the mortality by 57 percent
17 of swans and cranes, I have a problem with that.
18 Particularly in some of these areas around Henry and other
19 areas, I think that's unacceptable. Not only do we have
20 trumpet swans and some endangered cranes in the area,
21 that's a big concern.

22 Even those gadgets you put on the wires don't
23 work all that well. Anybody who goes around Soda Creek
24 knows that those poles and wires that are there, even
25 though they have those types of things on them, we still

1 get a large mortality with ducks and geese and swans in
2 that area. I'm not saying that the company didn't work to
3 try not to do that, but I think you got to come up with a
4 better solution. A 57 percent reduction in mortality is
5 not that great a number, guys. There has to be something
6 better.

7 Again, I understand that we have to have poles
8 and wires to bring electricity. Clearly I think you'll
9 hear from the community that we prefer the southern route.
10 We prefer the shorter distance so as not to have the
11 impacts. Those are my comments.

12 MR. LYNAM: Thank you. We appreciate it. I think
13 in order we have Allen.

14 MR. CRAWFORD: I'm Allen Crawford. I look at 10
15 miles of wires and poles. That's what I see on this map.
16 One route, 32 miles, the other route 22 miles. I'm
17 concerned about the 10 miles difference of wire and poles.

18 Basically, you know, we've got to get
19 electricity where we need it to be able to meet customers
20 and stuff. You said we don't have a, I guess, higher line
21 than the other. We're looking at both of them as equal.
22 But one requires 10 extra miles of wire and poles. It
23 doesn't matter where you put it, that's going to impact.
24 It impacts the farmers and the ranchers, the
25 recreationists, the tourists, people traveling through our

1 area.

2 You know, basically Soda Springs is in an
3 industrial setting. We're used to seeing industrial stuff
4 here with the mines and stuff. Does that mean that we're
5 a community where we can just go ahead and add to that and
6 nobody will notice? The people that work out here, or the
7 people that work within the community, just like Jim said,
8 they're looking for opportunities to be able to get out,
9 hunt, fish, recreate out in the areas, travel from here to
10 Jackson or somewhere else. And they want to be able to
11 enjoy the scenery that's out there. We don't need 10
12 extra miles of wires and poles.

13 Basically I look at that as just wires and
14 poles that we just put out there because we want to. I
15 don't think we need 10 extra miles of wires and poles.

16 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Crawford. Yes, sir.

17 MR. OLORENSHAW: My name's Wade Olorenshaw. I'm at
18 1930 Ivans Road, Bancroft, Idaho.

19 I would speak on a general level first and
20 that is the license plates I see going out along Highway
21 34 are not just 3C from Idaho. I see a lot of out of
22 state plates. There's a lot of commerce that passes
23 through this town and I think it will be impacted by that
24 northern route particularly. Communities struggle as they
25 are in these days and we don't need that impact here

1 diminishing our community.

2 Mr. Kackley's comments on the easements and
3 the right-of-ways that will be granted and the impact on
4 the trees is just tremendous. I had no understanding that
5 it was going to be that wide and that invasive into the
6 surrounding properties.

7 With that in mind, I would speak of a personal
8 matter. I have a small four acre recreational property
9 out there, deeded to me from my grandfather. It's a
10 keepsake piece of property. In this design process the
11 power lines will skim along the south boundary line of
12 this four acre parcel. If I understand that right, the
13 quaking aspen forest on this property will have to be
14 thinned back and cut away from this power line. I think
15 that's a huge impact on a small recreational property to
16 have to bear.

17 Now I lost my train of thought. Okay. The
18 access for this power line is proposed to go through this
19 four acre property. I think that's a large burden for a
20 small piece of property to bear.

21 Along Highway 34, the designers there, up
22 along the curve, 300 yards on south of my place, have two
23 nice graded accesses off from the highway onto current
24 lands that are cooperating with surveyors and access
25 there. It seems to me that access through this four acre

1 property is an overburden and an expectation beyond
2 something that is practical. I would like to see a
3 revision in the route should the north route be chosen.

4 And just personally, I stand in opposition to
5 the north route. I would try to come back to a more
6 general view that it serves a greater public good to try
7 and keep this out of sight and out of mind and let that
8 scenic route be enjoyed by populations across the country.
9 Thank you.

10 MR. LYNAM: Thank you. Who was next? Any other
11 comments? Yes, sir.

12 MR. JENSEN: I'm Doug Jensen. I represent the
13 Idaho chapter of the national organization of the
14 Oregon-California Trails Association. I would like to
15 address a cultural issue on the northern alternative. The
16 land erode that goes through that area and in the Wayan
17 area, just east of that, the land erode is a nationally
18 recognized immigrant trail under the National Trails Act.
19 I'm not sure that's the right name. Congress passed it
20 some years ago and it's administered by the National Park
21 Service.

22 That road was built in 1858 and 1859. There's
23 some original ruts in that area. Once those are gone,
24 they're gone. Access roads may cross those. And like I
25 said, once those ruts are plowed or harmed, they're not

1 there anymore.

2 There's some viewshed issues in that area. I
3 was talking to Tish about this before this section
4 started. It appears to me that the north alternative has
5 some real issues with this cultural business, the land
6 erode. We don't have a -- I'm not able to release here
7 and here and here is where there are visible remnants of
8 immigrant trails, but they are in that area. It might be
9 that the office in Boise may have more information on
10 that. I don't know that for sure.

11 But from our standpoint, as far as immigrant
12 trails preservation, we would have a real serious concern
13 with the north alternative. Thank you.

14 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Jensen. We've had five
15 very good substantive comments so far. I really
16 appreciate everyone's participation. Another comment?

17 MS. HUNSAKER: I'm Caroline Hunsaker. I think some
18 of you met with my husband earlier today. There's some
19 things that really concern me and probably turn the public
20 opinion against you. One is going on private property
21 without permission. I know that has happened out in
22 Grace.

23 The other thing is they were surveying all
24 over out by us and my husband went down to see what they
25 were doing, if they were going to go in the field. And

1 they didn't want to tell us who they worked for. They
2 told us they were checking for underground utility
3 services. I think this lying and sneaking around, you
4 have developed a real negative feeling about this project.

5 The other thing, I've never heard anybody say
6 that if this goes across private property what you'll pay
7 to have each pole and what you'll pay for a right-of-way.
8 I know something a couple of years ago was thrown at us.
9 I have a brother-in-law who works -- he's retired now from
10 Utah Power. He said they're not even in the ballpark. So
11 we kind of feel like you're coming in here and trying to
12 cheat us. It doesn't make us want to work with you very
13 much. You have to be upfront, honest, and you have to be
14 fair. In this community that is what we expect.

15 The other question that was jotted down here,
16 I know when the big power line went up through Lanes
17 Creek, those people were pretty excited because they
18 thought they were going to get power. Once the line was
19 through, no, we can't take power down from a big line like
20 that. And probably the only reason they got permission
21 and got cooperation is they thought they could get power,
22 which is another dishonesty.

23 So how easy will power be to access from this
24 line you're putting through? That's a question.

25 MS. EATON: This is just -- we're just taking

1 comments right now. I think this is just a comment
2 gathering time.

3 MR. ORTH: I'll answer that one question. You are
4 correct, this is high voltage. I forgot this in my
5 speech. This is a 115 kV, which is 115,000 volt. It's a
6 transmission line that connects substations together. And
7 you're right, you cannot serve a house or a business off
8 of this power line. It is served -- the power goes into
9 the substation and then there's distribution lines. Those
10 are the smaller single pole lines that you see running
11 across the fields and whatnot. Those are what serve the
12 town, the private houses and businesses.

13 MS. HUNSAKER: And they pay for their own power
14 lines to come to them, right? I know when we got power
15 out where we live it took years and years and years of
16 paying \$2,000 a month for unlimited use, but to pay for
17 the power lines. We paid a big price for power.

18 MR. ORTH: BPA customers, the city of Soda Springs,
19 Lower Valley Energy, Paul River Electric, that's who we
20 sell our power and transmission services to.

21 MS. HUNSAKER: So these people won't get any
22 benefit, except maybe up the power rates from what they
23 are now?

24 MR. ORTH: I can't comment on that.

25 MR. LYNAM: It is hard to speak to the business

1 practices of the customers that we sell power to. We
2 don't have any control over what they charge.

3 MS. HUNSAKER: But you control what you charge them
4 for, though, so in a way you do.

5 MR. LYNAM: An excellent comment, Mrs. Hunsaker.
6 Thank you for bringing that point up. I appreciate it.
7 Next? Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. NEDRA TORGESEN: My name is Nedra Torgesen. I
9 want you people to know that you have been to my home
10 twice. We have been out to Clark Valley to the cattle
11 range. I have not really heard anything here much today
12 that we haven't discussed with your crew.

13 That being said, they were very nice to me,
14 but I have not found one iota of a thing that will benefit
15 me from this line going through. I told them that when
16 they came and I haven't changed my mind. But I do want
17 you to know that they have treated me very nicely. Thank
18 you.

19 MR. LYNAM: Okay. Thank you. Yes, sir.

20 MR. HUNSAKER: I'm Keith Hunsaker. In Mr.
21 Kackley's comments on easements, don't quote me, but I
22 thought you said once this power line accesses your
23 property it would enhance your property value. Am I
24 correct?

25 MR. KACKLEY: That's what the environmental -- the

1 draft of the impact statement said.

2 MR. HUNSAKER: Because you have the power
3 available?

4 MR. KACKLEY: No, it doesn't say that at all. It
5 just said it wouldn't affect the salability or contribute
6 to decreasing the values not already generally there. And
7 I took exception to that, sir.

8 MR. HUNSAKER: Okay. Thank you. That was my
9 question. What benefit is it? That's what Mrs. Torgesen
10 just said. What benefit do we get out of it, other than
11 if you do access a private property with monetary return?
12 Are there other benefits?

13 MR. LYNAM: Did you want to talk to the question of
14 future load growth?

15 MR. ORTH: I would go back to the need of the
16 project. Again, if we lose one of the lines coming out of
17 Palisades Dam, which is a lot of the generation that
18 supplies the power in this area, if we lose one of those
19 line and it puts stress on the rest of the system, our
20 lines -- one of the lines on the Lower Valley system will
21 actually -- the benefit is --

22 MR. HUNSAKER: That's a roundabout answer to my
23 question. If I can't assess that readily power, what
24 benefit is it to us?

25 MR. ORTH: The need of the project is so Bonneville

1 can continue with safe and reliable power service to
2 southeast Idaho. The need of the project is there because
3 if we do lose one of those lines in the dead of winter,
4 and we start to lose lines and everyone goes black, then
5 we're in a world of hurt. Bonneville doesn't want to be
6 in that position.

7 MR. CRAWFORD: But that line is beyond where you
8 are connecting in. If you lose that line on the other
9 side, what difference does it make if you build this line
10 at all? I'm not getting that.

11 MR. ORTH: Because we are feeding -- that's a good
12 question.

13 MR. CRAWFORD: If it's all coming from the
14 Palisades, why do we need it to come through here?

15 MR. ORTH: It's a 345 Threemile Knoll substation
16 that Rocky Mountain Power has out here. That is what
17 we're going to tap into. We are proposing to build just a
18 short half mile transmission line from Threemile Knoll to
19 to feed our Hooper Springs substation. And then from the
20 substation, building one of these alternatives would
21 provide another transmission alternative. And there's a
22 large loop here, and there's some maps out there showing
23 it, but it would strengthen this loop that provides power
24 to everybody down here in southeast Idaho.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And Jackson. That's where

1 it goes.

2 MR. ORTH: Southeast Idaho, western Wyoming, is all
3 one transmission system, that is correct. So we have to
4 look out for all of our customers out in this area,
5 including western Wyoming.

6 MR. LYNAM: Anybody else? We've had good comments.

7 MR. ELLIS KACKLEY: My name is Ellis Kackley. I've
8 been to all four of the meetings like a lot of people in
9 this room today. At every meeting we've had, since the
10 first one, BPA has said the only group that they were
11 going to allow for was going out to Gray's Lake and that
12 was going to be it. We had no choice. From the very
13 first meeting where they had the four routes, the first
14 thing they said was we are going out to Gray's Lake on
15 Highway 34 and there's nothing you can do about it.

16 They have maintained that right up to this
17 meeting. And the only reason that they're having this
18 meeting is because we've all stood together and said to
19 hell with that. You can go up Lanes Creek where it isn't
20 a burden on us.

21 Their ultimate goal is to go up there to that
22 substation. That's the one thing they want the most, is
23 get to that substation. But they were going to put it up
24 through Gray's Lake just to burn our asses. They could
25 just as easily go out and up Lanes Creek, but they've

1 wanted to do it their way the whole time. And there's
2 never been any compromise on that. They told us no other
3 way than going out to Gray's Lake and across that way.

4 I think if they want to get to that substation
5 they ought to keep their eye on the ball and get to the
6 substation with the southern route. It's just arrogance
7 and orneriness that they're going to do it to us
8 regardless of what we say. And if we don't hold together
9 they will do it. That's why this meetings is held today,
10 the only reason.

11 They brought new people that haven't been here
12 before. There's even a guy out there that has a public
13 relations tag on his shirt. Before it's always been we're
14 going to do it our way and to hell with you. I think
15 they'll try to do it again. I would ask all the people
16 here today to stand with us and make them go the other
17 way.

18 They told us that there was a lawsuit out on
19 the southern route so they wouldn't go through that. And
20 then was a superfund site and they couldn't go through
21 there. If they planted one pole in the superfund site
22 they could be held responsible for the entire superfund
23 site. That just is silly stuff, but that's what they told
24 us and they're trying to insist on it.

25 Now they have enough people giving them flak.

1 I understand that BPA claims to never have gone to an
2 easement to try to get it to condemn an easement, but
3 they're going to have to this time if they think they're
4 going to go out through Gray's Lake. Thank you.

5 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Kackley. Any other
6 comments? Yes, ma'am.

7 MS. IRENE TORGESEN: My name is Irene Torgesen. I
8 live here in Soda Springs on Kelly Park Road. My concern
9 with the presentation is we get told that there's 22 miles
10 on one route and 33 miles on the other route. And then
11 that they'll cost about the same, but never a price. I'm
12 sorry, but putting in 33 miles on one route should cost
13 more, realizing that is it is a different type of pole and
14 a different style. But, still, you're going to have to
15 pay for the right to go through people's lands. You're
16 going to have to pay extra for the poles. You're going to
17 be going along a scenic highway that will ruin a lot of
18 people's views. And there's historical landmarks and
19 stuff like that on that highway that will be ruined
20 because you've got these power lines.

21 It kind of upsets me that we get an overall of
22 things, but never the bottom line. Let's get a bottom
23 line. Exactly how much will it cost, estimated of course,
24 for the 33 mile line? And exactly, estimated of course,
25 for the 22 mile line, so that people can see exactly what

1 you're saying. We're in the dark on that. We don't know
2 what you are talking about as far as costs, what you're
3 talking about as far as availability and all of your
4 different things that go into that.

5 We just need to know a schedule or some kind
6 of an outline that says, okay, the 33 mile route is going
7 to have X amount of poles, X amount of miles, X amount of
8 wire. So much stuff at this substation, so much at that
9 substation. So there's going to be the bottom line value.
10 The same thing with the 22 mile one. And then maybe we
11 can see what you're up against. Right now we can't.

12 As far as I'm concerned, I would go with the
13 22 mile route any day because it doesn't ruin the views,
14 doesn't ruin people's hunting and fishing and their cattle
15 ranches, their homes. You're impacting a lot of people to
16 go through the 33 mile route. It's going to make this
17 community very upset and it's not worth it. That's not
18 what we're here on this earth for is to make everybody's
19 life miserable. We're here to work together, so let's
20 work together and see what we can do to make the 22 mile
21 route work. Thank you.

22 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, ma'am. Appreciate it. Any
23 other comments?

24 MR. CRAWFORD: I'll just follow up on that. If the
25 price is the same, I don't want 10 extra miles of wire and

1 poles out across our countryside. If the price is the
2 same, why do I want 10 extra miles of wires and poles?

3 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Crawford. Any other
4 comments? Okay. Yes, sir.

5 MR. SOMSEN: I apologize. Earl Somsen. I would
6 like to have explained for the benefit of all those here
7 today that probably have attended some of the meetings
8 that we've had other than here at the school. I was a
9 little confused when Al Kackley said that there's only
10 been two meetings. I'm wondering, we had some very
11 spirited and lively discussions at the courthouse in a few
12 commissioner meetings that involved a good share of you
13 folks here. I am wondering if the comments and questions,
14 technical and philosophical, that were presented at that
15 meeting are going to be recorded on this? Was there any
16 record of any of that or did everything that was expressed
17 just go out the window?

18 MR. ORTH: Those meetings were not meant to be
19 official comment periods within our NEPA process for
20 comments. We certainly listened to the folks there that
21 day and we took that in as input, but they weren't taken
22 down or part of the draft EIS, no.

23 MR. SOMSEN: So it won't be considered?

24 MR. ORTH: No, I didn't say that. They will be
25 considered as input.

1 MR. SOMSEN: How with no formal recording of it?

2 MR. ORTH: If you have that available, then, yes.

3 MR. SOMSEN: We do have.

4 MS. EATON: Submit them as part of the comments on
5 the draft EIS, would be great.

6 MR. LYNAM: If you'll provide that to me, I'll make
7 sure it becomes part of the official record of the
8 project. I appreciate you bringing that point up.

9 Yes, sir.

10 MR. HUNSAKER: Keith Hunsaker again. If I've been
11 informed correctly, on this southern route, which we are
12 on, and I'm not with it or against it, but we're the
13 minority, apparently. Am I correct that the State of
14 Idaho on the preserve on the ranch, you are denied access
15 through there?

16 MR. ORTH: We were not. We have worked out with
17 the State of Idaho to gain access across that property.
18 Lower Valley originally was denied access, but we are
19 working with the state, as a cooperating agency, to gain
20 the permission to enter that property to look at
21 alternatives across that land.

22 MR. HUNSAKER: To my knowledge to this point you've
23 been denied. I just denied you access today. If they
24 have the right to deny you access, what is to say I can't?

25 MR. ORTH: Every private landowner has the right to

1 deny us access. Certainly it doesn't help us, you know,
2 to get the information that we need to help us evaluate
3 all of the alternatives plus the options if we can't get
4 on the property to evaluate it.

5 MR. LYNAM: Any other comments that folks would
6 like to share? While you're thinking about that, I want
7 to remind you that there's a number of different ways to
8 share your comments. You can fill out a comment sheet
9 here, you can e-mail us your comments on the website
10 address. And we've got plenty of time left to go over
11 specific comments here also.

12 MR. ORTH: Just a reminder, we have a number of
13 subject matter experts out in the hallway. We've got our
14 environmental folks. We have engineers, both transmission
15 line engineers and access road engineers. And then we
16 also have a bunch of folks that cover real property
17 services for us. I heard some of the comments tonight
18 about what does it do to the value of your land, what is
19 the process. The real property folks are out in the hall.
20 You can discuss that with them and the process of how we
21 go through and evaluate and appraise and make payment.

22 As far as engineering, talk to the engineers
23 about heights of poles, what the poles look like. We have
24 some examples out there. Spacing. Also access roads. We
25 understand that that is one of the largest disturbances is

1 access roads and building new roads and particularly how
2 that impacts the land. So our access road engineers can
3 certainly answer questions you have about that.

4 MS. HUNSAKER: One thing is I really don't believe
5 you should be able to go in and destroy people's income.
6 If you came one of the routes you would do for us.

7 The other thing is, people who don't want
8 power developed should quit using it. As long as your
9 power is still turned on, this is not a bad thing. But
10 it's something to think about, I think. There's got to be
11 a way to go through and not disturb -- completely destroy
12 a person's business, which the one route would have done
13 for us.

14 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mrs. Hunsaker. Yes, sir.

15 MR. EVERETT: Rex Everett. I live out in Enoch
16 Valley. I'm one of those guys that likes my lights to
17 come on when I hit the switch, but I don't want a power
18 line across my ranch.

19 I'm wondering -- I haven't studied the whole
20 thing, but I'm wondering how much need there really is for
21 this line? I mean, we've been getting along forever
22 without this line. I just wonder how important it really
23 is? If we're really short on power or if maybe Jackson
24 ought to quit heating \$7 million homes.

25 I hate to see this line go through anybody's

1 property. I own property over in the Driggs area and I've
2 had two power lines built across me over there. It's
3 irritating, you know. You've got stuff to look at, you
4 know.

5 I'm kind of against the whole project. I'd
6 like to make sure it's totally necessary before it's even
7 considered in any direction. That's my comment. Thanks.

8 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Everett. Appreciate it.
9 Yes, sir.

10 MR. WILDE: I'm Ross Wilde. I'm affiliated with
11 property that's on the south route, so I can empathize
12 with Mr. and Mrs. Hunsaker, the impact that it's had on
13 ranchers out there.

14 The one question that I would like to have BPA
15 address is in your one letter here it says, "BPA is also
16 considering a no action alternative. That is BPA would
17 not build the transmission line."

18 I would like to have you elaborate on that a
19 little bit. To have that put in there the way that is,
20 that has to be a consideration that you're addressing.
21 Does that mean there's another line or another route or
22 another option that isn't part of this?

23 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Wilde. Let me just talk
24 very briefly about the point that Mr. Wilde brought up
25 about the no line alternative. Erich, you may want to

1 dive in with some specifics there.

2 Any time BPA, or another electric or gas
3 utility, looks at a new project, one of the options,
4 regardless of what the options are that we might look at
5 such as route A or route B or route C, whatever we're
6 looking at, one of the options we always evaluate is the
7 don't do anything option. That's an obvious thing that
8 has to be on the table. That is why in the letter that
9 Mr. Wild cited we talked about the no build option as an
10 option that we have to evaluate as we look at the
11 potential impacts of this project. So that's a general
12 comment.

13 Erich, I don't know if you want to talk more
14 specifically about that.

15 MR. ORTH: The need for the project arises when our
16 electrical use goes up. In some areas you may have
17 decreases in electrical use and higher in others. As a
18 whole, our electrical use has gone up in this area. So
19 that is the whole reason why we've identified the need for
20 the project.

21 At some point down the road, if that need goes
22 away and we have -- we can re-evaluate and say, you know,
23 we don't need to build anything at this time, we won't
24 build anything. So that would be our no build option.

25 MR. ENGELER: When you say this area, you're not

1 saying it's actually coming from here to supply not this
2 area?

3 MR. ORTH: It supplies --

4 MR. ENGELER: When you say this area you're
5 talking --

6 MR. ORTH: Caribou County, southeast Idaho, western
7 Wyoming.

8 MR. ENGELER: This area doesn't really need it,
9 though. We have our power from Rocky Mountain Power.

10 MR. ORTH: You do.

11 MR. ENGELER: You'll purchase it from them and move
12 it somewhere else. I could say right now, by a show of
13 hands, the no build would get a hundred percent. Ready?
14 Well, I guess maybe not a hundred percent.

15 I don't see where it's going to benefit this
16 community ever. The power is already here and you're
17 going to move it from here somewhere else.

18 MR. LYNAM: What's your name, for the record?

19 MR. ENGELER: My name is Walt Engeler. I'd also
20 like to say, you know, you said this is a comment period
21 only, but when somebody has a question they need answers.
22 It's not -- if someone brings up a good point, I would
23 like to have a response. I think that's a very good
24 point.

25 MR. ORTH: I can address that. One example, on the

1 northern alternative -- well, on both alternatives the
2 power line feeds into Lanes Creek substation. Out of
3 Lanes Creek substation there's a transformer there and it
4 goes down into distribution power.

5 And I'm not specifically sure, but I imagine
6 Lower Valley feeds some folks in the Wayan area right out
7 of that Lanes Creek substation. So if that substation
8 goes out because we've lost this other line in the dead of
9 winter, then everyone goes black in that area. That
10 substation feeds residents in that area. So if that
11 substation has another alternative path coming into it, we
12 can keep the lights on.

13 MR. ENGELER: Lower Valley hasn't had a problem
14 with that. I've been here 20 years and it can be dead of
15 winter and they'll fix it within an hour.

16 MR. LYNAM: Depending on what the problem is.

17 MR. ENGELER: Because they supply it from other
18 places there. It's still not enough to convince me this
19 is needed. I'm not buying it. Why can't it -- where does
20 that -- can't that come from somewhere else to get it to
21 those -- it's not for this area. That's why I'm not
22 getting it. It's not for Caribou County. Is there a way
23 for you to, from a different perspective, explain the
24 standards that require you to build that's part of this
25 interconnection?

1 MR. ORTH: I mentioned earlier we have to safely
2 and reliably operate our system. Our guidelines -- NERC,
3 the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, that
4 is who dictates how we operate our systems.

5 This is a kind of more general map of the
6 transmission system. You can see here's Palisades Dam
7 here, the reservoir. We have our proposed alternatives
8 down here. And then the Jackson area with plenty of
9 transmission there.

10 Our concern is if we lose this Palisades/Snake
11 Valley line, or Snake River line, the power has to come
12 around through the Jackson area and then back down here to
13 feed this whole loop of folks here. Yes, it is in
14 Wyoming, but it's also in southeast Idaho. The overload
15 starts on this line right here, the Teton/Wilson line. If
16 we flip a breaker there it just starts to trickle down and
17 goes in all of these lines.

18 So with this transmission line that we're
19 proposing, it connects into this 345 line at the Threemile
20 Knoll substation outside of town here. It's right out of
21 our Hooper Springs right next to it and then feeds this
22 loop of transmission here, which is all owned and operated
23 by Lower Valley. That would ensure that we would safely
24 and reliably be able to operate this loop if this line
25 goes out and starts to overload these other lines.

1 MR. ENGELER: It doesn't continue to loop the other
2 way? Where it goes into Idaho Falls, is that where it's
3 going? That loop doesn't continue back around to
4 Palisades?

5 MR. ORTH: No.

6 MR. ENGELER: What's the line 31 there? Is that a
7 loop? That's a loop line going over to Jackson. Why
8 can't that feed around and back down?

9 MR. ORTH: That's what would be needed to feed back
10 into here.

11 MR. ENGELER: Wouldn't that feed if this line down
12 on Palisades goes out?

13 MR. ORTH: If this goes out, then we're feeding
14 both on this line and this line coming down. What happens
15 is you've got this pinch point along here that is a
16 transmission path that leaves this whole area in a tough
17 situation if we lose this line.

18 MR. ENGELER: Increase the size of that line 31.

19 MR. ORTH: That is -- those are alternatives that
20 we've looked at in our planning studies. Power does run
21 both ways on the line.

22 MR. CRAWFORD: Lower Valley Energy also has supply
23 stations other than the Palisades to feed that line. They
24 have a propane unit, fire generating system.

25 MR. ORTH: Most of their generation is in the

1 Jackson area to feed -- that's where a lot of the load is
2 is in the Jackson area, so they do have a gas pipeline to
3 feed that area.

4 MR. ENGELER: And where is the location on that
5 one? That's what would feed this line other than the
6 Palisades. Besides those two, is there any others that
7 would help that scenario?

8 MR. ORTH: No. This is all the transmission that
9 is in the area.

10 MR. CRAWFORD: Is the Palisades Dam --

11 MR. ORTH: It provides generation, but there is
12 some gas generation in the Jackson area, correct. But you
13 still need to feed it down through these lines to get it
14 in this area if this line was down.

15 MR. CRAWFORD: That's where my power comes from and
16 I'm in the north.

17 MR. ORTH: For the most part you're correct, but
18 if -- we have to look at a situation that if we lose a
19 line what does that do to the system? Does it overload a
20 line? Does it -- it also creates some voltage instability
21 issues in the whole system. Our transmission planners
22 look at all of this and do what if scenarios all through
23 the system. That's what the purpose and the need for the
24 project is.

25 MR. OLORENSHAW: Wade Olorenshaw. Erich, on that

1 line coming from Palisades southeasterly onto -- yeah,
2 that line right there. Why don't you build a second line
3 there and strengthen that structure through there rather
4 than encumber this southeastern Idaho area? Is there not
5 a possibility to run a second line through -- to widen
6 your easement right-of-way through there with a second
7 line to support the existing line?

8 MR. ORTH: That is a possibility. One of our
9 biggest concerns, and this comes from our regulatory
10 commission, you start to build parallel lines, if one line
11 is knocked out because of the weather or an airplane or
12 something, then there's a good chance both of them will be
13 knocked out. So that is why we like to have a separation
14 of the transmission lines. The weather up here could be
15 different than what is going on down here.

16 MR. FOWLER: My name is Gary Fowler. As far as
17 your secondary line there by Palisades, you know, we're
18 looking at the same thing down around the Rupert and
19 Burley area with this Gateway transmission line. They
20 want them separated and not run parallel. I stand the
21 chance of getting hit by lightening if I walk outside of
22 this building too, but I'm not holding my breath that that
23 is going to happen.

24 What is the cost factor of building that
25 parallel line from Palisades Dam to backfeed into Lower

1 Valley Energy's loop there?

2 MR. ORTH: We have not done studies. That goes
3 back to our NERC. They tell us -- they don't want us to
4 build parallel lines. I understand that it's a small
5 chance, but that's the guidelines we have to follow.

6 MR. FOWLER: So is there a different route they
7 could go and still build a secondary line there and not
8 affect us by building from Threemile and out either
9 through Lanes Creek or out through the south route?

10 MR. ORTH: That is a comment that we can't address.
11 We have not done detailed studies. We can't address that
12 comment at this time.

13 MS. HUNSAKER: We went over in Wyoming and they
14 have some big lines going down there, going into Afton.
15 We took a horse to somebody over there. And he says just
16 put them in the red gate. There were big power lines
17 going over it. When we picked it up it shocked us.

18 MR. HUNSAKER: Stray voltage.

19 MS. HUNSAKER: Stray voltage. Do people realize,
20 you know, where you'll put it and what that might do?
21 That's a legitimate thing, am I not right?

22 MR. ORTH: That is a concern, especially with some
23 barbed wire fences that run along without grounding. Yes,
24 that is a concern, and there can be stray voltage that
25 does occur. We do cover that in the draft EIS.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you worked with Lower
2 Valley at all?

3 MR. ORTH: Yes. Originally part of the project was
4 a joint project. It is no longer, but they still are
5 customers of us that we do provide power and transmission
6 to and so we do work with them.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It would seem like that
8 relationship should continue, not be dissolved, because
9 they have a power station that feeds into that -- what you
10 are trying to accomplish.

11 MR. LYNAM: We're continuing to work with them.
12 The relationship is not dissolved.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But they're just part of the
14 fixture. I'm not getting the picture of why we need this,
15 because it would seem to me that Lower Valley could
16 actually solve what you propose that we need more power
17 for, or to make this all work for whatever benefit. I'm
18 still not getting it.

19 MR. ORTH: That question would best be answered by
20 our planning engineer here tonight. I would ask that you
21 table that and ask her after this.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

23 MR. LYNAM: We originally planned to go until about
24 6:30 tonight. We're 6:40. A lot of good comments have
25 come out.

1 Any other comments? Let's maybe take two more
2 before we wrap it up and get you all out to the individual
3 stations. I would remind you that if you have other
4 comments you want to share, maybe comments you didn't want
5 to share publicly around your friends and neighbors, we
6 could also get you lined up with our reporter and capture
7 your comments that way. So, one or two more.

8 MR. CLARK: I'm Trent Clark. I work for Monsanto.
9 Jim Smith actually is the person who works at Monsanto who
10 has been engaged with this.

11 I just wanted for the record to kind of
12 reiterate the same thing that I mentioned when we were
13 meeting with the county commissioners. I noticed that
14 sort of that general language made it into the draft EIS
15 that said, oh, this is a CERCLA area that we can't touch.
16 I kind of understand why BPA has that as a kind of
17 cultural thing, because the strict joint and several
18 liability provisions of CERCLA have been pretty tough on
19 any entity that uses PCV's. And BPA is one such company,
20 one such entity, that has used PCV's in general in the
21 past.

22 And just so everybody knows, the way this
23 statute works, there are gas stations in Pocatello that
24 when they found PCV's at Pacific Hide and Fur, those gas
25 stations got told you may be on the hook for a \$2 million

1 cleanup. It's because the gas station had donated a
2 battery to a scout drive where the scouts had taken the
3 battery specifically to Pacific Hide and Fur to be
4 recycled. That's the chain of liability that can track.

5 The thing that we're missing in this draft EIS
6 is you're not going to be moving selenium bearing
7 materials around. So, therefore, you're going to have no
8 liability. There's no liability there whatsoever. It is
9 as simple a process as going to EPA and saying we would
10 like to route this line along the edge of one of your
11 study areas. Can you assert for us that we won't be
12 touching any contaminants of concern. They'll write you a
13 letter saying, oh, yeah, there's no contaminants of
14 concern there and you're okay.

15 That happens all the time, especially with the
16 concern these days about Brownfields cleanups. The agency
17 has become a lot more willing to say here's what you can
18 do. And that's all that Bonneville Power would have to do
19 is just say here's what we want to do. Does it touch
20 selenium? No. If you're not moving the battery around,
21 you don't have any liability. If you're not moving
22 selenium around you won't have any liability.

23 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Mr. Clark. Appreciate it.
24 One more comment and then we'll go ahead and wrap it up.

25 MS. STONER: Erica Stoner. I'm with Agrium. I

1 just would like to put on the public record that the
2 southern route, one of the CERCLA sites, is associated
3 with us. We do have concerns that it is also close to an
4 operation that we have right now. If that route is the
5 accepted alternative, there will be costs associated that
6 we expect BPA to bear to move that line around the mining
7 operation as is required.

8 MR. LYNAM: Okay. Anything else?

9 MS. STONER: No.

10 MR. LYNAM: Thank you, Ms. Stoner. All right.
11 We've spent about the last hour and a half reviewing the
12 project. You all have been very open and honest and
13 straightforward in the comments that you've shared. To
14 the extent that we could, we've tried to answer some of
15 the questions that were presented. I will assure you that
16 your comments from today will appear in BPA's official
17 record for the project.

18 And I think it was Mr. Sampson, is that
19 correct?

20 MR. SOMSEN: Somsen.

21 MR. LYNAM: If I could link up with you afterward,
22 I'll share my contact information with you so you can get
23 me the comments from that meeting and we'll incorporate
24 those as well. I think that will be an important piece of
25 information for the project.

1 Anyone who wants to have a little bit of extra
2 time with the reporter, remember to check in with Coleen.
3 She'll sign you up for the time that you need. Our
4 reporter is here until 8:00 p.m.

5 To wrap things up, I just want to say thank
6 you very much to each of you for the time and effort and
7 energy you've invested to come and talk with us today. I
8 would invite you to -- if there's comments or ideas that
9 come to your mind that didn't surface in the conversation
10 tonight, share those with us by the other methods I talked
11 about. And please feel free to check in with the subject
12 matter experts at the different stations out here in the
13 open house area.

14 Unless there's anything else that you want to
15 talk about, I think that pretty well concludes our public
16 part of the meeting tonight. Again, I want to thank you
17 for coming by and talking with us.

18 (Off the record pending further comments.)

19 MR. OLORENSHAW: My name is Wade Olorenshaw. My
20 concern is with the northern route. On the maps it's page
21 29-1 where my parcel is depicted. I just wanted to
22 provide that information for the BPA people so they can
23 zero in on that more quickly. And perhaps look at a route
24 realignment and pulling the line south a little bit away
25 from my four acre property. Plus taking the access

1 further south on the lower two existing offramps that are
2 there. Thank you.

3 (Off the record pending further comments.)

4 MR. OLORENSHAW: Wade Olorenshaw again. The Hooper
5 Springs north alternative route. For reference, page
6 29-1.

7 If we could make a new PI from Tower 30-2, and
8 then route that southwesterly to Tower 28-8, that would
9 help pull the power line southerly, away from the smaller
10 parcel. And it would increase the access from the two
11 routes southerly along Highway 34 as visited with our
12 right-of-way -- our access people this evening here at the
13 meeting. Thank you.

14 (Close public comment.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Rodney M. Felshaw, CSR No. SRT-299, Certified Shorthand Reporter, certify:

That the public hearing proceedings were taken before me at the time and place set forth; that the hearing was reported stenographically by and me and thereafter transcribed by me; and that the foregoing is a true and correct record of all proceedings held to the best of my ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I set my hand and seal this 15th day of April, 2013.

Rodney M. Felshaw, C.S.R.; R.P.R.

Notary Public
My commission expires March 31, 2015.

CRAIG W. CHRISTENSEN, CHARTERED

HSTP13 0026

414 SOUTH GARFIELD
P.O. BOX 130
POCATELLO, IDAHO 83204-0130
Telephone: (208) 234-9353

Facsimile: (208) 234-9357

E-Mail: cwcc@ida.net

*Craig W. Christensen
Attorney at Law*

*Admitted in Idaho & Utah
Certified by the American
Board of Certification*

April 29, 2013

Tish Eaton
Environmental Protection Specialist - KEC-4
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208

Re: William Meads Trust
Hooper Springs Transmission Project

Dear Ms. Eaton:

Thank you for providing to me for review a copy of the Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") report in written format as well as copies of the plat maps pertaining to the real property associated with the William Meads Trust.

This letter is written pursuant to our agreement that the William Meads Trust could provide written comments to you for inclusion in the EIS analysis with regard to the proposed 115-kilovolt electrical transmission line proposed to be constructed through Caribou County, Idaho.

The William Meads Trust is the owner of the following described real property located in Caribou County, Idaho:

a. Real Property:

Township 7 South, Range 42 East of the Boise Meridian:
Section 21: W1/2SW1/4
Section 28: Lots 6 and 7

The real property is currently being leased by the Trust to Doyle DeKay, Ruth DeKay, and Meadowville Ranches for farming purposes. The lease expires on October 31, 2013. The land is comprised of approximately 160 acres (two 80 acre parcels) of which there are between 135 and 139 tillable acres.

After reviewing the written materials and the plat map, it is apparent that if the "Northern Route" is selected, there will be an adverse impact and "taking" of the westerly 100' of the farm property which is adjacent to and extends north along Highway 34, and as the highway proceeds northward.

Of the three (3) available options, it is the position, and request of the William Meads Trust that the proposed high voltage transmission line be submitted as a "no-action alternative" proposal.

However, if it is determined that the power line project is going to be approved and constructed, then, the William Meads Trust requests that the construction be pursuant to the "Southern Route" alternative.

The request is based upon the following factors as presented in the underlying materials and at the public hearing held in Soda Springs, Idaho on April 5, 2013.

1. The "Northern Route" will be approximately 32 miles long and includes two (2) route options. While the "Southern Route" will be approximately 22 miles long and includes four (4) options. There is no need to add an additional 10 miles of electrical lines and transmission poles across the corridor.
2. The cost of construction, regardless of whether the "Northern Route" or the Southern Route" is selected will be approximately \$55.0 million. There is no cost saving by selecting the longer "Northern Route".
3. The right-of-way/easement across the William Meads Trust property will be subject to multiple permanent structures and will impact the farming operation of the Trust property, including the fair market value of the land and its crop production capabilities.
4. Construction will take nearly two (2) years to begin and complete. There will be a minimum of two (2) years of an adverse economic impact caused by the construction and inability to have total access to the farming property for planting, fertilizing, care, and harvesting of the crop to be grown on the land

Tish Eaton
Bonneville Power Administration
Page 2
April 29, 2013

5. The selection of the "Northern Route" will also adversely impact the views associated with the "scenic corridor" which extends north from Soda Springs to the termination point of the project.
6. The selection of the "Northern Route" will adversely impact the hunting and fishing sites located along the route, as well as causing significant interruption to the "flight patterns" of waterfowl and the "game trails" of big game animals.
7. There is no assurance that the parties will be able to amicably be able to arrive at a fair market value of the property and the "value" of the "taking. This may result in extended litigation and incurrence of legal costs and expenses by both parties.

As you are aware the electrical transmission line informational packets were sent by Bonneville Power Administration to an address which was associated with the Trust a few years ago. Since my appointment as Successor Trustee on or about September 16, 2011, the Trust has used the address of:

William Meads Trust
c/o Craig W. Christensen
P.O. Box 130
Pocatello, ID 83240

I appreciate your willingness to extend the comment period for the William Meads Trust from April 22, 2013 and incorporating our comments into the record.

Please keep me advised as to the status of the final "EIS" when it is released, as well as the Record of Decision. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Craig W. Christensen

CWC:jh
cc: William Meads Trust Beneficiaries



HSTP13 0027

DIRECTORS

DON K. WEILMUNSTER
President
1977 - 2001

October 10, 2012

FRED D. HARDER
Vice President
1981 - 2002

VIA U.S. MAIL

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-3621

JOHN BARCLAY
Secretary/Treasurer
1981 - 2001

H. LARRY LEASURE
1975 - 2002

To Whom it May Concern:

SHIRLEY V. MIX
1977 - 2001

At the Open Meeting before the Caribou County Commission on September 24, 2012, following the statement by Dr. Rod Drewien, concerning the inappropriateness of the Northern Line being considered by Bonneville Power Administration, the attorney for Bonneville Power, Mr. Earnest Estes stated that there were no questions raised by that statement.

CHRIS KORTE
1989 - 2001

R. G. NELSON, AIA
1991 - 2001

TERRY GESTRIN
1996 - 2002

Implicit in Dr. Rod Drewien's statement to Bonneville Power were a number of questions that we now explicitly address to Bonneville Power:

DEAN D. THORNTON
1997 - 2001

C.M. "CHUCK" RICE
1997 - 2001

1. What migratory waterfowl flight pattern data and/or material were considered by Bonneville Power in determining the amount of impact by the proposed Southern Line and the Northern Line?

DOUGLAS PORTER
1999 - 2002

- a) Where can copies of this material be obtained by the public for consideration by appropriate personnel?

CHARLES F. McDEVITT
1999 - 2002

JAMIE ANDERSON
2000 - 2002

2. What geological analysis was made by Bonneville Power in determining the amount of impact on the environment of the proposed Southern Line and Northern Line?

TONY VARILONE
2001 - 2002

- a) Where can copies of this material be obtained by the public for consideration by appropriate personnel?

SHARON HUBLER
Executive Director

ADVISORY BOARD

SHERMAN AKERS, POCATELLO
J. ROBB BRADY, IDAHO FALLS
RONALD F. DALY, BOISE
GOVERNOR ROBERT E. SMYLIE
DOYAL STILES, SODA SPRINGS
JERRY L. WRAY, BOISE

Bonneville Power acknowledges that one of the criteria considered in favor of the Northern Line is its proximity to an existing substation. What is the amount of money saved by Bonneville Power by utilizing this existing substation?

- a) How is this dollar saving weighed against the environmental impact in Bonneville Power's analysis?
- b) What is the formula utilized by Bonneville Power in such weighting and how can the public obtain a copy of this analysis?

5657 Warm Springs Avenue ♦ Boise, Idaho 83716-8700 ♦ (208) 344-7141 ♦ FAX (208) 344-5910

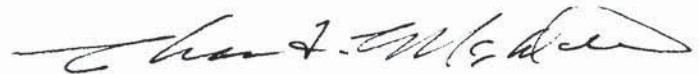
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www.idaholands.org



4. Has Bonneville Power examined the federal funds being spent by the Federal Government in preserving the Lander Trail in Wyoming?
5. What consideration has Bonneville Power made in the preservation of the Lander Trail in Idaho?

Very truly yours,

Al and Ellis Kackley
Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands



By: Chas F. McDevitt

CFM/hh
Al Kackley
Ellis Kackley
Executive Director-Idaho Foundation For Parks and Lands

HSTP13 0028

CARIBOU COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETING
BPA HOOPER SPRINGS TRANSMISSION PROJECT

DATE: June 25, 2012

PLACE: Soda Springs, Idaho

Transcribed By: Michael R. King, WA CCR 2655

Rider & Associates, Inc.
360.693.4111

APPEARANCES

Mr. John Williams - BPA Constituent Account Executive

Mr. Eric Orth - BPA Project Manager

Rider & Associates, Inc.
360.693.4111

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. WILLIAMS: -- that Representative Gilbert
3 and Senator Tippetts, they know me from the state house.
4 And I will give my cards to other folks, so if they have
5 any questions, not only dealing with our transmission,
6 but fish and wildlife, anything.

7 And what I am going to just explain just very
8 briefly, it's my responsibility for the Bonneville Power
9 Administration -- I'm actually housed in Boise, Idaho,
10 and I am the constituent account executive. My
11 responsibility is to have a relationship with all
12 elected officials in the state of Idaho, and that also
13 includes the governor's office. And I also have
14 relationships with some of the major non-profits such as
15 the Idaho Farm Bureau, the water -- Idaho Water Users
16 Association and some other organizations because of our
17 impact to their customers and clients.

18 Today, we're meeting with you to give you an
19 update on the transmission project that we've been
20 working on for the past few years. We're at a point now
21 where we feel it's good to have this meeting and to
22 provide you a status report.

23 Today, I brought the project manager, Eric
24 Orth, and he will go into more detail in terms of what's
25 going on on the ground and how we plan to move forward.

Rider & Associates, Inc.
360.693.4111

1 Eric.

2 MR. ORTH: Thank you, Commissioners, for having
3 us today.

4 So like John said, just I wanted to give you an
5 update. We first had started our environmental NEPA
6 process back in July of 2010. At that time, we had a
7 public meeting in August 2010. It was over here at the
8 high school and it was very well attended.

9 We -- from that point forward, we've been
10 looking at a northern route to our transmission line.
11 Currently, we're still -- we're proposing to build a
12 Hooper Springs substation right outside of town here to
13 the north adjacent to Pacifi-Corp's Three Mile Knoll
14 station. And we're looking at a small tap line coming
15 out of the Three Mile Knoll substation and to Hooper
16 Springs.

17 And then what we're currently investigating is
18 a 32-mile line that travels to the north, kind of
19 parallels 34, and then heads to the east across a lot of
20 private land, BIA, some BLM parcels, State of Idaho.
21 And then it enters into Forest Service property and then
22 the national forest and then continues east on to Lane's
23 Creek substation, which is owned and operated by Lower
24 Valley Energy through a special use permit through the
25 Forest Service.

1 And so the last year, it's been pretty busy.
2 Things have picked up, especially this spring. We're
3 working -- contacting a lot of landowners -- private
4 landowners to work with them to gain rights of entry
5 into their -- into their property so that we can
6 investigate the route that we're looking at so that we
7 can do a certain level of engineering analysis to
8 support our NEPA document, which is an environmental
9 impact statement, EIS.

10 Currently, we are beginning to draft that
11 document, draft a preliminary EIS. And we've done some
12 biological studies, plant studies.

13 The U.S. Forest Service is going to be a
14 cooperating agency with Bonneville Power in the EIS, and
15 so they'll -- they'll ultimately adopt that document as
16 their NEPA. BLM and BIA, they're not official
17 cooperating agencies, but they will -- we will be
18 working with them and we have met with them.

19 A lot of the work that's gone on on the ground
20 recently, like I mentioned, is working with landowners.
21 We -- our main focus, we know this could be a very large
22 impact to a lot of the landowners and so we truly are
23 trying to work with all the landowners that it will
24 impact, both the transmission line easement that's --
25 that we possibly could be proposing if the agency

1 decides to build the project, and also the access roads
2 leading -- leading to the -- to the easement.

3 A few weeks ago I dropped off some maps. I saw
4 some of you were flipping through the maps. It's pretty
5 detailed information. That's -- that's the northern
6 route that we are focusing a lot of our efforts on.

7 I'm not sure how familiar with -- the project
8 overall, originally, we had a transmission line route
9 that was a joint project of Lower Valley Energy that
10 went more easterly, coming out of Hooper Springs.
11 Unfortunately, that crossed over four mining sites that
12 are under current litigation, and so -- for Super Fund
13 investigations, so we couldn't -- couldn't -- our
14 agency, it was too high a risk for our agency to build
15 and help fund that transmission line. And so that's
16 where we came back and that's what started our EIS
17 process in July of 2010.

18 The other aspects, again, we've got a whole
19 staff of realty agents out of Boise. HTR, we've hired
20 HTR to do a lot of work on the realty front.

21 We're working with landowners. Originally, we
22 had sent out what we call permission to enter property
23 forms to the landowners and we -- we are now offering
24 \$500 for the landowners to sign that document. And so
25 the ones that are signing are getting the money. And

1 then we also retroactively went back and the landowners
2 that we do need to get on their property that had
3 previously signed, we're getting them the money, as
4 well, so -- so we can be equal to all.

5 Engineering is continuing on to support the
6 NEPA. That's our main focus right now is to properly
7 evaluate our environmental analysis, look at the
8 cultural resources, like I said, the biological studies
9 and plant studies. The Forest Service has some old
10 growth areas that we're -- that we're avoiding, as well,
11 and so there is -- there are a lot of resources.

12 There's the -- landowners have also spoken up
13 about some different resources. I know the Cackleys
14 have some pristine property that has an area that --
15 that they want us to avoid. And we're really taking
16 each -- each landowner, each issue and trying to work
17 through it so that we can hopefully -- our main goal is
18 we -- we need a transmission line somehow that links
19 between the Hooper Springs area and to Lower Valley's
20 transmission path that goes by Lane's Creek.

21 The reason for it, our load studies show that
22 in the next winter or -- well, in the winter of 2014-15,
23 we have some voltage stability problems with the entire
24 system here in southeast Idaho, and because this is
25 within our -- our authority to provide transmission

1 services, we need this link in the system to -- to keep
2 from that -- keep from a voltage stability problem, as
3 well as another transmission line that shows thermal
4 overloading once based on a 1 percent rate of growth in
5 the area.

6 What happens, you know, if -- if -- what
7 Bonneville's most concerned about is we run into these
8 problems in the dead of winter, a line trips out and
9 perhaps another line, and then you get this cascading
10 effect. And it's -- it's going to be very troublesome
11 to get the system back up and running when it's very
12 cold out in the middle of winter. You can't get access
13 to the lines. You don't know where the outage is. And
14 so that's one of our main -- main purposes is to
15 stabilize the system here looking at the load growth.

16 Are there any questions?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A few.

18 MR. ORTH: I figured so.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you aware that some
20 of your crew has been entering private property that
21 hasn't been authorized and they've been cutting survey
22 lines, pounding stakes, cutting trees?

23 MR. ORTH: I'm not aware of that. We -- we
24 keep a very active list of properties that -- that we
25 have permissions to go on. This is the first I've heard

1 of it, honestly. And I apologize if that has happened
2 to any of the landowners.

3 I would love to hear names and when -- because
4 we do have a lot of people out here I've met and they
5 are -- it is busy and -- but we do -- we do keep an
6 active list of folks' property who we do have
7 permissions to enter.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm sure you're aware
9 that Simplot will be closing its Smoky Mine out there in
10 Smoky Canon. That's where the line goes from the
11 substation down Tenco.

12 MR. ORTH: Uh-huh.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It goes south from there
14 and it goes over to Smoky Canon and supplies Simplot's
15 energy needs. And I'm a little bit curious as to why it
16 can't be put off for another couple of years while
17 they're closing that mine down and use that energy
18 rather than create a new line through undisturbed
19 property?

20 MR. ORTH: That's something I can go back to
21 our planning study folks and take a look at. I know
22 that we don't serve Simplot directly, but we do look at
23 the transmission grid as a whole and so we should be
24 able to pull that up for you.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, you mentioned that

1 this new line is going to be hooked up to Lower Valley
2 Energy, and I believe it's Lower Valley Energy that does
3 supply the power to Simplot. And it looks like that
4 would be an available resource rather than creating
5 another one.

6 MR. ORTH: Okay. We can certainly look at
7 that. It's -- it's our -- our issue is more of a
8 transmission issue. What you are talking about is a
9 power issue. But certainly we can take that back and
10 look at that.

11 Lower Valley is very supportive of the project.
12 I meet with them monthly. And the -- the Lower Valley
13 and Fall River, both utilities are in need of --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Another question. As I
15 say, I've got a few.

16 Another question: You mentioned -- and we were
17 aware of this too -- that the proposed line to come
18 across the now abandoned and reclaimed mines -- some are
19 reclaimed, some not -- it sounded like that was
20 discouraging because of the EPA; is that correct?

21 MR. ORTH: Not necessarily from the EPA.
22 It's -- it's -- it's our lawyers. We've looked at the
23 risks of putting a line in there. And if we happen to
24 put a line through that area and disrupt some soil and
25 cause further contamination just based on what's in the

1 soil then we could be held liable for -- for a lot of
2 dollars for cleanup. And that's too high a risk for the
3 agency to take.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Then what exactly was
5 the EPA's advice or their policy on that or do you have
6 any copies of that?

7 MR. ORTH: We --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or is it just the
9 attorneys that had perceived a risk?

10 MR. ORTH: No. Our attorneys have talked to --
11 not necessarily to the EPA, but to our Department of
12 Justice and discussed the risks.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But not with the EPA?

14 MR. ORTH: Not that I am aware of.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And so there's no actual
16 known threat from the EPA that you could become involved
17 in a CERCLA project?

18 MR. ORTH: The threat's not immediate. It's if
19 we were to cause disturbance -- which, you know, when
20 you build a transmission line, it can be very
21 disturbing. And because of the CERCLA law and -- and
22 being -- being able to be held liable, it's -- it's too
23 big a risk for our agency to take.

24 We did a lot of research to come to that
25 conclusion. It's not something we took lightly.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did the amount of
2 studies you have to provide going across private land
3 rather than going across that much government-controlled
4 land that's in that state of repair or disrepair, did
5 the cost of those studies have anything to do with the
6 decision to go with the northern route?

7 MR. ORTH: No. The decision to go to the
8 northern route was made when we finished our
9 environmental assessment back in '09 and we couldn't
10 sign a finding of no significant impact document to
11 allow us to construct there, so that's -- that's -- that
12 was the decision point to move to a different route.

13 Now, this new route, what we've done is we've
14 avoided all potential mining -- leased mining sites from
15 Monsanto and Simplot and the other companies, and so
16 we've -- we've avoided all those and that was our main
17 goal of this new route.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you don't view this
19 route as a line of least resistance?

20 MR. ORTH: It's -- no. It's being met with
21 plenty of resistance. It's -- it's -- what this route
22 does for us is it takes the risk of that -- of being
23 litigated under some kind of Super Fund investigation
24 and cleanup.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But no one has contacted

1 the EPA or the DEQ or anyone to see if they would
2 attempt to involve you with that?

3 MR. ORTH: I honestly -- I would have to get
4 back to you on that. I don't talk to our lawyers a lot.
5 I just know that's -- that's what they've decided --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'd be interested to
7 find out if that was the -- and, you know, just a
8 supposed possibility or if it was actual. I can't
9 imagine that the EPA wouldn't be somewhat reasonable
10 about giving you immunity from -- it would be, in my
11 mind's eye, minimal disturbance compared to what's
12 happened with the open-pit mining.

13 MR. ORTH: Yeah, you are correct.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is not even close to
15 being on the same scale, so I can't imagine that it
16 wouldn't be a little bit within reason to work with
17 those guys on that. But I don't know. Our dealings
18 with EPA hasn't been real good with the county either on
19 some issues that we have with 'em, but I would be really
20 interested to find out what their perspective is on it
21 if there -- if they would agree to any -- any kind of an
22 alternative, you know, or -- or whatever was necessary
23 to take this through an area that didn't impact so many
24 private landowners, through some very scenic, pristine
25 area.

1 MR. ORTH: We'll get back to you on that.
2 We'll put together some bullets of, you know, how we got
3 to the decision.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.
5 Have you got anything?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Couldn't you come
7 farther to the south on a lot of the public land and
8 stay on Forest Service ground without getting the mines
9 involved?

10 MR. ORTH: Unfortunately, no. The potential
11 mining sites, they reach -- I mean, it's -- it's almost
12 all the way up to the reservoir up there. There's a
13 very small gap that -- that can't be mined. And that's,
14 you know, that's what we're -- we're proposing that
15 route is to run it through that gap. It gets pretty
16 close to Highway 34 there and the resort area. But
17 unfortunately, anywhere to the -- to the east and to the
18 south, we run into more -- more potential mining sites.
19 And we did look at that and we've got maps that show all
20 these parcels that are potential mining sites.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I wonder if I need to
22 (inaudible) --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think from just
24 looking at the crowd here, we have a lot of people that
25 this is going to be in their backyard and I think that's

1 probably why a lot of 'em's here is to -- they're
2 wondering why it has to be right through their area out
3 there. And so we'll turn --

4 Is there anybody else that's got any questions?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have one.

6 How much -- I guess this is 30 miles north from
7 what your original plan was going through the mining.
8 How much is that costing you?

9 MR. ORTH: Uh --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: An additional 30 miles
11 of power lines poles and right-of-way and all that
12 rigamarole, how much is that costing you?

13 MR. ORTH: We're -- right now -- right now our
14 estimates show between 45 and 50 million.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: \$50 million?

16 MR. ORTH: The original proposed route was a
17 22-mile line. It had the same Hooper Springs
18 substation, but it was a double-circuit line. It was
19 going to be partially funded by Bonneville, partially
20 funded by Lower Valley. And because it was two
21 circuits, it was six wires. It was -- it was not going
22 to be that expensive, but it still would be -- would be
23 up there.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: One more question, if I
25 may. You are worried about going through the mining

1 thing and disturbing all the dirt from the soil and the
2 pollution stuff there, but yet you don't mind going up
3 through our property and doing the same thing. So isn't
4 there a dichotomy there?

5 MR. ORTH: We -- we do care that, you know,
6 that we're -- that we're going to be disrupting your
7 property and --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But you are willing to
9 do it to us, but not to the mining company --

10 MR. ORTH: Well --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- that line?

12 MR. ORTH: Well, because there's ongoing
13 investigations on those Super Fund sites, again, it's
14 too high a risk for Bonneville Power.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, you just told him
16 that you have not discussed that with EPA yet?

17 MR. ORTH: Well --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I want to know why
19 you're not doing that?

20 MR. ORTH: I can't say yes or no that we have
21 talked to the EPA. I'll have to go back and talk to our
22 lawyers and we can certainly get back to the
23 commissioners on how we came to that. I know that we've
24 looked at it. We've talked to the Department of
25 Justice, and it's -- it's -- it's a risk to Bonneville

1 and all the ratepayers if we get sucked into a huge
2 litigation for cleanup if we turn over some dirt or
3 cause any further contamination of that area.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you really believe
5 that any of us think that that's true; that you are
6 going to be -- if you plant a pole in a Super Fund site
7 that Monsanto's going to go broke and all the other
8 phosphate companies are going to go broke and you're
9 going to have to pay to clean up the whole thing? That
10 isn't believable to a single person sitting here.

11 MR. ORTH: Yeah, I understand your point.
12 It -- it is -- it is hard to explain. It is -- it's a
13 lot of our lawyers making -- making the decision.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is there any way to
15 obtain a waiver from the mines regarding --

16 MR. ORTH: We -- we would have to be granted
17 immunity both from the private -- the landowners,
18 Monsanto and --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't want to jump in
20 out of turn, but didn't Monsanto already have that
21 offered to BPA? It's my understanding that they had a
22 pretty good sweet deal for BPA all cut and then they
23 backed out of it.

24 MR. ORTH: I would -- there was some talk. I
25 don't -- I don't -- I never saw a deal worked up.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: I happen to know of the
2 finalization of that. I know when I've talked with
3 Monsanto and Simplot, I said you have to get our
4 attorneys to approve this. And just as a general
5 statement, our attorneys looked at our risks. We have a
6 separate risk management organization that also looked
7 at Bonneville's risks. And what they tried to do is
8 prevent Bonneville from getting into a situation where
9 we may be liable for costs and which we're going to have
10 to spread to our ratepayers. And that's something that
11 we take very strongly. So that's -- it's protection.

12 And we understand that, Hey, why don't you at
13 least look at EPA and DEQ to see if you can get this
14 waiver. That's something, when I go back, I will try to
15 find out.

16 I don't know the status of Monsanto and
17 Simplot. They talked to our attorneys. I'm going to
18 find that out, as well.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Another thing that
20 occurs to me on that same issue is if it's that much
21 shorter to go the other route, it would appear that it
22 should be probably \$10 million less to construct, more
23 or less. And if it was, I seriously doubt you'd have
24 over a \$10 million fine for digging 20 or 30 post holes.

25 MR. ORTH: Well, part of the problem is that

1 you don't just get in trouble for the post holes you
2 dig.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's an access road,
4 right?

5 MR. ORTH: Well, but then if it reaches a
6 supply of water -- which there's plenty of creeks and
7 stuff up in those drainages -- and it gets down and it
8 gets all the way down, say down to the reservoir, then
9 look what we've done?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Eric, I just wanted to
11 make sure that I understand what you're saying. The
12 original route is about 22 miles long?

13 MR. ORTH: Correct.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This northern route is
15 how long?

16 MR. ORTH: 32.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And it's an additional
18 45 to 50 million over the cost of the shorter route?

19 MR. ORTH: No.

20 THE WITNESS: You said no?

21 MR. ORTH: No, no, no. The 45 to 50 is the
22 preliminary estimates for the entire project, which
23 would include the Hooper Springs substation, our
24 transmission line of 32 miles and additions to Lane's
25 Creek.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So what's the additional
2 cost to go the additional 10 miles, do you know?

3 MR. ORTH: I do not know.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you have even a
5 ballpark guess?

6 MR. ORTH: I don't. I don't want to say. I
7 can go back and we can get that information to you.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I want to know the
9 impact on the landowners. You mentioned that some
10 landowners have accepted \$500 in compensation. Is that
11 just for access to their property during this
12 preliminary phase? This isn't -- this isn't an easement
13 for the transmission line if you should decide to build
14 there, is it?

15 MR. ORTH: That's correct. That is purely for
16 right of entry. Nothing else. No binding agreement. I
17 think it's revokable at any time by the landowner.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So eventually if the
19 transmission line were built across private property, is
20 there compensation to the landowner?

21 MR. ORTH: Oh, certainly. We would have to --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How is that determined?

23 MR. ORTH: We would -- we would negotiate an
24 easement across -- across their property and we'd
25 appraise it.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And if the landowner
2 didn't want to negotiate an agreement, ultimately what
3 happens? Do you take the property? Do you take the
4 easement through eminent domain and force it to happen?

5 MR. ORTH: We -- we -- we don't want to do
6 that.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You don't want to do
8 that, but is that ultimately an option that you would
9 consider? I understand it's not something you would
10 want to do.

11 MR. ORTH: As a federal agency, yes, we have
12 that option, but we do absolutely everything that we
13 can. And there's landowners that we've already worked
14 with to change the route to still be on their property
15 but to change it so it can both meet our need and their
16 need. And so that's what we're really asking landowners
17 to work with us on.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you think it's
19 unlikely that in the end you'll put it across private
20 property where the landowners don't agree?

21 MR. ORTH: I'm not necessarily saying that
22 everyone is going to agree in its final location. Every
23 time you put an angle or a bend in the line, you have
24 got guy wires, things get bigger, costs go up. The
25 straighter the line, the cheaper it's going to be. So

1 it's -- we have to weigh the pros and cons on every
2 change that we make.

3 We are trying to share the burden of the line
4 across both private, state and federal lands. And I
5 think we've done a very good job of doing that.
6 There's -- there's -- a lot of mileage of the line is
7 across Forest Service and BLM and BIA property.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you give me an idea
9 of the time line? When do you hope to start
10 construction?

11 MR. ORTH: Our main focus right now is the NEPA
12 document, the environmental impact statement. We'll
13 have a draft of the EIS out later this summer, maybe --
14 maybe in September. That'll -- that'll go through a
15 couple of comment periods. We take that and we would
16 receive all the comments and address all the comments
17 and then hopefully have a final environmental impact
18 statement sometime in the spring of '13.

19 At that time, if the -- at that time, our
20 agency then would -- would possibly have a record of
21 decision to sign either go or no-go. And we're looking
22 at that in May of '13. After that, then as far as
23 starting construction, it essentially could start after
24 that, but certainly not before.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So have you been in

1 contact with all of the private landowners that have
2 property on the proposed route?

3 MR. ORTH: Yes.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So they're all aware of
5 how to get ahold of you with their concerns about this
6 thing?

7 MR. ORTH: As far as I know. As long as they
8 have an accurate mailing address with their property
9 title at the county.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If someone has concerns
11 and they feel like they haven't had the appropriate
12 opportunity to express those, what would you recommend
13 they do at this point?

14 MR. ORTH: I would recommend that they go to
15 our project website and submit comments there. If you
16 are here today, I can take names and numbers.

17 I do know that it does happen that -- that
18 property changes hands, records don't get updated with
19 the county and then people are left in the dark. And
20 it's unfortunate that that happens, but we do see it
21 happen from time to time. The folks may not live here
22 on the property; they live somewhere else, and so
23 tracking them down can be a chore, as well.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What's the -- what's
25 (inaudibles) number?

1 MR. ORTH: Do you have that handy?

2 MR. WILLIAMS: I don't have it handy. Do you
3 still have my email?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I do.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: It's on there, yes.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Then I'm not sure that
7 I'll be (inaudibles) --

8 MR. ORTH: Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So would you get that to
10 everybody on to sign this --

11 MR. ORTH: Yes, I will, yes.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Of course, that just has
13 names, so I don't know how you would --

14 MR. ORTH: We can track down the addresses.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, okay. And anybody
16 that wants that can leave their email address or a phone
17 number with you?

18 MR. ORTH: That's a great idea.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What percentage of
20 landowners have given you permission to go on their
21 property? I really haven't heard of anyone that's given
22 you permission, so I just wondered if you have -- the
23 majority of the people are --

24 MR. ORTH: Just looking at the private
25 landowners, yeah, we have the majority.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And a signed to go in --

2 MR. ORTH: Yes, just for right of entry. Just
3 for right of entry.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't believe that.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't either.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Your compensation
7 agreement (inaudible) will it be a one-time -- a
8 one-time fee to the landowners or will you be paying
9 them based on the rate of how much power is going to be
10 going across the line on an annual basis?

11 MR. ORTH: You are asking about the -- that's
12 the easement, the actual easement for the line?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Uh-huh.

14 MR. ORTH: It would be a one-time fee.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How is the federal
16 government compensated for the power lines or
17 transmission lines across the public property?

18 MR. ORTH: How are they compensated? They are
19 not compensated. We -- we write up an agreement. We
20 have easement documents that show where the lines exist
21 across the other federal agencies, but no money changes
22 hands.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So this will be a
24 one-time fee to these landowners, a one-time payment --

25 MR. ORTH: Payment --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- if they agree to
2 this?

3 MR. ORTH: -- yes.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) to go over
5 federal land if you don't have to pay for it, right?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

7 Who is funding the Bonneville Power
8 Administration for you to build this line?

9 MR. ORTH: All the ratepayers of the Northwest.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have a question
11 about -- you were talking about the cost of the
12 transmission lines, the shorter one and the longer one,
13 but it seemed like when you were talking about the
14 shorter one that you said that they were different kind
15 of wires and it was three wires instead of two wires or
16 something. And so it sounded to me a little bit like
17 apples and oranges. If that line that's going that's
18 the northern route were to be put on the southern route
19 with just what you're proposing for now, how much would
20 that cost versus how much it would cost to go the
21 northern route, the increase in that process?

22 MR. ORTH: That's where I need to get back and
23 see those estimates. Those estimates were put together
24 a long time ago, back in '04, and I -- I would have to
25 dig around to get those.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now, on the easement
2 that you want, this is an easement for the power poles
3 themselves, plus you are going to have to have a road
4 that goes through there so you can maintain those power
5 poles, correct?

6 MR. ORTH: That's correct.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And the
8 ratepayers -- I know you are looking out for the
9 ratepayers, but you are going the northern route and
10 it's going to cost a lot of money. You're going to have
11 to maintain those lines -- another 10 miles of lines
12 until the world comes to an end, I guess. That's going
13 to cost the ratepayers. Has anybody thought about
14 asking the Idaho congressional delegation to slip
15 something into a bill that would give you immunity from
16 this problem of crossing the mines? I think that our
17 senators and representatives, if we're going to save 10
18 or 15 or \$20 million, would be happy to do that and
19 especially in the state budgets.

20 MR. ORTH: That's a great --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May I ask you to do
22 that?

23 MR. WILLIAMS: That goes back to an earlier
24 question. I need to talk with our attorneys --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: -- about if we have had
2 conversations with BPA, DEQ and go from there and then
3 get back to the county commissioners and others.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If we have another
5 meeting, it might be good to have an attorney here to --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah (inaudibles) --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's one other part
8 I'd like to have clarified. I believe either you're
9 misinformed or I misunderstand, but I would like to see
10 by a show of hands all of the people in here that are
11 affected landowners who have given their permission for
12 the power company to go on their land. Just a simple
13 raising your hand.

14 I think that's a reverse majority.

15 MR. ORTH: Well, it's --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a story that I
17 think -- I never talked to nobody to --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Is that information we can share
20 because we entered into contractual arrangements with
21 (inaudible) landowners?

22 MR. ORTH: I don't know.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, another question
24 to clarify that. Would these landowners that have
25 already given you permission, would that be farmers out

1 here north of town that have possibly property lines
2 down there that you will follow and it wouldn't be a
3 great inconvenience or a distraction?

4 MR. ORTH: That's correct.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But none of the other
6 landowners that have got pristine property; is that
7 accurate?

8 MR. ORTH: What's accurate is we've -- we've
9 received some permission on properties. We've --
10 I've -- we've received the majority from the private
11 landowners. None of 'em are here today because they --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What you called just the
13 dry farmers, not the ones that's got the pristine
14 property in the mountains?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The ones that farm and
16 not live here?

17 MR. ORTH: I -- you're asking me to decide
18 what's pristine and what's --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Well, I think we
20 have all kind of got the picture.

21 Another man here has the floor now.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you know anything
23 about the flyway treaty? Have you heard about that?

24 MR. ORTH: No.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Three migration flyways.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Also, how about the
2 wetlands you will be crossing?

3 MR. ORTH: Well, yeah, there are a number of
4 wetlands.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How about the Lander
6 Trail?

7 MR. ORTH: The trail, yeah, we got the Lander
8 Trail. That's one of our cultural resources that we're
9 avoiding.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not by the way of your
11 map, you're not.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Going right through it.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right down in the center
15 of it.

16 MR. ORTH: Well, that's -- Mr. Cackley, that's
17 why we want to work with you and help determine where
18 the trail is because right now we can't even be on your
19 property to determine where the trail is to protect it
20 and so that's -- that's the issues that I'm running
21 into. So if we don't -- you know, if we have to -- if
22 we can't get on the properties, we have to make
23 assumptions what's on the property and keep moving
24 forward so we can do our environmental analysis. And
25 the more information we get, the better the document's

1 going to be. But unfortunately, if we can't get on the
2 property, we have to make some assumptions and guesses.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You can do that, but you
4 can't talk to the EPA?

5 MR. ORTH: I -- I imagine we've had
6 conversations with the EPA. I don't know what they
7 entailed. But we'll -- we can get back to the
8 commissioners on what were discussed.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you have a handout as
10 to where this proposed line is -- the two routes, the
11 two different routes, the short route and the long
12 route?

13 MR. ORTH: I do have --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Keith, here's the long
16 route, the north one. But we don't have the one --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You don't happen to have
18 that?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't have that it.

20 MR. ORTH: I've got -- I've got 10. I honestly
21 wasn't expecting -- I apologize -- this many folks. I
22 knew the commissioners would be here.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, is this just the
24 northern route?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, that's the

1 northern route there. That's the one we're talking
2 about now.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, if you've got the
4 information, they sent the map in the letter, didn't
5 they, to all of you?

6 (Inaudibles).

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll make some copies.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: While you do that, earlier for
9 those who utilize the computer and would like to find
10 that (inaudible), if you email me -- I hope this is easy
11 enough for you to follow -- jjWilliams@BPA.gov. That's
12 my email address. And, now, if you send me an email, I
13 will send you the website directly to the project
14 information so that you don't have to go to Bonneville's
15 website trying to find out where this particular project
16 is.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I would just be
18 asking -- well, but is this still just a proposal? If
19 we let y'all in the easement and study it, it's not
20 cut-and-dried that you are going to do that?

21 MR. ORTH: That's correct. It's just a
22 proposal and we're -- we're using information that we
23 get from the land to put together our environmental
24 analysis.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, where they showed

1 me where mine was, you're going to go through up on a
2 hill with rocks. It sounds like a mess to me, you know.

3 MR. ORTH: Yeah, there's -- there's some tough
4 terrain out there.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah.

6 MR. ORTH: You know, we've -- we've made it a
7 little tougher on ourselves by trying to avoid the land
8 that's being farmed or, if we can't avoid it, staying on
9 the edges of the fields.

10 Our original design, we were looking at wood
11 poles, which typically there is two wood poles 12 feet
12 apart. And what we've moved to is a single steel pole
13 through the area that's -- that's cultivated fields to
14 help lessen the impact. Again, we're putting the
15 structures on the edges of your property line, as well,
16 so -- to the farmers, they -- they -- to lessen the
17 impact there.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How wide of an area
19 would you have to clear-cut when you cross through
20 timberland?

21 MR. ORTH: 100 feet. 100 feet is our typical
22 easement width. That hasn't changed from the beginning
23 of the project.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And when you said you
25 were going to take out a single pole when it goes across

1 cropland and when it comes across grazing lands, you are
2 going to go back to the double pole?

3 MR. ORTH: To the double-width pole.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that will still be
5 100 feet?

6 MR. ORTH: Yeah.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And the road would be in
8 that 100 feet, too?

9 MR. ORTH: The majority of it. There will --
10 there are areas that you -- we run into wetlands or
11 creeks and you can't cross those and so sometimes we
12 don't have a continuous road.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That southern or shorter
14 route, that goes -- it's up -- and I haven't been out
15 there for years, I have to apologize -- but that runs
16 close to a county road now where your trucks could
17 follow that if you had a problem out there. Is that not
18 true? Or a good part of it does anyway.

19 MR. ORTH: I believe it did. I -- yeah, the
20 China Hat Road or -- yeah, it followed China Hat Road up
21 into the hill there, yeah.

22 When the project was that -- when it was that
23 route, again, it was a joint project with Bonneville
24 Power Administration and Lower Valley. We were funding
25 two-thirds of it; they were funding a third of it. And

1 they were going to own and operate the line after they
2 were done. Completely different than our proposed
3 project now, which Bonneville will construct, own and
4 operate this transmission line and substations.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This project is to
6 provide power running to the east; is that not correct?

7 MR. ORTH: The transmission line itself, it's a
8 link in the series in this entire electrical grid to
9 help southeast Idaho here. It's another link that we
10 need to stabilize the grid.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So it's going to be back
12 and forth. You are not going to --

13 MR. ORTH: Yes.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- send power to a mine
15 or something, this is --

16 MR. ORTH: That's correct.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- this is a larger
18 implication than that?

19 MR. ORTH: When we build the line, it can push
20 and pull power, either way, depending on where the need
21 is at the time.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Isn't it true most of
23 it's going to Jackson Hole?

24 MR. ORTH: It is true that there is a lot of
25 load in Jackson, but there's also a lot of folks that

1 live here, too, that need power.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not going to Jackson
3 though.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have we looked at
5 bringing power to this area from the east, like, into
6 Wyoming and bringing it this way?

7 MR. ORTH: Bonneville hasn't. That's outside
8 of our balancing authority. We -- we -- we're not
9 obligated to -- to serve power coming out of Wyoming.
10 Is that --

11 MR. WILLIAMS: It's on, like, the Jim Bridger
12 plant. That would be Rocky Mountain and Idaho Power.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudibles).

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe you should talk to
15 them with the EPA and see if you could work something
16 out that way, too, because you're going to be talking to
17 'em before we do all this.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How deeply do you think
19 you're going to sink the holes for the power poles?

20 MR. ORTH: Typically it's 10 to 12 feet.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And do you think that
22 going through the Super Fund site and going down 10 feet
23 would cause you to have liability for chemicals going
24 down the creeks like selenium?

25 MR. ORTH: Yes.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you think that's a
2 realistic assumption?

3 MR. ORTH: Yeah. Not necessarily the digging
4 of the hole, you know. It's more the -- the roads, the
5 area around the pole that you've got to establish a
6 landing for the heavy equipment, the cranes that you
7 have to bring in. That original route, too, it was --
8 like I had mentioned, it was six wires instead of three.
9 It was going to be on single steel poles that were going
10 to be 100 to 120 feet tall, a lot bigger. A lot of 'em
11 had concrete foundations, so then you bring in concrete
12 trucks, rebar. It was -- it's a -- it's lot -- a lot
13 more of a line than what we're proposing now.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many poles would be
15 on (inaudibles) -- how many poles are we talking about?

16 MR. ORTH: I honestly don't know. I was not
17 involved at that time. Again, that was a Lower Valley
18 Energy project. I just know that there was four sites
19 that are under current investigation that we were
20 crossing --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is the power that you
22 are going to (inaudible) over this line, is that excess
23 power that you have on hand now or are you going to have
24 to create that somehow?

25 MR. ORTH: It's not -- it's not a plus or minus

1 power. It's just the fact that we need a transmission
2 link there to help support the whole system. The power
3 comes and goes and moves all over the system like a
4 spiderweb. But without that link, then -- then there's
5 other vulnerabilities in the system. And that's where
6 we are concerned in the middle of winter we start losing
7 a line. And then if you lose a second line, that's when
8 the whole of southeast Idaho gets into some real
9 trouble.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You talked about the
11 south route over the mining property. Is some of it
12 unmined property that might be permitted in the future
13 that you're protecting?

14 MR. ORTH: There is -- yeah, there is -- yeah,
15 not all of it's mining property. The problem is,
16 though, we need to get from the south (inaudibles) --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Those are the two
18 proposed routes?

19 MR. ORTH: The -- the original southern route
20 there, you can see (inaudibles) -- it's pink, but this
21 map, you can see all the squares on there. Those are
22 all the potential pinks that are mine areas that we're
23 trying to avoid.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So some of 'em aren't
25 mines; they're even permitted there.

1 MR. ORTH: No, but (inaudibles) --

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now you're trying to
3 protect those, too?

4 MR. ORTH: Well, not protect 'em. The thing is
5 we have to get over here to this green line and it looks
6 like (inaudibles). We have to make that connection all
7 the way to that green line, which is the Lower Valley
8 transmission line, the Valley does (inaudibles).

9 So you see the yellow -- not yellow -- you
10 see -- you can't even see the (inaudibles) --

11 Yeah, it didn't pick up the (inaudibles).

12 Oh, well, the yellow route is the -- is the
13 (inaudibles).

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you done any
15 studies on earthquakes?

16 MR. ORTH: We do have a geotech who's actually
17 going to be out this week looking at some stuff. We
18 look at potential landslide areas. We know what side of
19 the (inaudible) out here and we do design for it, yes.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You have (inaudible)
21 poles designated on my place. What kind of fire
22 protection do you have?

23 MR. ORTH: Typically what we do is we control
24 the weeds and vegetation about a 10-foot diameter around
25 the base of the poles.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I mean, if the power
2 line goes down.

3 MR. ORTH: If the power line -- oh, because of
4 a fire?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, anything, wind. I
6 know of farmers that's had some poles sheared off from
7 wind shears. You just tromped his grain to pieces
8 trying to get it out.

9 MR. ORTH: We would -- we would come in and --
10 and replace the wood poles that are burnt. It would be
11 an emergency. We'd be in as soon as we can. And --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would you compensate --
13 is what he's asking -- for the damages?

14 MR. ORTH: Oh, damages because of the wood
15 poles that burned up?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Correct.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, no. Private
18 property.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Private property.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You know, that's our
21 livelihood you are dealing with.

22 MR. ORTH: We compensate the landowner if we
23 were to (inaudible).

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: To what extent?

25 MR. ORTH: We -- we appraise the value and

1 negotiate that with each landowner.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just for the first time
3 initial purchase, right, that's where I am only to see
4 the money?

5 MR. ORTH: That's correct.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If the landowner is
7 being damaged from a fallen line overheating or
8 something and there was a fire that caused damage or if
9 you had a pole fall over and you had to bring equipment
10 in and tore up my field while the grain hadn't been cut,
11 would the landowner be compensated for that?

12 MR. ORTH: Yes, yes. If we -- yeah, if we have
13 to go in there in an emergency and cause excess crop
14 damage, especially outside of our easement area, yes, we
15 would certainly compensate the landowner for any lost
16 revenue, yes, certainly. I think maybe that was more
17 your question.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My question is why are
19 you doing it?

20 MR. ORTH: Why are we doing it? We're doing it
21 because the -- the southeast Idaho grid needs some help
22 and, without it, we could be in a lot of trouble. And
23 we want to keep the lights on for all of you individuals
24 that live in this area.

25 MR. WILLIAMS: We have to meet reliability

1 standards.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, you guys are going
3 through ground that's been there for generation after
4 generation. I mean, our ancestors would just roll over
5 in their graves if they could see what you're doing.
6 And we've got -- now, we've got to look at it for the
7 rest of our lives.

8 MR. ORTH: It's not -- yeah, it's not an easy
9 thing. I understand it'll have -- it could have great
10 impact.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, you don't. You
12 don't understand.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You know, it would be
14 one thing, though, if you were going -- had a proposed
15 line that went straight over that valley, then we could
16 almost thank you for doing what you could to go around
17 this. But I still think going about twice as far, I
18 think you should be able to do some -- if you've got
19 really good lawyers, you should be able to arrive at
20 something that would protect you and build it
21 straighter, a shorter route.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Why don't you just
23 follow Highway 34?

24 MR. ORTH: Well, we do for the most part. We'd
25 end up with it on more private land if we do that.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

2 MR. ORTH: Well, you actually land on more
3 federal land and we get away --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They've run into the
6 bird refuge.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, that's true.

8 MR. ORTH: Yeah, that was one of our concerns
9 was the bird refuge.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) on the
11 flyway pattern, that's not where you begin.

12 MR. ORTH: When we're dealing with the flyway
13 pattern, we're -- we're tucking the transmission line in
14 up against the side of the hill there, putting it in the
15 in the trees, you know, in the trees in the buffer and
16 hopefully there won't be any avian collisions. That's
17 our -- that's our mitigation for the flyway.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you have to resort to
19 eminent domain (inaudible), what would be the time
20 (inaudible), like, for example, the person is served and
21 then (inaudible)?

22 MR. ORTH: We -- we don't want to go there.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, let me just ask an
24 additional question. If you go to the process of
25 eminent domain, it's (inaudible), correct? I mean --

1 MR. ORTH: Not necessarily, no. A judge has to
2 decide --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, but --

4 MR. ORTH: -- in favor of us or in favor of the
5 landowner.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But percentage-wise,
7 most of the time, if it does go to eminent domain, it
8 goes to the party that's attempting to do (inaudible) --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The only thing you're
10 going to be arguing about is what's fair market value.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It would be the price,
12 then. It wouldn't be whether it was justification of
13 taking the land or not?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It most likely would.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you seen in your
17 past any other places where you have actually buried the
18 lines instead of suspending it up on poles?

19 MR. ORTH: We don't bury the lines. If you
20 want to talk costs, a 32-mile line, that would be maybe
21 \$500 million to bury 32 miles and you would completely
22 destroy an entire swath of about 20 feet wide. You have
23 to dig up all that earth 20 feet wide, probably, like,
24 10 feet, 15 feet deep to bury that line. It's a huge
25 environmental impact and the cost is way too much for

1 the agency and our ratepayers to (inaudible).

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're talking about the
3 mines and the pollution of selenium and stuff. But have
4 you -- without going on private ground, have you dug any
5 holes that deep to see if it would dig up any selenium
6 in that area?

7 MR. ORTH: No, we have not.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Because we are a
9 watershed up there, especially where we are in the south
10 end, and all our water goes on down to Blackfoot and
11 around, keeps going down -- down in that area, so that's
12 why I was just wondering if you had done anything like
13 that.

14 MR. ORTH: No, we have not, again, even just
15 doing a test pit on the risk of digging something up.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When you talked about
17 this is in response to a perceived instability in your
18 grid, is this instability currently in your grid or is
19 it a proposed or an expected instability that will arise
20 in the future?

21 MR. ORTH: It currently is not instability.
22 Based on expected load growth, it will become an
23 instability.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And this is premised on
25 population growth for this region?

1 MR. ORTH: Yes.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How big of a region are
3 we talking about? Eastern Idaho, all of Idaho, part of
4 Wyoming?

5 MR. ORTH: Eastern Idaho and western Wyoming,
6 yeah.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

8 MR. ORTH: Yeah. The -- however, our -- we're
9 regulated by the Federal Electrical Regulatory
10 Commission and we have to maintain to the standards that
11 keep us operating our system at a safe level, so we
12 can't wait until after we pass that instability.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

14 MR. ORTH: Then we're operating our system
15 outside of what we're regulated to do and, therefore,
16 then we can be fined.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So how far out do you
18 project your -- your need to where it affects your
19 infrastructure to stabilize your grid?

20 MR. ORTH: Typically 25 years. We'll even run
21 some 50-year studies. But obviously the further you get
22 out, the numbers get sketchier. But 25 years is a very
23 common number to look at for load growth.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the perception of
25 instability with this particular 32-mile line could

1 potentially be something you are looking at 20, 25 years
2 in the future?

3 MR. ORTH: The -- the instability itself?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, for this region.

5 MR. ORTH: Yeah, if load growth began to
6 decrease, yeah.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So it could be
8 unnecessary if population were to decline or remain
9 static?

10 MR. ORTH: Yes.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

12 MR. ORTH: That's correct.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But didn't you say right
15 now you're projecting the instability will start showing
16 up about 2014 or --

17 MR. ORTH: The winter of 2014 and 2015, that's
18 where our instability in the system starts showing up,
19 yes. And we -- and we -- our system, we would be
20 operating it, again, at a level that would not meet our
21 regulation as an agency to FERC.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I've got one more
23 question on the soil disturbance. When we started
24 talking again about cutting across the mines, you
25 mentioned the steel towers and they were big and

1 required the huge footprint, you know, with a cement
2 base and everything, and that would cause the
3 disturbance. Well, that -- is there a reason that a
4 similar transmission line like is proposed through the
5 Wayan area, the double wooden poles that don't require
6 that kind of a footprint couldn't be used there?

7 MR. ORTH: Uh --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It looks like that that
9 would take care of most of the soil disturbance. Then
10 about all you would have -- you could haul off all
11 that -- if that soil was contaminated that you dug up,
12 remove it, fill the hole with cement and the pole and
13 then all you'd have to do is haul in dirt for your road
14 or gravel, and it looks like it would be a minimal deal.

15 I'm not an engineer, but it doesn't look -- it
16 looks like the pole (inaudibles) number of miles would
17 appear is what it looks like, you know, for not being
18 able to take a transmission line across there without
19 causing any kind of major environmental impact.

20 MR. ORTH: You're talking about the southern
21 route?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, the southern route,
23 correct. If you used the same type of transmission
24 line, just a double pole.

25 MR. ORTH: I --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Unless there's a reason
2 that can't be used.

3 MR. ORTH: Engineering, we -- we -- it would --
4 it would be difficult for us because we're talking six
5 wires instead of three. We'd have a minimal -- we'd
6 have three wood poles for every structure. That's our
7 standard design.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, isn't there just
9 two going through the -- through the Wayan area? I
10 thought it was a two-pole system?

11 MR. ORTH: It is primarily a two-pole system,
12 but -- but that's also only carrying three wires. If we
13 go with the southern route, we have to do six wires
14 because we're not linking into a substation at the end.
15 We're hooking into a line, and so it's got to be a loop
16 in/loop out scenario, so that's what makes it six wires
17 instead of three wires.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

19 MR. ORTH: And the Wayan route is only three
20 wires.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Gary. One more. Gary.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, sorry. John. Gary
23 had his hand up there first. Next will be you.

24 Gary.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He was talking about if

1 you go the southern route, you were going to tie into
2 the end of that line. They've got the substation down
3 on Highway 34 in the Lane's Creek area. If that's going
4 to be a problem, they could move that substation to the
5 other end of the line so you can tie back into the sub
6 on that (inaudible) --

7 MR. ORTH: Moving a whole substation like that
8 could cost 10 to \$15 million. I don't think Lower
9 Valley is going to want their ratepayers to eat that
10 cost. It's not an option we looked at, that's all I can
11 say.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Senator.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Eric, just looking at
15 the map, it looks like there would be a way to realize
16 most of the southern route and bypass the mines. I
17 don't know the geology or the topography of that area.
18 I'm guessing there's probably other obstacles to doing
19 that, but do you know that for sure that you couldn't
20 reroute this around the mines and if you could still
21 make that work?

22 MR. ORTH: We -- engineers early on looked at
23 that. There are some very skinny gaps in there. You're
24 following the Blackfoot River drainage.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You only need 100 feet,

1 so...

2 MR. ORTH: You only need 100 feet. You're
3 going to -- we're going to be right in there with the
4 Blackfoot River drainage, which typically that river
5 meanders so much you've got a huge wetland.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You are anyway
7 (inaudible).

8 MR. ORTH: Yeah, we -- definitely we'd cross
9 it --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So I guess the question
11 is have you seriously looked at that? But if not, could
12 you?

13 MR. ORTH: We haven't recently, but we could
14 look into that option.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I know you'll have
16 concerns with property owners regardless of which route
17 you take, but this is a shorter route. It would impact
18 fewer landowners, I would say, and potentially keep you
19 away from the mines that are concerned -- environmental
20 concerns you have there.

21 MR. ORTH: I can take that back and look into
22 it more. Thanks.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Chris?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think what my last

1 question would be when you estimated your costs, how did
2 you estimate what the compensation was going to be for
3 the private landowners?

4 MR. ORTH: Our estimates that we have right now
5 are varied. We don't -- I mean, we use our -- I don't
6 know -- a typical 100-foot easement in a combination of
7 cropland and grazing land. I -- I -- I'd have to go
8 back and look at all the little details. I mean, that
9 is just a ballpark and that's -- we'll -- in our draft
10 environmental impact statement, we'll probably have a
11 more refined estimate in there and you can look at that
12 number. But that's just a ballpark that's (inaudible).

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And what I'm saying is
14 you have an estimate of 40 to \$50 million to come around
15 and I don't think you've taken into consideration what
16 it's likely to cost you to compensate the landowners.

17 MR. ORTH: Okay. Well, we will --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Because I guarantee you,
19 we've been through this before with the Lander Trail and
20 we won our case at that point. We did not accept the
21 low-ball figure that was given to us. And I don't think
22 anybody in this room is going to accept the low-ball
23 figure that you guys are going to throw out. We're
24 going to have to look at this thing for the rest of our
25 lives, for our children's lives, and very few people in

1 this room ever intend to sell their land. We -- most of
2 us have children who will inherit this land and we
3 really don't want to look at a 100-foot swath of power
4 lines going through what -- when my father's estate was
5 appraised -- was designated the highest and best use was
6 the pristine value of the land and recreation or
7 greater. So you are just voiding the appraised value of
8 our land that we have actual appraisals on this land
9 which that's what they say the best use of the land is.

10 But you're not only destroying our values,
11 you're destroying other people's values whom you're not
12 touching because they have to look at it, too. So I
13 think you'd better take that into consideration when you
14 give your ballpark figures because there isn't anybody
15 in this room who's given you permission to even come in
16 and survey.

17 And if you're going to use eminent domain,
18 which I think is probably the only way you're going to
19 get this ground, you know, there will be something other
20 than low ballpark. You need to go across the land
21 that's already been ruined by the mining, not ruin --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: As I've mentioned
23 before, though, we are -- we've talked about the
24 Blackfoot drainage. We are -- as much snow as we get up
25 there, we are a lot of the watershed for the counties

1 down below us, a lot, and that's -- that's what
2 (inaudibles), you know, as well.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Any questions?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You've talked about a
5 lot of things here and you got a lot of holes in your
6 program, a lot of things that you haven't done that
7 could be done to alleviate the concerns that we're
8 expressing here today. Are you going to do anything
9 about this or are you just giving us lip service?

10 MR. ORTH: I'll go back and -- I believe we've
11 actually done a lot more than I've stated today.
12 Unfortunately, I'm not the best -- I'm not a lawyer.
13 I'm not a realty agent. I -- I don't have all the
14 answers, but we will go -- I will go back, yes, and make
15 sure --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think we need to have
17 at least one more meeting on this to find out what
18 you've done with these suggestions and holes that we're
19 finding that you haven't done.

20 MR. ORTH: We --

21 MR. WILLIAMS: We will have a follow-up
22 meeting. We did not expect --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, it's only going to
24 get worse if you guys keep going with this
25 (inaudibles) --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Don't you remember the
2 meeting at the high school? It was (inaudibles) --

3 MR. WILLIAMS: What I am saying is that if we
4 would have known the type of questions that was going to
5 be fielded today, we would have brought our
6 environmental specialist, who is also a project leader
7 on the environmental side, and probably brought our
8 attorney who deals with environmental and property so
9 that your -- the questions that you gave us today could
10 be answered. So we definitely will have a follow-up
11 because you raised a lot of issues that maybe I wasn't
12 as aware of as I am today and so this is definitely on
13 my screen.

14 And, as I mentioned at the beginning, my
15 responsibility is to have a positive relationship with
16 the State of Idaho, the citizens, the elected officials,
17 government officials. And today I -- I can promise you
18 we will have a follow-up meeting. We will more than
19 attempt to address your issues and concerns.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The best one I've heard
21 so far is that gentleman sitting by you. If you look at
22 this map, all you have to do is change a few of the
23 directions in there and this whole problem goes away.
24 And I don't know why you guys haven't done that.

25 MR. ORTH: We have done that. We --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But it seems so easy --

2 MR. ORTH: I know.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- if you look at this
4 map, just swing it around a little bit and it all goes
5 away. Avoid the mines, avoid all this stuff, change the
6 direction a little bit and you don't even need to bother
7 us up here (inaudibles).

8 MR. ORTH: I'll look into it some more.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

10 MR. ORTH: We will -- like John said, we'll
11 definitely be having a public meeting when we publish
12 the draft environmental impact statement sometime in
13 September, that's for sure. Probably have two meetings
14 actually, because I know --

15 MR. WILLIAMS: We probably need to have one
16 before then.

17 MR. ORTH: Good idea.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Agreed.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. That sounds good.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Next time let the
21 hunters know about this deal on Gravel Creek.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah (inaudibles).

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Williams --

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Jjwilliams@BPA.gov.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just one suggestion. I

1 think that what the attitude of most of the folks here,
2 when you bring more people back, it probably would be
3 good if they were straight talk and not super polished,
4 you know, to gloss over something just -- I don't think
5 anybody is going to buy -- I think you've probably
6 figured that out. Nobody is going to buy a well --
7 well-spoken excuse. Whatever it is, I would hope that
8 there would be some straight talk on what some
9 alternatives can be, what some possibilities could be
10 and how everybody could work this out so it's
11 satisfactory.

12 MR. ORTH: I do apologize that we weren't as
13 prepared as we should have been.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, I -- I'm sorry
15 that you came, you know, kind of got blindsided. I've
16 had that happen to me, too, and it's not fun. But
17 nonetheless, some good legitimate points, I think, have
18 been raised.

19 MR. ORTH: Yes.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And thank you for your
21 efforts in trying to present some -- some answers.

22 MR. ORTH: Thank you for having us.

23 And thank you, everyone, too, for showing up.
24 I know it's not easy getting here.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'd like to thank

1 everybody that was in here that participated. It was
2 very orderly. Nobody got unruly. I think that's very
3 good. That's very (inaudibles). I
4 compliment everybody.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudibles) at least we
6 leave our guns outside (inaudibles).

7 MR. ORTH: (Inaudibles) -- I was a bad guy to
8 first step in the door.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. We
10 appreciate it.

11 MR. ORTH: Thank you.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

13 (MEETING CONCLUDED.)

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HSTP13 0029

CARIBOU COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETING
BPA HOOPER SPRINGS TRANSMISSION PROJECT

DATE: September 24, 2012

PLACE: Soda Springs, Idaho

Transcribed By: Michael R. King, WA CCR 2655

APPEARANCES

Mr. John Williams - BPA Constituent Account Executive

Mr. Eric Orth - BPA Project Manager

Ms. Tish Eaton - BPA Environmental Crew

Mr. Joe Cottrell - BPA

Mr. John Chapburn - Office of Energy Resources

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Whoever speaks, it looks
3 like as many people as is in here, let's go with a
4 minute time limit. And state your name before you start
5 to speak because we'll have it all recorded.

6 Anything else, (inaudible)?

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudibles).

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Who wants to go
9 first then? John?

10 MR. WILLIAMS: I guess, good afternoon. This
11 has been quite a process for us and we took it very
12 seriously. As you know, we met with you back in June
13 and there was quite a lot of concerns regarding our
14 transmission project, and so I wanted to make sure we
15 could answer -- since we couldn't answer all your
16 questions at that time, so I did bring more of the
17 project team with me this time. And I think there is
18 about 10 of us, so we should be able to answer most, if
19 not all, of your questions.

20 Last Friday, I sent to the commissioners and
21 other elected officials how we would move forward in
22 coordinating with you on this very important project.
23 This was started to be answered in a separate document
24 some of the issues and concerns you raised back in June.

25 Just quickly, I want to go over how I would

1 like to try to move forward in today's meeting so that
2 we can definitely hear all of the concerns and issues
3 and try to address them. But first, I would like to
4 introduce some of the core people that I bring to you
5 today at this meeting.

6 You've met Eric Orth, our project manager for
7 this meeting.

8 The next person is our attorney, Ernie Estes --
9 I hope I don't get any of this wrong -- our
10 environmental crew, Tish Eaton. And --

11 MR. GUSTAVSON: Zach Gustavson.

12 MR. SANDERS: Steve Sanders.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Steve Sanders.

14 And we have some other people here, but I will
15 let the project core project team introduce those folks
16 to you later.

17 And our realty person on the ground is Joe
18 Katerro, so I just wanted to just mention that because
19 those would be the core people addressing the issues and
20 concerns.

21 You should also know that the Office of Energy
22 Resources interim director John Chapburn met with us
23 back on August 31. They are a cooperating agency, which
24 means that they're going to gather and speak for the
25 State of Idaho through the governor's office. So other

1 state entities, particularly departments who may have
2 some things or input will funnel their information and
3 concerns to that particular office, the Office of Energy
4 Resources.

5 Now, John had some issues and concerns, as
6 well, that was aligned with what we heard back in June.
7 So, again, we're here to package that so that we could
8 provide that information to you.

9 And lastly, moving forward, we would like to
10 also mention what our tentative schedule would be for
11 the -- for the project moving forward.

12 And with that, I'm going to let the project
13 manager, Eric, present the information that he would
14 like to put before you.

15 MR. ORTH: Thank you, John.

16 So you'd mentioned one minute. I'm going to --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could I get your name?

18 MR. ORTH: Oh, Eric Orth, project manager for
19 Bonneville Power Administration.

20 (Inaudibles).

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. The presenters
22 will have more than one minute.

23 MR. ORTH: Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And it will be questions
25 that will be held to a minute.

1 MR. ORTH: Okay. Thank you, Commissioner.
2 Thanks, everyone, also, for making the trip here today
3 and thank you for having us back here. A lot of
4 familiar faces here today and we're hoping that we can
5 answer the questions that you had back in June, as well
6 as John Chapburn's questions and any of 'em that we have
7 today. We have a much bigger staff here that -- that
8 should be able to answer them.

9 Back when we met in June, there was a lot of
10 questions focused on our original southern route that
11 Lower Valley Energy had presented as the original
12 proposed plan of action for the transmission line. And
13 so we got a sense in the meeting back in June that --
14 that there was a lot of questions on why Bonneville
15 had -- had abandoned that and had we looked at seriously
16 keeping the line in that position. So we took that back
17 to our office over the last few months and dug up -- dug
18 up the information that we had back in 2010 when we
19 first started the project. We went through our
20 environmental assessment with the Lower Valley route
21 and -- and didn't go forward with that.

22 And so after that, that's when we started
23 looking at -- looking at first that that original route
24 would be -- would be possible still. And then from
25 that, we further developed the northern alternative.

1 The southern alternative -- one of the first
2 things we did, we did talk to Lower Valley Energy about
3 being able to lower our risks, environmental and legal
4 and financial risks, by, you know, continuing to put a
5 line in that -- in that original route. They weren't
6 interested, I guess, in giving Bonneville any kind of
7 hold harmless agreement by moving forward, and so
8 that -- that's -- that was one big issue for us.

9 And then -- so then when Bonneville first
10 started our -- our proposed project and started our
11 environmental impact statement, NEPA process for the new
12 proposed plan, we did -- we did sit down and meet with
13 some of the mining companies, talked to them over in
14 Pocatello about -- about what -- what our environmental
15 and legal risks are and by, you know, putting -- putting
16 a line across the area that's mined here to the south --
17 or excuse me -- to the north of Soda Springs.

18 There's certainly -- I think a lot of you've
19 seen the maps with our mine lease areas. There's also
20 the areas that are currently under investigation, areas
21 for -- for the Super Fund sites. And so we -- we
22 discussed with them, you know, what -- what we could do
23 to -- to also enter into some kind of hold harmless
24 agreement. Some of the mining companies agree that we
25 could look at it. One of 'em, unfortunately, did not

1 agree. So we were left then with, again, with a large
2 risk environmentally and legal risks that could impact
3 and become a financial risk to Bonneville and their
4 ratepayers.

5 Then we also did discuss with EPA, talked to
6 them. Unfortunately, within the CERCLA law that -- that
7 manages the Super Fund site, once it's identified and
8 being investigated, there's -- there's not a way to
9 enter into a hold harmless agreement with the company.
10 We -- we still could be held -- held liable. And so
11 those are some of the issues that -- some of the big
12 hurdles that we saw in that original -- original
13 southern route.

14 And some of the things we've done since then,
15 this summer, we -- we did go back and we've talked to
16 Lower Valley because they did have a number of easements
17 that they had purchased, both from private landowners,
18 from the mining companies, and also established
19 easements across the Forest Service land and some BLM
20 land. Took a look at their easements and we did decide
21 they were transferrable.

22 Some of the biggest concerns that we have,
23 though, is they didn't include any access roads. And so
24 our -- Bonneville's standard is to have full year-round
25 access to each one of the structures. And so with that,

1 we couldn't -- we would have to go back and -- even if
2 we were able to transfer those easements, we'd have to
3 go back and negotiate access roads across those
4 easements and, also, any access roads that didn't fall
5 within those easements. So that was -- that was going
6 to be a large hurdle.

7 One of -- one of our concerns with the
8 mining -- the number of mine lease areas out there
9 across where the southern original route crossed is,
10 from an operational standpoint, putting a transmission
11 line across an area that has a high potential of future
12 mining. Since -- since '08 when that original route was
13 scoped out, there's actually already been an area that
14 was a potential mine at the time and now it's going to
15 become a mine. And so that -- that shows to us that
16 that is an active area of change. And so putting a line
17 across that area is -- is a risk to Bonneville that --
18 that we would potentially in the future have to move
19 that line at our cost unless we negotiated an easement
20 at the time it's signed. And so with that, that's a --
21 it's a -- it's a -- it's a big problem for us to put a
22 line that's going to -- we have to pay for it twice and
23 move it again sometime in the future.

24 Some of the other questions we had in general
25 about landowners and willing landowners, you know,

1 allowing us, I guess, on their property to investigate
2 and look at the -- look at our proposed route to the
3 north, just I want you to know that we're continuing to
4 work with each individual landowner, looking at ways
5 to -- to minimize their impacts, changing routes,
6 changing access roads. We've made a few changes since
7 we met in June to help some landowners. It has moved
8 the line across some new landowners, so we are having to
9 work with them -- the new landowners, that is.

10 Some of the questions that came from John
11 Chapburn, Department -- or the Office of Energy
12 Resources, you were asking about access and staying as
13 close to Highway 34 as possible, minimizing our need to
14 build a lot of access roads. And we certainly -- our
15 proposed action that follows the northern route, we do
16 follow Highway 34 very closely.

17 There are two areas that we do vary away from
18 it. One is across state land and it's -- it was mainly
19 a -- an issue with the terrain and, also, just trying to
20 sight the line as straight as possible.

21 Another area is up around the Gray's Lake area
22 and trying to stay away from that migrating bird path,
23 so it's where we cut up and over the hill, across the
24 Forest Service land. And so that -- that was -- one of
25 the main reasons is to stay away from the birds' flight

1 path and, as well as, it would have impacted a handful
2 of other landowners and more mileage across private
3 landowners.

4 There was talk last time -- questions about how
5 we sighted the line across public and private. I think
6 there was the perception maybe the southern route
7 crossed a lot more public lands. We went back and
8 looked at that and it actually crosses a lot more
9 private land -- percentage of private land versus public
10 federal land than our northern route. Our northern
11 route, it still crosses a fair amount of private
12 landowners, but we do cross a lot BLM, BIA and a good
13 chunk of Forest Service land.

14 When we met in June, too, I think there was
15 some -- some questions of cost that we couldn't --
16 couldn't answer that day. We went back and looked at
17 our estimates. You know, the southern route, it was
18 a -- it's a double-circuit line where each pole would
19 carry six wires. It was estimated at 22 miles in
20 length. Our northern alternative, which -- which will
21 hook either into the line or into a substation because
22 it -- it -- it connects -- a direct connection to two
23 substations. We only had to make it a single circuit
24 where there is only three wires held by each pole and it
25 was 32 miles.

1 And looking at the cost of the shorter 22-mile
2 double-circuit line or the longer 32-mile single-circuit
3 line, it was -- it was a wash as far as the estimated
4 cost at this time. And so I just wanted to share that
5 with you.

6 I believe that is all that I wanted to -- to
7 cover. I was hoping maybe if Steve or Ernie had
8 anything to add at this point or John.

9 MR. ESTES: Well, I think it might be better --
10 Ernie Estes from BPA.

11 I think it might be better to solicit questions
12 at this time, if that's okay with the commissioners.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MR. ORTH: And I can certainly help facilitate
15 answering questions I can and then I can direct the ones
16 that I can't answer to the folks that are here today.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

18 MR. ORTH: If that works for you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Questions?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I've got a question.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. On the north
23 versus the south route, private versus public, wouldn't
24 it be true that there is maybe less public land that you
25 go across, but there is a larger percent of private land

1 that you do not go across because the route is not
2 shorter? So if you had total miles of private one side
3 versus the other, north versus the south, there would
4 still be significantly less on -- on -- on private land,
5 wouldn't it?

6 MR. ORTH: That's -- that -- that could be
7 true, yes, because you're looking at 22 miles versus --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Because the -- the other
9 route is a third shorter basically?

10 MR. ORTH: That -- that is -- that is correct.
11 I'm trying to get our -- the other --

12 So our -- our northern route that is the 32
13 miles -- I apologize. I don't have it here in front of
14 me -- yeah, that -- that -- that would -- that is
15 possibly correct.

16 I mean, we can go back and look at the numbers.
17 The percentages, though, when we're looking at -- it is
18 a higher percentage of -- of public land for the longer
19 route. But when you look at total mileage, yes, it may
20 be a wash or it may be -- it may be less just because of
21 the -- the one is shorter.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I suspicion that it
23 would be less by quite a large margin on private land.

24 Another thing that I'm -- I'm curious about --
25 and I certainly don't know your business as well as you

1 do -- but your road standards for year-round access,
2 I've seen a lot of power lines and some of 'em going
3 over difficult terrain that do not seem to have any sort
4 of road access and they seem to get along fine.

5 What is it that compels BPA to demand
6 year-round access roads?

7 MR. ORTH: We -- we operate in -- we want to be
8 able to operate and maintain our system that enables us
9 to do so year-round. I wouldn't -- you are correct.
10 There's lines that don't have permit roads to them and
11 they operate just fine. The biggest issue is when we do
12 have an outage or a need to maintain it, especially
13 during poor weather conditions and you can't get to it
14 because there is no road, that -- that's -- it's --
15 it's in case of the emergency situation and so that's --
16 we've developed our engineering standards and our
17 operational standards to accommodate year-round access
18 to all our structures.

19 It also eases us in maintenance. We do a lot
20 of, like, visual checks to the line throughout the year
21 and so that -- that is what we have adopted as our
22 operational and maintenance standards.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

24 Another -- another item with Mr. Chapburn from
25 the Energy Resources Department. He mentioned to me

1 when we talked that -- that he would be really
2 interested in having his office and along with the DEQ
3 perhaps do a little negotiation with the EPA and see if
4 there wasn't something to -- they could work out along
5 with some legislators to ease the way for BPA to go
6 through there on a hold harmless.

7 Did he mention anything about that to you?

8 MR. ORTH: When we met with him last month, he
9 didn't mention it. But John has met with him since.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is this something that
11 would interest you?

12 MR. ORTH: Yes, we are certainly open to any
13 ideas, yes.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. There is one more
15 issue here that I've -- I have got down that I wanted to
16 discuss and there's somebody that's -- that are more
17 qualified than myself here in the audience, and that's
18 for the migrating birds that you are putting the line or
19 proposed to put the line in the spot that you have now
20 got. And that would be Dr. Rod Druan, and he is the
21 resident biologist that's been associated for a long
22 time with the national wildlife refuge.

23 Mr. Druan, could you speak for a minute on the
24 migratory bird issue with the power lines.

25 MR. DRUAN: I'd just (inaudible) with the

1 route.

2 My name is Rod Druan. I live in the spring,
3 summer and fall at Wayan the past 40 -- over 40 years
4 and I have spent over 20 years working on the birds at
5 Gray's Lake National Wildlife Refuge, particularly
6 cranes and geese, through the University of Idaho. And
7 I am now retired.

8 Anyway, I've just put your map on the computer
9 and I couldn't pick a worse route to go for migratory
10 birds. And they're probably no doubt going to be based
11 on (inaudibles) and having inquired of several
12 environmental groups about this kind of foolishness of
13 putting big transmission lines right on primary
14 migration routes of large birds and, hence, cranes,
15 geese, trumpeter swans. By the way, trumpeter swans,
16 the local population in Idaho is listed as critically
17 imperiled. (Inaudible) folks trying to deal with that.

18 Anyway, it's a lot of nonsense I see looking at
19 that route. You are in a major migration route, have a
20 scenic highway and we have a historic Lander Trail out
21 there and you guys want to plow right through that with
22 your -- what I consider mess. And there's better ways
23 to go.

24 Your southern route, I've looked at that.
25 That's pretty (inaudible) except you have these -- I

1 consider -- phony reasons why you shouldn't be looking
2 at that.

3 I've wondered, have you ever done a thorough
4 geologic assessment of that southern route? You are
5 worried about these potential contaminants and such. If
6 so, I'd like to see it. I'd like to see a copy of this.

7 You guys just sit up there in Portland and take
8 maps out and draw lines. I find them not very
9 satisfactory and acceptable. I hope you do a more
10 thorough environmental assessment out there than what
11 you are doing.

12 And lastly, you are subject to laws such as the
13 Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1980, which opens you wide
14 open to suits, the Eagle Act of 1940 -- and we can go on
15 and on and on. So I'd like to see these things
16 addressed and not just sit there in some office in
17 Portland and come up with a bunch of nonsense. And
18 that's what I consider your proposal, nonsense.

19 (Applause.)

20 MR. ORTH: Thank you. I appreciate your
21 comments and concerns.

22 MR. DRUAN: And thank you for (inaudible).

23 MR. ORTH: We do. We welcome them and we do
24 appreciate them. We appreciate comments and questions
25 that anybody in this room has.

1 We are globally -- just to let you know, we are
2 working on our draft environmental impact statement
3 which does take into account the Migratory Bird Act,
4 the -- any of the flight patterns of the -- of the
5 regional birds and we do take into account our ESA
6 species in the area, both animals, plants. And so we
7 are taking that into account.

8 Our draft EIS, we are looking at publishing in
9 November, and so that -- that will include all of our
10 analysis. Now, certainly if there are local or regional
11 folks that are much more in tune and experts to what's
12 going on in this area, I think we'd certainly invite
13 getting any -- any information or passing knowledge on
14 to us so that we can properly do our -- our
15 environmental analysis and include all of those
16 concerns.

17 As you probably understand, too, there are
18 many, many resources that we're trying balance here, the
19 impacts to. Certainly building a transmission line
20 anywhere is going to have an impact on any number of
21 resources. We balance, you know, biology, plant life,
22 cultural resources and so, yeah, it's -- it's difficult.
23 And then the -- I guess your perception of our worries
24 of risks, environmentally, legal, financial risks of
25 crossing the southern route may be perceived as phony,

1 but they are real risks to our ratepayers.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Though perceived?

3 That's a big one, perceived.

4 MR. ORTH: You want to follow up with anything
5 or Tish?

6 MR. ESTES: Ernie Estes of BPA.

7 Was there a question in the -- in the
8 statement, if we can respond to any questions within the
9 statement? I heard mostly statements.

10 MR. ORTH: Okay. I just want to check, too,
11 before we get too far, are we limited on time? Do you
12 have another agenda item at 4:00?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

14 MR. ORTH: We're -- we're certainly here as
15 long as needed.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think are we.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, we're here, too.

18 MR. ORTH: Okay. I do want to know, -- I do
19 want it to be known, too, that we will have at least one
20 public meeting when the draft EIS comes out, so there
21 will be another -- at least one formal public forum once
22 that is released. And we also always do offer letters.
23 Any time we have questions or comments, too, we invite
24 people to send those in whenever you have 'em. There
25 doesn't need to be a formal -- a formal comment period.

1 We'll take 'em anytime.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. A question about
3 your formal meeting that you intend to have. Is this
4 going to be a meeting that will have a moderator and
5 will have minutes and questions and answers in an
6 organized forum or is this going to be another kind of
7 walk-about and chat with the folks there?

8 MR. ORTH: We could -- we could look at doing
9 it any number of ways. A lot of times in the past, we
10 have more of an open-house format. But if -- if -- if
11 the commissioners and others believe it would be a
12 better format to have a moderator and have a
13 presentation and then ask open house for questions after
14 that, we can do it that way.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just question how
16 comments and questions of the audience can be recorded
17 and addressed, you know, and kept other than just from
18 memory if there isn't minutes taken and, you know, a
19 formal question-and-answer?

20 MR. ORTH: We will have comments covered and
21 there are -- there are formal comment forms at the
22 meetings that we have, but we will have someone taking
23 notes at those meetings.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And minutes?

25 MR. ORTH: And minutes, yes.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. You didn't have
2 that in the -- at the last meeting, did you, at the high
3 school? I never saw anyone taking any minutes or notes.

4 MR. ORTH: We -- no, we did not. We took -- we
5 took -- we captured all the comments from the -- from
6 the comment forms that were there available for folks to
7 fill out and any other comments that we could take while
8 we were visiting the folks. We took that all back as we
9 were scoping the project.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thanks.

11 I've got a couple of more, but I think I'll
12 wait until everybody else has a chance to say or comment
13 or whatever.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Senator Goedde.

15 MR. TIPPETS: Thank you, Commissioner.

16 John -- John Tippetts. Senator Goedde is
17 (inaudible) --

18 So, Eric, can you tell me where we are today?
19 Is there still an opportunity for this group to impact
20 the route of that line or are you guys set on the
21 northern route at this point and it's a done deal?

22 MR. ORTH: There's still plenty of opportunity
23 to make adjustments to the route. Like I'd mentioned,
24 there are large hurdles in that southern route and so
25 we -- you know, we are looking a lot at the northern

1 route, but there's certainly opportunities. No final
2 decisions have been made. We're far from it. And so
3 there are still opportunities, yes.

4 MR. TIPPETS: Follow up (inaudible).

5 Eric, in the last meeting in June, the
6 contention was made that the transmission line would
7 go -- that if you would take that southern route, you
8 would have to travel across some of the historic mining
9 sites that were CERCLA sites. It would look like from
10 that map there was a route where you could skirt all of
11 those. Sometimes the corridors are pretty narrow, but
12 it looked like there were some corridors where you could
13 stay out of those sites.

14 Have you looked at doing that and, if so, why
15 are you dismissing that option (inaudible) --

16 MR. ORTH: We have -- we haven't completely
17 dismissed anything at this point. We have looked more
18 closely at skirting a route through there. We can get
19 around the potential leased mine sites. However, there
20 is one particular investigation area that is so large
21 that it creates a -- it does create a barrier that we
22 need to cross the investigation area or a mining lease
23 site to intersect with the existing Lower Valley Energy
24 transmission line that we'd have to connect it to.

25 MR. TIPPETS: One more thing. So what are you

1 doing, then, at this point to (inaudibles)? Are you
2 still doing some work to see if that's a viable option?

3 MR. ORTH: Yep. We're -- we're actually --
4 we're still getting some data from the Bureau of Land
5 Management to take a look at that to make sure we do
6 have all the data on the map. We will take a field look
7 here before the winter to take a look at the route as it
8 leads up the Blackfoot River Road. That's right here.
9 Maybe it's -- I'd to have look.

10 But, yeah, we will -- we will do a field visit
11 and take a look at that. Not -- certainly not
12 dismissing it at this point.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Appreciate it. Thanks.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jim, excuse me.
15 Commissioner?

16 MR. SMITH: Do you have a name for that?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Your name?

18 MR. SMITH: Jim Smith. I'm sorry. Jim Smith,
19 Soda Springs, Idaho.

20 Do you have a name for that route that you
21 are -- or that area that you are concerned about that
22 may have potential mining on it? Do you know which
23 mines it is?

24 MR. ORTH: It's -- it's it's the North Maybe
25 mine.

1 MR. SMITH: Okay. What is that?

2 MR. ORTH: North Maybe mine. It's to the --
3 it's near the far east, yeah.

4 MR. TIPPETS: I'm done.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Merle Botley.

6 MR. BOTLEY: The last time we were here you
7 said that the increase to the northern route would cost
8 an additional \$10 million versus going with the southern
9 route and now this time you're telling us it's a wash.
10 What happened to that \$10 million?

11 MR. ORTH: I -- I didn't have all the
12 information in front of me at that time. I was taking a
13 guess and I probably shouldn't have done that. I went
14 back and looked at our numbers of the original routes.
15 We looked at our numbers of the northern route and it's
16 essentially a wash.

17 MR. BOTLEY: A wash.

18 Okay. So how much is this project costing?

19 MR. ORTH: This -- this -- you know, until we
20 got through our NEPA, you know, we can't say for sure.

21 MR. BOTLEY: Estimated?

22 MR. ORTH: Estimated, we're looking from 50 to
23 60 million.

24 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. You're going to pass 50 or
25 \$60 million in charges off to these people over in Star

1 Valley, is that what you are telling us?

2 MR. ORTH: No. We will -- our ratepayers, they
3 pay a portion of our entire system that we build, own
4 and operate and we have --

5 MR. BOTLEY: Well, who's paying for this thing
6 then?

7 MR. ORTH: Our ratepayers.

8 MR. BOTLEY: Well, who are they then? Where
9 are we -- who's going to pay for this?

10 MR. ORTH: A lot of the folks in the room today
11 are ratepayers.

12 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. So our rates are going up
13 is what you are saying?

14 MR. ORTH: We -- in order to continue safe
15 operation of the system here in southeast Idaho to serve
16 both -- you know, anybody that lives here in this county
17 or western Wyoming, yes, we need to put in a -- our
18 proposed project, either a southern route or a northern
19 route, in order to continue safe operation of the
20 facilities.

21 Yeah, go ahead.

22 MR. ESTES: Ernie Estes, BPA, again.

23 Any -- the construction of any route is going
24 to have a cost impact on our ratepayers. Our ratepayers
25 are west -- Montana west to the Great Divide, to the

1 Canadian border, to the Pacific Ocean, to extreme
2 northern California. Most of the citizens living in
3 that area pay for projects like these. \$50 million is
4 not -- is not chump change, but in our expenditures over
5 a year or two, that's not a lot of money. We pay more
6 than a billion dollars every year for our -- repaying
7 the federal government for our expenses. So it is a
8 significant amount of money, but to say that, it is not
9 likely that this particular project, you will see a
10 change in your bill because of it. It doesn't mean that
11 a particular project doesn't increase the cost of the --
12 of the system to the ratepayers. It does. But you have
13 to look at all of our expenses in that context.

14 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. When you say northern
15 California, how far south does that go?

16 MR. ESTES: Not very far.

17 MR. BOTLEY: Does it take San Francisco?

18 MR. ESTES: No, it just is very northern
19 California. We have Sun Valley -- what's the name of
20 the -- Lakeview and there's a town in northern
21 California that Bonneville serves.

22 MR. BOTLEY: So basically it's Oregon,
23 Washington, some in California, Idaho?

24 MR. ESTES: Yeah, it's principally Oregon and
25 Washington and Idaho.

1 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. Now, is it possible, once
2 you get this line in, that you are going to be able to
3 transmit more electricity into a higher-priced market
4 such as Portland or Seattle; is that what we're playing
5 with here?

6 MR. ESTES: That was not the purpose of the --

7 MR. BOTLEY: Well, that's what you are telling
8 us.

9 MR. ESTES: The purpose of this line is to make
10 our system more reliable.

11 MR. BOTLEY: Why is it unreliable right now?

12 MR. ORTH: There's -- we've -- we've got --
13 looking at the generation at Paddle Creek Dam and the
14 lines that feed in and out of that, our generation
15 constraints at the dam, and then also having to feed all
16 the load in the area, we have certain lines that will be
17 overloaded unless we have another link in the line to
18 offset that from being overloaded, to redirect power to
19 get to other areas. And it's all contained right here
20 in southeast Idaho and western Wyoming.

21 MR. BOTLEY: I can't happen to think that you
22 got 50 million bucks or whatever you are talking about,
23 you're going to ship this power somehow into a
24 higher-priced market because I am assuming that Seattle
25 and Portland and maybe some of the larger cities pay

1 more for their power than we do here. And that's what
2 you are enabling this thing to happen.

3 MR. ORTH: I'm -- I'm -- sir, I'm not familiar
4 with our power rate structure or our transmission rate
5 structure, but --

6 MR. BOTLEY: But doesn't the -- the numbers
7 don't make sense what you're saying. You've got 50
8 million bucks and it's supposed to help us here and that
9 does not make sense.

10 MR. ORTH: The purpose and need of the project
11 is to add a link to the transmission system in southeast
12 Idaho so that we don't have a full collapse of the area
13 or --

14 MR. BOTLEY: Well, have you ever had a collapse
15 of it?

16 MR. ORTH: Well, no, because we operate our
17 system in a manner that doesn't allow that to happen.

18 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. So then everything -- I
19 mean, if everything were to stay constant, we'd be okay?

20 MR. ORTH: Yes.

21 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. So then why are we putting
22 the new line in?

23 MR. ORTH: Because we have a load growth of 3
24 percent in this area.

25 MR. BOTLEY: So there is some growth then?

1 MR. ORTH: In this area, yeah.

2 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. But I haven't seen any of
3 this growth. Where is it happening? Is it Jackson
4 Hole?

5 MR. ORTH: It's -- it's in -- it's in the area
6 that we serve there. It's south -- it's all southeast
7 Idaho and, yes, in western Wyoming.

8 MR. BOTLEY: Due to the recession, this growth
9 has not happened.

10 MR. ORTH: Our -- our numbers show it has.

11 MR. BOTLEY: Where?

12 MR. ORTH: In industry load. And it may not
13 necessarily be population. It could be industrial load.
14 Some of it, I'm sure, is population. There's a number
15 of factors of how we look at load growth. We look at
16 our numbers that are -- are our planning numbers and how
17 much power is getting used throughout the system and --
18 and, you know, over a 25-year period, we continue to see
19 (inaudible) --

20 MR. BOTLEY: So we're in a recession and you're
21 saying your demand has gone up 3 percent? Does that
22 make sense, really?

23 MR. ORTH: People use more computers --

24 MR. BOTLEY: Why has oil dropped down 8 percent
25 just this week? I mean -- I mean energy costs are going

1 down because there's no demand for 'em and you are
2 telling us we're going up 3 percent. This does not make
3 sense.

4 MR. ORTH: I -- I can't answer why it does or
5 doesn't make sense. I just know that there is load
6 growth in the area and we have to keep up with it,
7 otherwise, we will have a situation where we will start
8 losing lines, we will start dropping people off in the
9 middle of winter. And that's not how we want to operate
10 our system.

11 MR. BOTLEY: Has that ever happened that you
12 have had to drop people off?

13 MR. ORTH: Yes.

14 MR. BOTLEY: Where at?

15 MR. ORTH: It has happened -- well, it has
16 happened in the Portland area, yes. It happened in the
17 northeast United States. We dropped off however many
18 million customers.

19 MR. BOTLEY: Northeast United States?

20 MR. ORTH: Yes.

21 MR. BOTLEY: We're not concerned with them.

22 MR. ORTH: Well, I know, but those are the
23 types of situations that we have to be sure that we
24 don't put ourselves in.

25 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. Let's shift gears here. I

1 think I have made my point on this.

2 You mentioned in your comments -- opening
3 comments there were about four mining companies; that
4 all of three of 'em are -- I picked up four. I don't
5 know -- okay -- three of 'em have agreed to a hold
6 harmless agreement, one of 'em isn't or hasn't given you
7 that. From what I heard from the last meeting, most of
8 that stuff's Monsanto and they spent upwards of a
9 million bucks -- I don't know where I am getting my
10 numbers from -- they've spent upwards of a million bucks
11 to figure out a plan so you guys could go through that
12 southern route and all of a sudden this is just null and
13 void. And -- and then you're telling us that there are
14 four of 'em involved. Who's the fourth one that's not
15 playing ball here?

16 MR. ORTH: So --

17 MR. BOTLEY: Why aren't they here today?

18 MR. ORTH: I can't tell you why they're not --

19 MR. BOTLEY: Were they invited?

20 MR. ORTH: This is a public meeting, so
21 everyone is invited, yes.

22 MR. BOTLEY: Do you know the reason why they
23 don't give you -- won't give you that hold harmless?

24 MR. ORTH: I think because -- I don't -- I
25 believe because the reason that --

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Let me try answer that.

2 This is a meeting to explain some of the things
3 that are happening at Bonneville in connection with this
4 project and it is also to get information and comments
5 from the people who are affected from the public. We're
6 still human beings. We're still planning this project.
7 What we are currently in the process of doing is
8 preparing environmental reviews for this project that
9 will aid us in deciding exactly which route we will
10 take.

11 It's -- we can be responsible for the things
12 that we do. What we do with landowners in the areas
13 that we are considering, we let them know that we are in
14 the area. We provide information to them so that they
15 can communicate effectively with us.

16 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. I want to communicate. I
17 don't like you in my area. How's that for
18 communication?

19 MR. WILLIAMS: It would be better if you put it
20 in writing and sent it to us. It would be more
21 effective. We can certainly take that (inaudible), but
22 what you have to understand is that the agency is
23 chartered by Congress to --

24 MR. BOTLEY: So you're the government is what
25 you're saying, for the people, by the people and you're

1 shoving this down our throats?

2 MR. WILLIAMS: I don't think it's -- I don't
3 think it's helpful to argue --

4 MR. BOTLEY: Well, I'm just calling it the way
5 I see it here.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: And you are welcome to do that.

7 MR. BOTLEY: Thank you.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Bonneville has to serve all the
9 citizens of this region.

10 MR. BOTLEY: At the expense of the people in
11 Wayan?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: I don't think at this point that
13 we have reached this conclusion that you have suggested.

14 MR. BOTLEY: What?

15 MR. WILLIAMS: We have not concluded that we
16 are constructing a line at the cost -- primary cost to
17 the citizens here. You mentioned earlier that you're --
18 you suggested earlier that your rates might increase
19 because we place this line. We responded that we have
20 many expenses and this is a small one compared to them
21 so that it is not likely that the expenses for this line
22 will show up on your bill directly.

23 Having said that --

24 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. That's a nominal concern.

25 My concern is I live in Wayan. We've got a

1 place there in Wayan and you're bringing that thing
2 within 100 feet of our house, our home. I believe it's
3 400. Pardon me. (Inaudible) the strip's 100 feet.

4 It's going to be 400 feet from our house.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Most -- we have many challenging
6 questions that are associated with planning and -- the
7 planning -- planning and deciding whether to build a
8 line and where to build the line and yours is one of
9 many. You -- the southern route is a series of
10 questions, the northern route is a series of questions.
11 There will be some folks who would think it's a good
12 idea to have a more reliable system that benefits the
13 region. Others will say, It's a line. I don't want it
14 in my backyard.

15 We confront those things regularly on most of
16 our decisions, but the key thought that I'd like to give
17 to you is that that's not the question you ask if
18 there's an outage here. Part of the goal is to avoid
19 those outages. Can you promise that nothing will occur?
20 No. It is an electrical system. Can you make it more
21 likely that there will be no loss of load in our area if
22 one line goes out? Yes, we can. That's exactly what
23 we're doing.

24 MR. BOTLEY: Okay. But what we're saying is,
25 yeah, we need that line or you need the line or

1 whatever, but with a little work and effort and
2 negotiations, from what we were seeing it there, take
3 that southern route and -- as the Senator over here
4 said -- move the -- move it so you're not going across
5 the mining and all that threat that you're worried
6 about. Do a little more work and then it solves the
7 problem and Wayan won't have to deal with this thing.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Well, someone will have to deal
9 with it, right?

10 MR. BOTLEY: Well, this (inaudible) was wide
11 open.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We've already given you
13 a route. To have to find ways to take it is the
14 problem. You have weird perceptions up there in
15 Portland.

16 MR. BOTLEY: And another thing, you're worried
17 about all these birds and stuff. You're giving them
18 more preference than you are us as people. I'm sorry,
19 but that's the way I feel about this. Yeah, it's
20 important that we worry about these birds and all that
21 kind of stuff, but we've got people living in that
22 place, too, and this stuff's coming right down through
23 here.

24 And I think she said last time, this is going
25 to destroy that valley. But you people in Portland, it

1 doesn't matter to you because you live in Portland.

2 MR. ORTH: Sir, we -- you live off of Wayan
3 Loop Road, right?

4 MR. BOTLEY: Yes. And you are planning to take
5 that right up over our hill.

6 MR. ORTH: And we encourage you to work with us
7 to find --

8 MR. BOTLEY: I don't want work with you. I
9 don't have to work with you.

10 MR. ORTH: You don't --

11 MR. BOTLEY: Don't bring the line to my house.
12 It's that simple.

13 MR. ORTH: Okay. By that statement alone, it
14 makes it difficult for us to work with you.

15 MR. BOTLEY: I hope it's impossible for you, if
16 you want my honest opinion.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're not very workable
18 with us.

19 MR. BOTLEY: You shove stuff down our throats
20 when you have an alternative route and the only answer
21 is questions of why you really can't go through there
22 because of one mining company. That's (inaudible)
23 answer these questions. You're trying to sidetrack us.
24 You sidetrack us with other nonsense and you don't get
25 there is a real issue of putting it in an area having

1 less impact on people and less impact on the land, on
2 private lands in particular, and less impact on the
3 wildlife. And you don't seem to consider that.

4 You sit up in Portland and come up with these
5 ridiculous possible problems that are probably
6 nonexistent. Like I say, I'd like to see your
7 geological profile on that area through there to really
8 discuss the issue of potential contamination as I hear
9 from some of you people on it. Where is all that stuff?
10 I don't see any of it. I don't hear you talking about
11 it.

12 MR. ORTH: That's not --

13 MR. BOTLEY: (Inaudible) the other route that
14 doesn't impact the number of people, the wildlife or the
15 private lands. There is a whole bunch of important
16 issues right there and you have not addressed those. I
17 find you guys typical government bureaucrats that tell
18 us a bunch of gobbledegook nothing. Yeah.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: We've got somebody else down
20 there. Madelyn.

21 MS. BLOCKSON: My name is Madelyn Blockson and
22 I live at Wayan at the end of Gravel Creek Road.

23 And when you are talking about your preliminary
24 workup, I -- we've been told all along that we would
25 seek permission to go on your land. On July 15, my

1 daughter and I found surveyors just east of my property,
2 a fence to the south and a fence to the west. And I
3 said to the Adam Dell, who was the head guy -- kid
4 there, I said, What are you doing on my property? And
5 he said, I'm surveying. I'm on forest land property.

6 I said, You are not on forest land property.

7 And I would like you guys -- to invite you out
8 and show you where my cattle are -- are grazing and look
9 at the -- the cow pies and this is the area they were in
10 and it is my property.

11 Three -- another issue -- I know I don't have
12 much time -- but three weeks ago -- my home is fenced
13 all in. And three weeks ago, 90 feet from my deck, I
14 found a beautiful pine tree chopped down. I have
15 pictures to show you. And that was planted probably 20
16 to 25 years ago by my husband. He is no longer here and
17 each day that pine tree becomes just a little more
18 valuable to me.

19 No one has ever come to me and said -- a Mr.
20 Brown or somebody came several months ago and I said,
21 I'm not giving permission anywhere. I gave no
22 permission to either individual.

23 And how would you like to have someone coming
24 and 90 feet from your deck and cut off a beautiful pine
25 tree and just leave it turned over?

1 And I'd like to show the picture to you. It
2 makes me so angry I just can't hardly contain myself.

3 I never said anything to the -- to the
4 surveyors because I didn't want to make any problems.
5 But when I saw that pine tree, I was mad as you know
6 what.

7 Thank you.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have another one.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: My name is (inaudible).
10 I am from Wayan and I just have a couple of quick
11 questions and one statement.

12 My one statement: I think there's several
13 people in the valley that they've trespassed on that has
14 not given permission besides Madelyn with pictures,
15 other people have that they've been. That's my
16 statement.

17 My question is -- my first question is: What
18 about the power that will be coming from the Simplot
19 mine in two years when they close down that will no
20 longer be used? Is that something that can go into the
21 system and be distributed? They use an awful lot of
22 power up there and they're going to be closing down.
23 What will happen to the power wattage that was used at
24 Simplot?

25 My second question is: You were concerned

1 about the impact study with the mines that -- and having
2 to move because of the proposed mining site. One is the
3 mountains that you are going over in Wayan is also a
4 proposed mining site. Has that been addressed if you go
5 in and dig? And what with that, it's also proposed? So
6 what if you put it there, just like you're saying you
7 don't want to go the southern route, it would be the
8 same issue with this northern route. If you go over
9 that mountain that is a proposed mining, you will have
10 to move the transmission line.

11 And I was just curious on if you have done a
12 study on that, where those -- where that line would go?

13 MR. ORTH: I'll start with your -- your
14 second --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

16 MR. ORTH: -- question.

17 I was not aware of our proposed route crossing
18 a potential leased mining site in the Wayan area.
19 Certainly if you have additional information -- I'm not
20 sure if it's your land or --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, it's not my land.

22 MR. ORTH: But -- yeah, if we need to look and
23 get more information on that, then, yeah, we can do
24 that.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's forest -- forest

1 land.

2 MR. ORTH: It is -- oh, it's forest land?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's forest land.

4 MR. ORTH: Okay.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So is the mining area.

6 MR. ORTH: Okay. The Forest Service is a
7 cooperating agency on the project and so we can -- we
8 can get with them and square that away --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So what's the
10 difference -- oh, I guess it's not forest, but this
11 proposed mining is private on the southern route, the
12 proposed mining is private (inaudible) --

13 MR. ORTH: It's -- it's a mix of both, both
14 private -- mining companies have their land that they
15 own that the route crosses and then there's also the
16 route crosses federal land that companies have mineral
17 rights to to do the mining across the federal lands.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So the -- the public or
19 the forest on the southern route has gave you
20 permission, just like I guess you were saying they did
21 in the Wayan area?

22 MR. ORTH: They gave Lower Valley permission to
23 have an easement, yes, across that property. They
24 haven't -- they haven't --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Then what about the

1 mining impact? If we're worried about the mining impact
2 on the southern route, wouldn't it be the same as the
3 forest in the Wayan area, the mining impact?

4 MR. ORTH: Yes. The potential impact, yeah, it
5 would be -- it would be similar in nature. The southern
6 route does have a rather steep area that we're cutting
7 through. If we had to move the line, we may be in a
8 position there is nowhere to move it and so having --
9 having the line -- having access to it could become a
10 real -- a real issue for us.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Now, your line
12 will enter in Alpine through that rugged country. Does
13 it have an access road to provide the 12-month access
14 through the -- where the line goes through the Swan
15 Valley?

16 MR. ORTH: Yes. And the Swan Valley --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's a line --

18 MR. ORTH: Across the Tetons, is that what
19 you're --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. From -- it would be
21 Alpine north through those --

22 MR. ORTH: That's Lower Valley Energy's
23 (inaudible) --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. Lower Valley goes
25 from Alpine north. We have from (inaudible) to the

1 Palisades, Palisades to Swan Valley and then Drummond to
2 Maxwell --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And is the
4 line --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Those --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- there east of the
7 highway through those mountains there?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The (inaudible) Tetons
9 over to Wyoming?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. 6.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's ours.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And it has the access
13 road --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. You run down
15 (inaudible) that's one of our lines.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And what about
17 the Simplot issue?

18 MR. ORTH: So on your first question, so that
19 power, we don't serve that power directly. Certainly
20 any power that's not used could be used by others.

21 What our purpose and need of our project is a
22 transmission need. It's not a power need. We -- we
23 need a link in the system to off-load other lines that
24 will become overloaded in the coming years, and so it's
25 not -- it's not a power issue. It's a transmission

1 issue.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. One more quick
3 question. Back to Merle's question: Who is the fourth
4 entity that will not give you the (inaudible) the mine?

5 MR. ORTH: There are four main mining
6 companies --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

8 MR. ORTH: -- Simplot, Monsanto, P-4 and
9 Indywest.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And one of those four
11 will not?

12 MR. ORTH: Well, one of -- they've -- they've
13 all got their own issues. There was one company that is
14 currently investigated -- has an investigated area, has
15 sued the EPA. And so, yeah, they're not interested
16 in -- in talking with us on a hold harmless because
17 they're in the middle of a lawsuit with the United
18 States government, so...

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

20 MR. ORTH: And getting back to your statements,
21 certainly we -- we have tried -- we heard back in June
22 that there was the possibilities of some trespassing
23 going on. We went back to our folks, Joe, Chan and some
24 of the other realty folks that are working out in the
25 area, and we got the word out to everybody to make sure

1 that -- that we're only stepping foot on the land that
2 the landowner has granted permisisions.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's nice.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many landowners have
5 granted permission?

6 MR. ORTH: Let me -- let me finish.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

8 MR. ORTH: And we also have tightened up our
9 information internally as far as updating spreadsheets
10 and keeping everybody informed. We have realty staff
11 out here, survey staff, there are a number of people so
12 we are trying very hard to do that.

13 You asked how many. On 32 miles of the line,
14 we probably have access to, I would say, 25-26 miles of
15 it. It's --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How much is private,
17 though?

18 MR. ORTH: Pardon?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How much of the private
20 land --

21 MR. ORTH: How much of that is private?
22 Probably at least 18 miles of it's private land. All
23 the way -- this is -- I'm just talking about my northern
24 route across the --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

1 MR. ORTH: Oh, yes. Maybe you could answer
2 that better --

3 MR. COTTRELL: Joe Cottrell, Bonneville Power.
4 My office is at 22 Pasco Quotas Road in Pasco,
5 Tri-Cities, Washington.

6 I don't have the exact numbers of how many PP's
7 we have signed. But as Eric stated, it's a high
8 percentage on the southern route. On the northern
9 route, it's a smaller percentage. So I can get those
10 numbers and get your contact information and follow up
11 with you on that.

12 So is there any other questions that I can try
13 to follow up with along those lines?

14 Mrs. Blockson, first of all, I want to
15 apologize to you.

16 MS. BLOCKSON: Well, I don't know how they had
17 the audacity to just come in and cut a pine? Maybe if
18 they'd cut a quaking down. I got a lot of those. But
19 that's a beautiful tree.

20 MR. COTTRELL: I understand that.

21 MS. BLOCKSON: And that's right -- right in my
22 front yard.

23 MR. COTTRELL: Mrs. Blockson --

24 MS. BLOCKSON: How would you like to have 'em
25 do that to you?

1 MR. COTTRELL: I understand that. I represent
2 Bonneville, but I'm not a surveyor, so I didn't cut your
3 tree.

4 MS. BLOCKSON: Well, I --

5 MR. COTTRELL: But I'm trying to --

6 MS. BLOCKSON: -- I can also say something
7 that's rumored all over Soda Springs about what your
8 surveyors are doing all night and carousing and
9 drinking, and then they go out during the day to survey.
10 How reliable are they after it's rumored that they are
11 playing all night?

12 MR. COTTRELL: Well, I -- I understand. And if
13 there is validity to the rumors, then we'll address 'em.
14 But, you know --

15 MS. BLOCKSON: (Inaudible).

16 MR. COTTRELL: -- it's kind of like throwing
17 numbers out there. There's no substantiation to it.
18 Anybody can say anything. So Bonneville Power, as Eric
19 and Ernie have expressed to John, we're going to put our
20 best foot forward. So if there's some areas that we
21 need work on, like in this situation, then we need deal
22 with 'em.

23 I can't take back what happened. I can't put
24 the tree back that was cut down, but I can pay you
25 damages for the tree that was cut down.

1 MS. BLOCKSON: Well, I don't have anybody to
2 plant my trees anymore.

3 MR. COTTRELL: Well, we can work that out, too.
4 So if there's situations -- and in your case where we
5 cut down one unhelpful tree, the one tree was 90 feet
6 from your house, I don't know how that happened. The
7 trees that were up by the fence line, in talking to the
8 surveyors, my understanding was that there is some
9 discrepancies on the old surveys and the new survey.
10 I'm not saying our guys are in the right. I'm not
11 saying they're in the wrong, but we need to meet and
12 deal with it, so I'd love to meet with you after this.

13 If there's any other questions from landowners
14 regarding realty-related items, I'm the person you need
15 to chat with.

16 Shane. Okay. Shane Graham from HTR. We've
17 contracted HTR Engineering out of Boise to help me on
18 this project. She's been one of my right arms in the
19 field, so you've probably chatted with her. So if
20 there's any other questions that you have for her, we'll
21 stay around after the meeting.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have a question.

23 MR. COTTRELL: All right. Let me get to her
24 first (inaudible).

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

1 MR. COTTRELL: Yes, sir.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What's going to happen
3 if we don't give you permission and the use to go
4 through our land?

5 MR. COTTRELL: I'll tell you from my
6 perspective, we really don't want to go onto your
7 property without permission.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm not saying now, but
9 if we don't give you permission and the line goes and we
10 don't sell, what punitive --

11 MR. COTTRELL: It's going to go up to the
12 project manager and it's going to go all the way to the
13 administrator of Bonneville Power, Steve Wright, or
14 whoever the administrator is at that time. And they're
15 going to review this project and they're going to
16 dictate whether the project warrants going further in a
17 process where we don't have landowner cooperation and
18 that's --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And you're saying
20 that --

21 MR. COTTRELL: And that's not going to be a
22 call that's going to be made here.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you're saying you're
24 taking eminent domain?

25 MR. COTTRELL: I didn't say that, sir.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Let's say it goes
2 to eminent domain --

3 MR. COTTRELL: Okay.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- don't I have a good
5 case where you have an original route that was okayed,
6 approved and turned it down yourselves and didn't have
7 adequate proof that it was inadequate?

8 MR. COTTRELL: I can't tell you what type of
9 case you would or wouldn't have. I'm not a legal
10 attorney. I can't -- I understand where you are coming
11 from, but --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But you are going
13 through our property, so that's what's going to end up?

14 MR. COTTRELL: Okay.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, like I say, I think
16 I'd have a pretty good case if -- if you decide to go
17 through me but you had an alternate route that was
18 okayed, you spent a lot of money on and your lawyers
19 said, well, maybe, maybe we can't go there but it's no
20 definite proof?

21 MR. COTTRELL: And to answer your question -- I
22 can't answer the hypothetical, but I can tell you in our
23 process, in the event that it would go that process, a
24 federal entity as Bonneville Power has a very stringent
25 guideline that we have to adhere in moving a project

1 forward, so it's not just BPA wants it and it's a done
2 deal. We have a very strict guideline that we have to
3 move forward on, so your word's going to be heard one
4 way or the other.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who oversees that?

6 MR. COTTRELL: It's -- it's a process through
7 the federal government that Bonneville Power has as a
8 federal entity. But the -- since condemnation came up,
9 condemnation is a right that Bonneville Power has under
10 a federal entity to operate. That authority goes all
11 the way up to the administrator level to assign and
12 dictate whether he will sign off or she at that time --
13 because we're going to have a new administrator here
14 pretty soon -- whether they're going to go forward with
15 that process. It's not something that's made at our
16 level.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It does go to the
18 Department of Justice at that point and the case is
19 heard in front of a judge and the judge makes the
20 ultimate decision.

21 MR. COTTRELL: And it's -- it's a process that
22 if it's deemed to go forward and necessary, there's a
23 strict guideline that we have to adhere to in the
24 acquisition of that property. The landowner has a right
25 to hire their own appraiser to compete with Bonneville

1 Power's appraisal on what they perceive as fair market
2 value. So it's a pretty stringent guideline, so it's
3 not one-sided.

4 MR. ORTH: One of the things that we -- we like
5 to do is we want to work with the landowner as much as
6 possible, because once it goes to the Department of
7 Justice, it is out of our hands. And so by us working
8 with the landowners up front, we can hopefully avoid
9 that if it gets that --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Have you got any
11 permissions, like -- which direction -- beyond Henry, up
12 in that -- when you start getting into Wayan, have you
13 gotten anybody that's given you permission up in there?

14 MR. ORTH: Beyond Henry --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It is about where the
16 Blackfoot River comes through there.

17 MR. ORTH: Yeah, I'd to have check on maps to
18 give you an accurate answer. I think we do, but I'd
19 have to verify and get back to you.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. I know what he is
21 talking about (inaudible) --

22 MR. ORTH: But we -- we can get that
23 information back to you if I can get your --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm thinking
25 everybody -- what is it -- south or -- that's south of

1 Henry, they've probably given you permission because
2 they don't really care. I'm thinking nobody -- they
3 don't live there is what we're saying. Nobody north of
4 Henry has given you permission, I'll bet you anything on
5 that.

6 MR. ORTH: I believe that we have one or two,
7 but we'll have to check and follow up on that.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, one or two.

10 MR. ORTH: One or two. But then we quickly get
11 into Forest Service land and then the Wayan area.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

14 MR. CACKLEY: Allis Cackley.

15 From the first meeting we had over in the
16 school system, you told us you were going to take the
17 northern route and that was all that it was going to be
18 to it. I asked a number of people at that meeting and
19 it was the northern route, the northern route, the
20 northern route. All the rest of it is out. There was
21 no doubt in your minds that you were going to go about
22 this that way and you've held to it regardless of
23 everything else. There's no room -- there's no
24 compromise at all in your going to the south route, but
25 we know what the plan was. It was to condemn a

1 right-of-way all the way through private land. And you
2 were determined to do that and you were not going to go
3 the southern route no matter what any of us said and
4 it's been that way every since. And every meeting we've
5 had since, it's the same bunch of crap.

6 MR. ORTH: Tish, do you want to address that?

7 MS. EATON: I don't know what the question is.
8 I think it's a statement, so I'm not sure how to respond
9 to that.

10 MR. ORTH: I -- I can say that when we first
11 had that meeting in the school, we had just come off of
12 doing an environmental assessment on the southern route
13 with Lower Valley. We -- Bonneville did that because we
14 were funding two-thirds of that project at the time, so
15 we had done our environmental analysis on that -- on
16 that route. And so, yeah, we were looking at another
17 alternative to start scoping our EIS. And so we knew a
18 lot of things about that southern route and we didn't
19 know anything at the time about the northern route so,
20 yeah, we were -- we were -- we did talk a lot about
21 developing and doing our environmental assessment across
22 that northern route.

23 Now -- now we're 24 months down the road and we
24 are going back and looking at -- at the southern route,
25 looking at the options that are really, you know,

1 showstoppers for us from keeping us from building the
2 line in that -- in that southern position. No final
3 decisions have been made and we are looking at both.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You told us it was final
5 over at the school. You said you were going the
6 northern route and that was it and we could just shove
7 it.

8 MR. ORTH: I hope I didn't put it in those
9 words and I apologize for making --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I talked to about three
11 people that told me exactly that.

12 MR. ORTH: I apologize for -- for that message
13 that we gave you that night.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It doesn't sound any
15 different now.

16 MR. ORTH: We still have many -- many issues
17 with the southern route. We obviously have many issues
18 with the northern route. And -- and we'll -- we'll move
19 forward on our assessments and weigh all the pros and
20 cons of both routes. And when the time is ready, when
21 we can make a decision, we will.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have a question,
23 please.

24 You've got a substation up there off of 34
25 about Tenoco; is that correct?

1 MR. ORTH: That's Lower Valley Energy's
2 substation.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But isn't that the one
4 where this line will eventually tap into?

5 MR. ORTH: No. We were going to tap into
6 Lane's Creek substation.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. There's a
8 substation there. I'm not sure --

9 MR. ORTH: Yeah, where you make the hairpin
10 turn on 34, right there.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's a substation
12 there (inaudible).

13 Now, is this line not more efficient to go
14 directly into a substation than tapping in the line down
15 below? Isn't that what the bottom line of this thing
16 is?

17 MR. ORTH: It's -- it's -- it's just as
18 efficient --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, you're running
20 three lines up to the substation. There's the six over
21 into the main line is what you're telling us?

22 MR. ORTH: Yes. Because if we connect into
23 another line, we actually have to loop the power in and
24 loop it back out.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you want to hit that

1 substation?

2 MR. ORTH: It's -- operationally, yeah, it --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

4 MR. ORTH: -- it's a better -- it's a better
5 option.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Why don't you build a
7 substation down there -- how expensive are they -- so
8 that the southern route could tap into a substation
9 right there?

10 MR. ORTH: You are looking at a very large cost
11 added to the project at that point.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How much does a
13 substation run?

14 MR. ORTH: I --

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't know.

16 MR. ORTH: -- I can't even begin to guess.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: \$10 million?

18 MR. ORTH: More than that.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. I can see why
20 you'd want to go up to the substation then.

21 MR. ORTH: Yeah. The substation itself, I
22 mean, so that everyone understands, it's operated by
23 Lower Valley Energy under a special use permit from the
24 Forest Service. And we'll go into that area in the
25 fenced yard and bring equipment in and also operate it

1 under a special use permit from the Forest Service.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But it's easier for your
3 line to tap into a substation rather than just get the
4 line similar from the southern route?

5 MR. ORTH: It is. We provide year-round access
6 to the substation. We have all the switching equipment.
7 And, yes, it's --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So that's why we're
9 going the northern route because that's easier to do?

10 MR. ORTH: It -- it -- either -- either --
11 either proposals meet the purpose and need of the
12 project.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But you would prefer to
14 go to the substation?

15 MR. ORTH: I don't have that preference one way
16 or the other.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, you have enough
18 people here. Tell us. Is it more preferential to go to
19 that substation?

20 MR. ORTH: It -- it -- I -- I --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Never mind.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well --

23 MR. ORTH: Tapping a line (inaudible) of, you
24 know, along -- along that -- that route, that highway --
25 well, it's not even a state highway that runs Lane's

1 Creek -- south of the Lane's Creek cutoff road. We
2 would be tapping that line out in the middle of nowhere
3 essentially. We put up some disconnect switches so we
4 can operate it one way or the other. And so, yeah,
5 having access -- year-round access to that would be
6 tougher.

7 I'm not sure exactly what the plowing schedules
8 are of that area of the county, but I imagine they're
9 going to plow 34 first. And, yes, Lane's Creek
10 substation is right off of 34, so operationally, yeah,
11 it's -- it's --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It makes a lot of sense,
13 doesn't it?

14 MR. ORTH: It would be -- yeah, it meets more
15 of our maintenance needs.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sir, did you have a
18 question?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I do.

20 I've noticed over this summer in July the
21 survey crews out there working and apparently they're
22 running a preliminary line called an L line -- is what I
23 see on the survey stakes, the stakes that I've seen on
24 Highway 34. And then up on Williamsburg they are going
25 to run right past the three or four recreational

1 properties, within 150 feet. Is there anything you --
2 what can you do to move that line away from those
3 properties to help minimize the impact of that loss of
4 value because of this project? There's a question.

5 MR. ORTH: So the recreational areas -- are you
6 talking about in the Gravel Creek Campground?

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. They're -- they're
8 small, three, five, seven-acre parcels along Highway 34.

9 MR. ORTH: So I guess we're not aware of --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) mitigation.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's (inaudible)
12 mitigation.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. You've got real
14 estate people involved in this project and everybody's
15 tied together and you know what you are going through
16 and why, certainly within 150 feet from the centerline
17 of your project. Can you move that line?

18 MR. ORTH: Yes, we can work with those
19 individual landowners.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How far?

21 MR. ORTH: Well --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 10 miles? 15 miles?

23 MR. ORTH: We -- we -- we're working with other
24 landowners already to make adjustments to the line to
25 get away from an area. Yes, we can.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think it would be
3 important to find out where those are. If you could let
4 us know, you know, if we've -- I'm not sure where we're
5 talking about.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Say, I have a question.

7 MR. ORTH: Let me real quick --

8 That is one of our key mitigations that we do
9 to the (inaudible) --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's a large impact.
11 Someone that's got five or six sections of land for
12 range or farming is one thing, but private,
13 small-acreage landowners can zip right past 'em. I
14 think it's really inconsiderate. Not that this is all
15 inconsiderate.

16 MR. ORTH: I do understand, yeah, if you have a
17 small parcel, it would be a bigger impact.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: It would be helpful if
19 you reduced that to writing and send it on to us. It's
20 a different kind of use than I've heard so far.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Would you leave contact
22 information so that we can do that?

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Sure.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Question 2: On
25 the south route, the Senator suggested maybe we could

1 hop and skip around through the areas of concern.

2 What's your longest span that you can do
3 between your towers on this project? What's the
4 engineering?

5 MR. ORTH: Engineering-wise with the wire we're
6 using, you can -- you can -- you can span --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How far?

8 MR. ORTH: Our average is 800 -- usually 800 to
9 1,000 feet.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Up to a thousand.

11 MR. ORTH: Across -- across flat ground.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

13 MR. ORTH: As soon as you start adding
14 terrains, then our spans get shorter.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now, as I -- I got to
16 get the Monsanto people involved. A lot of those
17 streams run north and south with the mountains with the
18 ore seams and a lot of the mine sites that I've seen in
19 my experience are -- I don't know -- 1,000 feet wide,
20 maybe, at the most. But they -- you know, they follow
21 that seam down and it seems to be quite narrow to me.
22 Although they have other acreage around on each side in
23 this developable right, can't there be agreements
24 reached where they could -- you know, we could take from
25 ridge to ridge or identify where the ore seams are known

1 to be and plan to be mined in the future and couldn't
2 you more closely coordinate with them in a way that
3 would be constructive to hop and skip over their
4 concerns so you wouldn't have to move the line again or
5 have any concerns like that?

6 Monsanto people -- can anyone speak to the
7 width of the ore seams and typically what's developed?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jim?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

10 Commissioner, (inaudible) or not, we may be the
11 only friend BPA has in the room right now.

12 (Laughter.)

13 And they're shortly pissing us off, so
14 (inaudibles).

15 Let me -- let me just make a couple of
16 comments. When we were aware of this line, Monsanto met
17 with Lower Valley, who represented as themselves as
18 representing Lower Valley and Bonneville Power, to work
19 with them on acceptable routes. We worked diligently.
20 We did not spend a million dollars. We spent about
21 \$100,000. And we developed some -- some lines and
22 worked through some paths because there were some paths
23 that would actually cross Rocky Mountain Power's line,
24 as well. We actually were the impetus in getting
25 both -- or Lower Valley and Rocky Mountain together and

1 to force an engineering study so that they could move
2 through some of these mine sites.

3 I would be the first one to tell you that
4 moving through a mine site is not an easy thing to do,
5 but we did locate a path that would be acceptable that
6 they could move through those sites. We did that.

7 Now, when you talk about going through the
8 northern route, we don't have properties that we're
9 talking about. The southern route are those properties.
10 We've also just talked to them about their environmental
11 concerns and how we feel about them, which we think are
12 really red herrings. However, they have to manage their
13 own businesses.

14 To expect us to accept and hold harmless is not
15 something that's going to happen. I receive no economic
16 value for them putting a line through my property, so
17 I'm not going to hold them harmless. They have to work
18 that out themselves. And they are -- they're a big
19 company and they can do that.

20 Monsanto is a little upset about the \$100,000
21 we've already spent that's never been reimbursed.
22 However, we've talked to them about that. They know
23 about that situation.

24 We still remain willing to talk to anybody
25 about those routes. That's something we do as a good

1 neighbor. That's something we tried to work through.
2 So I would tell you that we're still willing to have
3 those discussions and -- and have met with them every
4 time they've requested to meet, so... but we did not
5 spend a million dollars.

6 The other issue is the companies that they have
7 identified. Simplot is definitely an entity. Agrium's
8 an entity. Monsanto and P-4 are really the same people.
9 So if you're representing 'em as two companies, it's
10 probably not a fair representation. P-4 is this wholly
11 owned subsidiary of Monsanto. So just to clarify that.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Jim.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Commissioner, if I could
14 just expand on something that Jim talked about and I
15 wanted to correct some -- some misinformation I heard
16 placed on the record at the beginning of the hearing
17 here today.

18 There are only two Super Fund sites in the area
19 and neither one of them extend north of Monsanto or the
20 (inaudible) so that's the limit of Super Fund sites in
21 Caribou County. Neither one of those interfere with
22 either the northern route or the southern route.

23 And I wanted to make that clear because a lot
24 of the ways that work is done is we'll use contractors
25 to search national databases and one wouldn't find from

1 a national database the nuances and the differences
2 between various cleanup activity. So I just wanted to
3 indicate that, as Jim said, what has been very
4 productive is dialog. Dialog has been good. And -- and
5 it's obvious to me that maybe even more dialog is needed
6 because, for instance, at the mines, in virtually every
7 case, the mines are actually not under Super Fund
8 cleanup orders. No -- no hazard ranking system has been
9 performed at any of those sites and there's no national
10 priority list listing. And so, therefore, just strict
11 or unseverable liabilities that I am sure BPA's
12 concerned about does not automatically apply in those
13 situations.

14 In fact, at every one of those sites, the
15 cleanup is actually proceeding under a voluntary cleanup
16 order, which is an administrative order or a consent,
17 that's entered into at a local court with two parties,
18 EPA and the mining company. And if we need to amend
19 those cleanup orders, we can -- that is actually
20 something that's doable. And I actually think that even
21 under the existing cleanup orders, you know, some --
22 some statement of what the work is to be done in and
23 around the mine that, you know, good engineering
24 practice applies. If it shows that the good engineering
25 practice done is in the course of erecting a

1 transmission line is not likely to impact any of the
2 liabilities of that particular cleanup site, that's all
3 that has to be done. You just have to show that you're
4 not -- you're not going to be disturbing anything.

5 Another thing that happens when you search
6 national databases is your national database will say
7 the mine is this big. And then what you do if you
8 scratch the surface of it, it'll say, well, the mine is
9 this big, but the lease is actually smaller because the
10 mine has to be big enough to cover the lease. Okay.
11 And so usually the lease is a -- is done naturally by
12 geologists and then surveyors do the mine and they do it
13 to the square, so the mine is always bigger than the
14 actual lease, the lease is always bigger than the actual
15 pit and the pit is actually always bigger than the
16 actual placement of any selenium-bearing materials or
17 any of those materials that you don't want to disrupt.

18 So in Mr. Orenca's question, the question was
19 how far do you have to jump. It really requires dialog.
20 And that's probably a lot of the work that Jim had done
21 was you don't want to look at just the mine or even the
22 lease or even the pit. You want to look at where is the
23 material that you don't want to disrupt. And sometimes
24 that will be a very narrow band.

25 And it should -- again, like I said, dialog

1 should enable us to work through those issues.

2 And then lastly, there was mention that one
3 particular mining company had sued the federal
4 government. Well, that -- that, by the way, isn't
5 Monsanto, but I know the -- I know the situation in that
6 particular case. And it was one of those cases where an
7 effort was made to come up with a joint cleanup
8 agreement. And one party pointed out that, well, wait
9 just a minute. A lot of what we did here was at the
10 federal government's direction, so you should have at
11 least a portion of the liability.

12 That case, by the way, is not pending as was
13 mentioned. That case has now been settled with the
14 federal government agreeing to pick up 32 -- 30 percent
15 of the cleanup costs. And so that's now a settled issue
16 and there is no pending case raising questions about
17 liability, so that's the current status of what
18 (inaudible) --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Senator Tippets.

20 MR. TIPPETS: Thank you.

21 Mr. Clark, who do they need to contact to get
22 boots on the ground and understand and really visit
23 about this mine concept?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jim Smith continues to
25 be Monsanto's contact.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Jim Smith. Okay.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And I think, Jim,
3 isn't -- you're open to continuing that discussion?

4 MR. SMITH: Oh, absolutely.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

6 MR. SMITH: So I make a motion that BPA follow
7 up on this and that this be taken care of for a southern
8 route (inaudible) on the southern route.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We all agree.

10 MR. ORTH: We will follow up. I've already got
11 Jim's phone number.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sir, could you identify
14 yourself, please.

15 MR. CLARK: I'm Trent Clark with Monsanto.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, you're also with
17 Monsanto?

18 MR. CLARK: Yes.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Senator Tippetts.

20 MR. TIPPETS: Thank you. John Tippetts.

21 And I want to be sure that everybody
22 understands that in addition to being a state Senator, I
23 also have a real job and I work for Agrium U.S.
24 Industries. I'm not here on their behalf. They didn't
25 ask me to be here today. And I haven't had any

1 discussions with BPA over power line routes.

2 And, Eric, I don't know who you've talked to in
3 our company, but I'd be happy to facilitate some of the
4 discussions and conversations if we need to go there.

5 And I don't know if the southern route is the
6 best route. I brought a series of questions up just to
7 make sure that we have considered all options and that
8 we've made sure that if we're not going that route that
9 there is a better route.

10 So I'd make that offer to you, Eric, to
11 facilitate some discussions with some people in our
12 company. And I haven't been involved in any
13 discussions, even inside our company, on this route, but
14 I can find the right people to talk to.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

16 MR. ORTH: Appreciate that, Senator. I --

17 MR. TIPPETS: Can I ask a question as a
18 Senator? I want to make sure that what I heard was --
19 what I thought I heard was really what I heard.

20 I thought I heard a commitment made to Mrs.
21 Blockson was somebody is going to investigate a tree
22 that was felled and that she will be reimbursed if
23 there's evidence that it was your surveyors?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Correct.

25 MR. TIPPETS: And, also, if people would give

1 you the names of landowners who have had people
2 trespassing on their property without permission that
3 you will contact the landowners and make sure you get
4 that resolved. Did I hear that?

5 MR. ORTH: Yes, yes. We'll make that
6 commitment.

7 MR. TIPPETS: Appreciate that.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have one -- not
9 more -- scathing remark to give.

10 We talked a lot about the Gray's Lake area.
11 But what about the farmers here that's north of town?
12 I've heard a little bit of discontent from some of them
13 and not super critical, but it would be a firm
14 suggestion that maybe you could align your poles
15 between -- if you take that route -- on the boundary
16 between the property owners so there wasn't a blank spot
17 in the field that they'd have to go around and farm
18 around. If you had it up closer to the line and they
19 could farm right up to the line on both sides, not to
20 have to dodge the poles; is that right?

21 We got farmers in the group here. Is that how
22 you're thinking?

23 I see a couple of heads nodding yes.

24 Is that an unreasonable request?

25 MR. ORTH: No, it's certainly not --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible) brought it
2 up because they made it so you couldn't even turn around
3 the poles and you would be on your neighbor's property,
4 so...

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So they need to either
7 run down one person or down the line, either way. But
8 if they're going to do what they had staked out, it was
9 ridiculous.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So that would be
11 an issue.

12 And probably the same with the access road that
13 you'd require if it's that close or far away from a
14 regular public road. I'll bet they'd like it so they
15 didn't have to go around that, too, just right up to the
16 edge of it.

17 MR. ORTH: Certainly. That is a reasonable
18 request. We have worked with some landowners to move
19 the line right -- right down the property line. We do
20 have a certain width where we are bumping up against
21 either a county road easement or a state highway
22 easement, so we do have to stay off of that so that we
23 don't overlap. Or if we do overlap, we're accepting of
24 the risk of that overlapping. But we certainly would
25 like to work with any landowners where we have placed

1 the line in a -- in a -- in a place that's not going to
2 work for them.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: One other comment that
4 I've had. Since this would be a publicly used utility,
5 it would be appropriate to use basically public lands
6 it's constructed on rather than have individual
7 landowners be the ones that have to bear the burden of
8 having the lines through their property. And that seems
9 to make sense where it's the public generally, why not
10 have it land that they own, as well?

11 MR. ORTH: Certainly that -- that comment can
12 be taken.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is this as controversial
14 as your I-5 corridor reinforcement project?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're all
16 controversial.

17 MR. ORTH: They're all controversial. I would
18 say as far as the -- the size of the community here in
19 Caribou County, yeah, this is -- this is -- this is
20 probably just as busy as I-5.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: This one has not spawned
22 a website, though, yet, with No Way BPA.

23 MR. ORTH: It has not, no. I'm unaware of any
24 (inaudible) --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A very interesting

1 website.

2 MR. ORTH: Bonneville does have a website for
3 this project if you'd like to take a look at it.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do they?

5 MR. ORTH: And you can get the information off
6 of the --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think the other one
8 will draw more attraction. But there is some very
9 interesting comments and letters and including from
10 the -- you know who all from -- U.S. Army Corps of
11 Engineers and everyone else, and they weren't entirely
12 favorable either.

13 But neither here nor there, I think this --
14 what we would like to see is -- the public here -- is
15 just some consideration and some coordination. And I
16 don't think there's anybody here that's really wanting
17 to see the power project stopped, but we'd certainly
18 like to see an appropriate route taken, one that has
19 less impact on -- on individual landowners and one that,
20 we think, should be more cost-effective to go the
21 shorter route. Maybe it won't be. I'm not an engineer
22 and I don't know. But we'd like to see it done with
23 some sort of sense rather than a bureaucracy at work.

24 MR. ORTH: Certainly.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No --

1 MS. EATON: Can I just make one comment to
2 address Mr. Cackley and to speak to that?

3 So we are in the middle of our environmental
4 process. There has been no decision and that is made by
5 our administrator in the record of decision. We're
6 going to be putting out the draft EIS. We're going to
7 have a public meeting. There -- no decisions have been
8 made, so if it seems like this is just a maze, that's
9 the perception, but that is not how Bonneville is
10 operating in this -- on any project until our
11 administrator makes a decision. So we encourage all
12 comments and participation.

13 MR. ESTES: Ernie Estes.

14 I would like to remind folks that we have a
15 goal of getting our environmental impact statement out
16 in November. That means that the earlier we receive
17 comments, the more attention we can give to them.

18 MS. EATON: Or if they're not, we can't put 'em
19 in the draft EIS. We talk to you at the public meeting
20 and we incorporate them into the final EIS or we do
21 whatever we need to address them to the final EIS, so
22 it's -- we're really still in the middle of this long
23 process.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you for your
25 encouragement, for your participation. I don't think

1 you will be disappointed. I -- I think -- I think you
2 will have some.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I had one last comment I
4 wanted to make about access roads.

5 One thing that Bonneville Power will do, too,
6 is in areas where we don't have to do improved roads
7 where we can do route to travels through a farmer's
8 field and we don't have to put gravel down or put any
9 felt down or anything, that's what we're going to do, so
10 we're going to minimize the impact. We'll buy an
11 easement that will be identified via survey and it'll be
12 a route to travel, but it won't actually be an improved
13 road.

14 And that's going to be a decision that's going
15 to be made from our access road engineering group. So
16 anywhere we can have minimal impact, that's what we
17 want. We'll still pay fair market value as an easement
18 for an access road, but it'll be an unimproved route to
19 travel.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May I ask one question
21 on that?

22 You're going up over a mountain that's at about
23 30 degrees or more. How are you going to get a road up
24 there?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's for our road

1 engineers.

2 MR. ORTH: We --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's going to be a
4 horrendous mess going up that thing.

5 MR. ORTH: We have to -- we have to go outside
6 the right-of-way quite -- quite a ways, a quarter mile,
7 half a mile, and then switch back.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're doing
9 switchbacks?

10 MR. ORTH: To get back to it, yes.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And clearing trees as
13 you go?

14 MR. ORTH: Clearing trees where there's trees,
15 yes.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's mostly rocks up
17 there, though.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is it?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But we will see that
20 from the valley then?

21 MR. ORTH: Yes, it could be a visual impact,
22 which is one of the things we do analyze in our
23 environmental impact.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. You folks going
25 to be around for a few minutes then --

1 MR. ORTH: We'll be around.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- in case anybody wants
3 to talk?

4 MR. ORTH: I've got business cards that I can
5 certainly hand out to anybody that doesn't have one
6 already. And, yeah, we will be around.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Does it have the contact
8 information we need to send in questions, comments? Is
9 the attorney here?

10 MR. ORTH: It's -- it's --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Where do we actually
12 send our comments so they will be considered?

13 MR. ORTH: You can send your comments directly
14 to me and they will -- they will get considered and put
15 in, too.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. We thank
17 everybody for being here. We thank you for all your
18 comments. Appreciate it.

19 (MEETING CONCLUDED.)

20

21

22

23

24

25



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Fort Hall Agency
P.O. Box 220
Fort Hall, Idaho 83203-0220



Tish Eaton, Environmental Lead
Bonneville Power Administration - KEC-4
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-36211

RE: Hooper Springs Transmission Project

Ms. Eaton,

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Fort Hall Agency and Fort Hall Irrigation Project are commenting in support of the South Alternative Option 2. Although we are in support of Option 2, we do support the selection of any of the Southern Alternative options over any option in the North Alternative as a preferred Alternative.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Fort Hall Agency and Fort Hall Irrigation Project would like to be kept informed as the EIS moves forward and appreciates the opportunity to comment on this project.

Thank you,

Randy A. Thompson
Acting Superintendent
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Fort Hall Agency

CC: David Bollinger, Fort Hall Irrigation Project Manager
Chrony



Greater Yellowstone Coalition

People protecting the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, now and for future generations.

BOZEMAN • CODY • IDAHO FALLS • JACKSON

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August 14, 2013

Tish Eaton, Environmental Lead
Bonneville Power Administration - KEC-4
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-36211
tkeaton@bpa.gov

Re: Hooper Springs Transmission Project

Dear Ms. Eaton:

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (“GYC”) has recently learned that Bonneville Power Administration (“BPA”) may propose a significant change of the transmission line location for the above-referenced project that would impact the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area (“WMA”). GYC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the lands, waters, and wildlife of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (“GYE”). GYC has offices in Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana with approximately 27,000 members and supporters nationwide. GYC’s members regularly use and enjoy the lands and waters of southeast Idaho, including the Blackfoot River Wildlife Management Area, for a variety of activities such as fishing, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, photography, and other pursuits. If BPA were to change the alignment for the Hooper Springs Transmission Project so that it crosses into the WMA, GYC’s and its member’s interests would be substantially harmed.

As we understand, based on a map dated July 9, 2013, BPA now is considering a change in alignment of the transmission line to pass through the WMA. In fact, from our best calculation more than a mile of the line would be constructed within the WMA. GYC and its members have a long history in protecting the WMA. GYC “adopted” the WMA through the Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s “Adopt-a-Wetland” program in 1997 and our staff and members have volunteered more than one thousand hours of labor on the WMA. We have carried out numerous restoration and enhancement projects that have improved fish and wildlife habitat within the WMA. The proposed alignment change as illustrated in the July 7, 2013 map will have profound, negative effects on habitat within the WMA, which in turn will negatively affect GYC’s members and supporters, as well as the larger public who value the WMA for a variety of recreational activities.

GYC commented on the initial scoping for this proposal; however, we did not comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (“DEIS”) because none of the proposed alternatives would have located the transmission line within the WMA. The new alignment of the proposed line differs greatly from any of the line locations proposed in the DEIS, which was released for public comment this past March.¹ Should BPA wish to relocate the transmission line so that it passes through the WMA, BPA must release a supplemental environmental impact statement to disclose the impacts of this change.

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations require that an EIS must be supplemented when “[t]he agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns.” 40 C.F.R. § 1502.9(c)(1)(i). The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the twin goals of NEPA are met: informing the public of the environmental impacts of the project and allowing the agency to make an informed decision. See Marsh v. Oregon Natural Resources Council, 490 U.S. 360, 371 (1989) (“It would be incongruous with this approach to environmental protection, and with the Act’s manifest concern with preventing uninformed action, for the blinders to adverse environmental effects, once unequivocally removed, to be restored prior to the completion of agency action simply because the relevant proposal has received initial approval.”). Thus, if a modification may substantially change the environmental impacts of a project, the agency must reevaluate and reveal the new effects.

BLM’s NEPA handbook sheds some further light on when a supplemental EIS will be required. It notes that “substantial changes” requiring supplementation “may include changes in the design, location, or timing of a proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns (i.e., the changes would result in significant effects outside of the range of effects analyzed in the draft or final EIS).”² In sum, a supplemental NEPA analysis is generally required if changes proposed will cause significant or uncertain environmental impacts. Marsh, 490 U.S. at 374 (“the decision whether to prepare a supplement EIS is similar to the decision whether to prepare an EIS in the first instance”).

In the case at hand, BPA is proposing to change the location of the transmission line to cross through a significant portion of the WMA, a change that will undoubtedly lead to significant environmental impacts that were never analyzed in a NEPA document that would appropriately inform the agencies and the public of the project impacts. The WMA provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including moose, elk, and deer. Streams within the WMA provide crucial habitat for native fish, including the imperiled Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Furthermore, the sagebrush lands of the WMA provide habitat for sage grouse, a species with the Fish and Wildlife Service has determined warrants listing under the Endangered Species Act, largely due to fragmentation of the species’ habitat. Moreover, the WMA provides an important recreational site for residents of and visitors to Idaho. People visit the WMA each year to participate in a variety of activities, including fishing, hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, and photography.

¹ The preliminary Environmental Assessment, released in 2009 also did not include an alternative which would have located the transmission line as passing through the WMA.

² BLM National Environmental Policy Act Handbook, Handbook H-1790-1 (January 2008), at 29, available at http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/blm_handbook.Par.2.4487.File.dat/h1790-1-2008-1.pdf (last visited August 14, 2013).

All of these values may be significantly impacted by the location change proposed by BPA. For this reason, BPA may not move forward with this new proposal without first issuing a supplemental EIS that fully discloses and analyzes the environmental impacts of the new alternative. See New Mexico ex rel. Richardson v. Bureau of Land Management, 565 F.3d 683, 706 (10th Cir. 2009) (holding supplemental NEPA analysis required even where similar acreage would be disturbed because changed location of disturbance was important). Thank you for your consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,



Andrea Santarsiere
Idaho Conservation & Legal Associate

Cc: Virgil Moore, Director, IDFG
Randy Budge, Southeast Commissioner, IDFG
Mark Gamblin, Regional Supervisor, Southeast Region, IDFG
Paul Wackenhut, Wildlife Habitat Manager, IDFG

