

# Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project

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Central Project Advisory Team Meeting 2 Summary  
July 29, 2009

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Best Western Sunridge Inn  
1 Sunridge Lane  
Baker City, OR 97814

**Table of Contents**

Introduction .....2  
Background .....3  
Overview .....4  
Presentations .....7  
Community Criteria Discussion.....13  
Panel Questions and Answers.....14  
Next Steps .....21

## Introduction

**This document summarizes the second Central PAT meeting held in Baker City, Oregon on July 29, 2009 from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.**

Idaho Power is committed to partnering with communities to identify proposed and alternate routes for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project. The initial process of identifying a route began in late 2007 when Idaho Power submitted documents to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Oregon Department of Energy–Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC). Following public scoping meetings held in October 2008, these agencies received public input requesting that Idaho Power conduct more extensive outreach while identifying the transmission line route.

In Spring 2009, Idaho Power initiated a process to engage communities—from Boardman, Oregon, to Melba, Idaho—in siting the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project. This process is called the Community Advisory Process.

As a part of the Community Advisory Process, a Project Advisory Team has been formed in each of the three geographic project areas: North, Central and South. The Project Advisory Teams are made up of residents, property owners, business leaders and local officials.

The Project Advisory Teams will work closely with technical experts to recommend proposed and alternate routes.

### **During the Community Advisory Process the Project Advisory Teams will:**

- **Identify** issues and concerns; develop criteria for evaluating possible routes and integrate community criteria with regulatory requirements.
- **Develop** a range of possible routes that address community issues and concerns. Routes will be identified through mapping sessions; routes not meeting the regulatory and community criteria will be removed from consideration.
- **Recommend** proposed and alternate routes, which will be carried through the permitting process.
  - **Follow through** with communities during the state and federal permitting process.



## **Background**

The Central Project Advisory Team includes representatives from Baker County, Union County and Grant County. The first Central Project Advisory Team (PAT) meeting was held June 4, 2009. At the first Central Project Advisory Team meeting team members:

- Reviewed and discussed the purpose and need for the project, work to date and how the Community Advisory Process would proceed.
- In smaller working groups, team members identified community concerns and suggestions about the project.
- The community concerns and suggestions identified by Project Advisory Team members were developed into community criteria.

Project Advisory Team and community members will use regulatory, engineering and community criteria when developing proposed and alternate routes for the transmission line.

- **Regulatory and engineering routing criteria** include state and federal regulations, policies and other standards that are applicable to development of a route. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Oregon Department of Energy-Energy Facility Siting Council (ODOE-EFSC) will use these criteria when reviewing proposed and alternate routes and determining if they should authorize the project.
- **Community criteria** include the concerns and suggestions identified by Project Advisory Teams in each area of the project – for example, irrigated farmland.

The second Central Project Advisory Team meeting provided team members with an opportunity to learn more about regulatory criteria and ask questions directly to the federal and state agencies involved with the authorization of the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project.

## **Overview**

The purpose of the second Central PAT meeting was to give team members a better understanding of:

- The federal, state and public processes involved in the project.
- The regulatory and engineering criteria that will be used to develop routes for the transmission line.
- The requirements and regulations the project will have to meet.

Team members also refined the community criteria at the second Central PAT meeting.

Identifying routes for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line will involve multiple processes and jurisdictions, agencies and communities. Idaho Power invited representatives from the BLM, ODOE-EFSC, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Oregon Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to the second PAT meeting to participate in an informative panel discussion and present their agency's review processes.

As part of the panel discussion, each representative gave a presentation that outlined their agency's review process and addressed key issues that may arise as the processes work together. Project Advisory Team members were given the opportunity to ask the representatives questions about the regulatory criteria that will be used during the siting process.

The following information was provided in advance to help team members prepare for the panel discussion:

- A siting process background paper was prepared for Project Advisory Team members to provide more information about the federal, state and public processes involved with the project.
- Tables of regulatory and engineering routing criteria.
- Draft community criteria that were developed from the concerns and suggestions submitted by team members at the first PAT meeting.

## **Meeting Agenda and Format**

Idaho Power hosted the second Central PAT meeting in Baker City, Oregon, on July 29, 2009 at the Best Western Sunridge Inn.

Fifty people attended the second Central PAT meeting.

A copy of the invitation letter for the second Central PAT meeting can be found in Appendix 1.

**The meeting objectives were to:**

- Discuss the role of each agency involved with the Boardman to Hemingway Project
- Refine community criteria
- Provide a forum where PAT members could discuss regulatory and engineering criteria with the appropriate agencies
- The meeting included:
  - Presentations by representatives from the BLM, ODOE, U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Idaho Power.
  - A facilitated discussion about the community criteria to identify issues and incorporate input from team members.
  - A question-and-answer session between team members and the resource agency representatives.
- Presenters:
  - Idaho Power—Stacey Baczkowski, Senior Biologist
  - BLM—Renee Straub, BLM Project Manager
  - USFS—Kurt Wiedenmann, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, District Ranger, La Grande Ranger District
  - ODOE—Adam Bless, Energy Facility Analyst
  - ODFW—Nick Myatt, ODFW District Wildlife Biologist

**Handouts:**

Organizational binders were provided to all team members. The binders included a meeting agenda from the first PAT meeting and the Community Advisory Process flowchart handout. The following handouts for the second meeting also were included in the binders and are available in Appendix 2:

- Central PAT #2 Agenda (Two changes were made to the agenda: Renee Straub represented the BLM instead of Lucas Lucero and Eric Hackett, Idaho Power, was unable to attend.)
- Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project Siting Process Background Paper
- Boardman to Hemingway Project Advisory Team PowerPoint presentation
- BLM PowerPoint presentation
- USFS PowerPoint presentation
- State of Oregon's ODOE-EFSC PowerPoint presentation
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) PowerPoint presentation
- Community Criteria comment sheet
- Meeting Evaluation comment sheet

- Invitation to public meeting

### **Team Member Input**

- Idaho Power asked team members to evaluate the meeting by completing Meeting Evaluation comment sheets. Transcriptions of the Meeting Evaluation comment sheets are available in Appendix 3.
- Seventeen team members completed the Meeting Evaluation comment sheet. Responses included the following:
  - Nine team members responded that they planned to attend the Baker City public meeting.
  - Four team members responded that they planned to attend the La Grande public meeting.
  - Twelve team members responded they were available to attend the PAT #3 meeting/mapping session on September 15 and 16.
  - The majority of team members responded positively to the panel discussion and thought the Q&A was informative and useful.
  - Comments included:
    - “The panel worked well. I liked the presentations with more time for questions.”
    - “The Q&A gave the opportunity to listen, learn and gather more information.”
    - “Federal agencies have a multitude of laws and regulations to protect federal land. Who protects private land?”
    - “Maybe the affected county commissioners should have been part of the panel.”
    - “Answered many questions that I had come with and didn’t have to ask. Well prepared, relevant and direct.”

## **Presentations**

### **Welcome—Kent McCarthy, Idaho Power CAP Project Leader**

McCarthy welcomed participants and reviewed the agenda. Two changes were made to the agenda: Renee Straub represented the BLM instead of Lucas Lucero and Eric Hackett was unable to attend for Idaho Power. Team members were told that if the panelists were not able to answer engineering questions, these questions would be forwarded to Hackett and answers would be returned to the team via e-mail.

### **Introductions and Agenda—Rosemary Curtin, PAT facilitator**

- Curtin thanked team members and panelists for attending and asked everyone to briefly introduce themselves. Curtin then went over the following housekeeping items:
- Reviewed the team binders and handouts for the meeting.
- Documents from all the first PAT meetings are available on the project Web site [www.boardmantohemingway.com](http://www.boardmantohemingway.com).
- Idaho Power hosted two optional Purpose and Need meetings on July 8, 2009 in Baker City and Ontario. The summary from these meetings will be posted to the project Web site when finalized.
- Seven public meetings have been planned and will be held in communities in all three advisory areas. Invitations will be distributed to team members and they are encouraged to attend.
- Contact information for all Project Advisory Team members will be posted at these public meetings. If the team members would not like their information included on the PAT member display board they need to contact RBCI.
- Review of proposed mapping session dates. The mapping sessions will consist of an evening introduction followed by an all-day mapping workshop the next day.
- Review of upcoming mapping sessions:
- The first evening, a meeting will be held to give team members instructions about the mapping workshop.
- The following day, mapping sessions will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. for people to drop in and identify routes. County planners are encouraged to attend these mapping sessions.
- After the first session, the routes will be analyzed by Tetra Tech and Idaho Power. Analyzed routes will be presented to the PAT, including their advantages and disadvantages. This analysis process will continue until an acceptable route is mapped. Resource agency data will be available during the mapping sessions.

## **Panel Presentations**

The purpose of the panel was to meet representatives from the resource agencies involved in the project and learn about their processes, functions, roles and responsibilities. All PowerPoint presentations and the siting process background paper that summarizes agency roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix 2.

### **Idaho Power—Stacey Baczkowski, Senior Biologist**

Baczkowski works with environmental considerations in routing the line. She explained the regulatory materials, which includes a list of acronyms and the table of regulatory and engineering criteria. Baczkowski explained the table of regulatory and engineering criteria summarizes the regulations and requirements the project will have to meet; some of the regulations are route dependent and some are independent of the chosen route. The table of regulatory and engineering criteria will be used during the mapping sessions. The regulatory and engineering criteria table includes avoidance areas, placement opportunities, and exclusion areas (Appendix 5).

### **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—Renee Straub, BLM Project Manager**

Straub delivered a PowerPoint presentation, which outlined the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the responsibilities of lead and cooperating agencies, and BLM suggestions. Straub's presentation included the following information:

- The CAP and NEPA processes have several differences:
  - CAP is a process chosen by Idaho Power to identify proposed and alternative routes.
  - NEPA is a federal law that requires agencies to analyze and disclose potential impacts of projects or programs to ensure agencies make well-informed decisions. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is a detailed analysis prepared by federal agencies to comply with NEPA when a project is expected to have significant environmental impacts.
- Responsibilities of the BLM as the lead agency in the NEPA process:
  - BLM will prepare the EIS.
  - BLM must select an agency-preferred alternative and will not participate in the CAP route development process.
  - BLM will consult with other agencies and tribes and evaluate the project against numerous laws, regulations and policies prior to selecting an agency preferred alternative and mitigation, approving or denying the right-of-way grant and the Land Use Plan Amendment.
- Cooperating agencies assist the BLM with preparing the EIS. Seventeen agencies in Oregon and Idaho have expressed interest in participating as cooperators.
- Review of the EIS process, which is currently in the scoping phase:
  - After scoping, the BLM will develop alternatives, conduct the environmental analysis, prepare a draft EIS, and file a notice of availability in the Federal Register.

- o The draft EIS has a 45-day comment period, after which the BLM responds to comments and selects the preferred alternative.
- o The BLM will prepare the final EIS, file another notice of availability, circulate the final EIS for 30 days, and file a record of decision.
- Review of the parts of an EIS and the comprehensive list of known issue areas to be analyzed along the entire route. Additional issues may arise during the CAP process during scoping or during review of the draft EIS.
- The BLM suggested the following:
  - o CAP teams will not resolve all routing issues or mitigate all environmental impacts.
  - o CAP teams should focus on developing routes in “opportunity areas” and keep routes away from “avoidance” or “exclusion” areas.
  - o CAP teams should consider routes in the BLM Public Scoping Report that make use of “opportunity areas.”
  - o CAP routes are not “final approved” routes.
  - o After the CAP process, team members should remain involved by reviewing and commenting on the draft EIS and draft Proposed Order.
- All routes, including CAP routes, will be presented by the BLM and ODOE in public scoping meetings after the CAP process. The BLM, with help from cooperating agencies, will identify reasonable routes for detailed analysis in the EIS.

**U.S. Forest Service (USFS)—Kurt Wiedenmann, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, District Ranger, La Grande Ranger District**

Wiedenmann discussed the USFS’s role as a cooperating agency in the NEPA process.

Weidenmann’s presentation included the following information:

- The USFS will make a separate decision from the BLM regarding USFS lands. At least three, and possibly four, national forests are on the potential route. The three likely forests along the route are the Wallowa-Whitman, Umatilla, and Malheur national forests, together constituting about six million acres. The route may also reach the Ochoco National Forest.
- National Forest System lands have forest plans (land and resource management plans) that guide land management and provide land management allocations similar to city zoning regulations. Forest plans also give general guidance regarding transmission lines and utility corridors.
- A map of the three national forests, showing the following:
  - o Exclusion areas (red)—Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) and congressionally designated wilderness areas
  - o Avoidance areas (yellow)—areas with high resource values, such as wild and scenic rivers protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; Research Natural Areas; and municipal watersheds
  - o Opportunity areas (green)—areas generally conforming for use by utilities, in which the USFS still has to address issue areas and mitigate if possible

- A map with current transmission lines, highways, and corridors, noting that existing power lines come through the HCNRA because they pre-date the HCNRA's establishment.
- A map of management areas (MAs) in the La Grande Ranger District. MA1 would be the least controversial and denotes areas allocated to timber emphasis (e.g., road construction, grazing, harvesting). As the MA numbers increase, the resource objectives increase and are more restrictive. MA 17 is a utility corridor (the only one on the Wallowa Whitman National Forest) that was designated in the 1990s because a Bonneville Power Administration transmission line and large underground natural gas line run through that area.

**Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE)—Adam Bless, Energy Facility Analyst**

Bless discussed Oregon state siting criteria. Bless told team members that he is available for questions outside of Project Advisory Team meetings. Bless' presentation included the following information:

- The lead state agency is EFSC, a seven-person citizen board. The ODOE serves as staff to EFSC, does most of the detailed review, and makes recommendations to EFSC.
- EFSC criteria apply on all land in Oregon—including private land, Oregon state land and federal land—and come from three areas:
  - o Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) chapter 345, divisions 22, 23, 24, and 27 (these are captured on the regulatory and engineering criteria table [Appendix 5])
  - o Other state agency and county rules (e.g., ODFW guidelines, county land use plans)
  - o The Project Order issued in January 2009—a comprehensive list of the regulatory criteria (available at the Boardman to Hemingway Web site)
- OAR 345 Division 22 contains the 14 core standards that incorporate other standards by reference. Bless expanded on the following standards:
  - o Retirement/financial assurance—If the line becomes obsolete, removal and restoration are the applicant's responsibility. The applicant must include an estimate that is reviewed by an outside source for removing the line and restoring the route. As a condition of approval, the applicant must provide a bond or letter of credit to cover the estimate. Under no circumstances would the landowner have to remove the equipment and restore the site.
  - o Need—Idaho Power must make its case for a finding of need and compliance with the standards in an application, which is subject to public review. Need is a unique standard because EFSC relies on the Oregon Public Utilities Commission (PUC) (a sister agency) to review Idaho Power's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to determine need. Idaho Power's new case for need will be included in the IRP to be submitted by December 31, 2009.
- Review of some of the route-related standards in more detail:
  - o Biology standards are based on ODFW's six habitat categories.
  - o Land use standards are based on criteria directly from the County Comprehensive Plan, although EFSC can make direct goal findings or take goal exceptions.

- o Scenic standards only protect inventoried resources included in the County Comprehensive Plan or a tribal or federal land management plan.
- o Although no public health and safety standards exist, EFSC has broad statutory authority to place any conditions on a permit to protect public health and safety, including routing conditions. EFSC can and has considered electromagnetic fields in past applications.
- The EFSC standards incorporate many other rules and standards from agencies and counties and require EFSC to determine “no net significant adverse impact” (with mitigation). Bless encouraged PAT members to read the OAR or Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) because the names of the standards often do not tell the whole story.

**Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)—Nick Myatt, ODFW District Wildlife Biologist**

Myatt discussed ODFW’s role in the siting process. Myatt’s presentation included the following information:

- The project area is about 300 miles long and includes the following:
  - o Habitat for five native anadromous fish species, bull trout and red band trout
  - o Important habitat for a variety of wildlife
  - o Federal and State protected species
  - o Important hunting, angling and recreational areas
- ODFW’s role in siting is mostly advisory unless the line crosses ODFW-owned land. The ODFW provides data, contributes to scoping and plan development, and requires mitigation.
- Various ORS, OAR and species management plans provide authority and guidance for species management and habitat protection, especially ODFW’s Fish & Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy. The policy is based on the premise that habitats can have varying levels of importance based on conditions and the location of habitat and on the need and sensitivity of associated species. The policy contains a hierarchy of habitat categories, defining Category 1 as irreplaceable, essential, and limited habitat; Category 2 as essential habitat; and Category 6 as neither essential nor limited habitat. Ideally, Category 2 habitat would be avoided since mitigation is often expensive. The goal for Category 6 habitat is to minimize impacts; no mitigation requirement exists for Category 6.
- The ODFW assists the applicant in the following:
  - o Collecting information to categorize habitats
  - o Assigning categories
  - o Quantifying impacts
  - o Proposing mitigation
- EFSC will have to address fish and wildlife mitigation in the final order, which will likely have some mitigation for the impacts.

- In Baker and Union counties, species of concern include the following:
  - o Sage grouse
  - o Raptors (e.g., great grey owls)
  - o Big game (deer and elk)
- Sage grouse have declined in number and range throughout the West. Sage grouse are sensitive to habitat loss and alteration. The Virtue Flat area—one of the oldest known leks in Baker County—has been researched since the 1940s when there were over 200 displaying males. Last spring, numbers were down to 23 males. Sage grouse are currently petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- In order to minimize impacts to sage grouse, the ODFW recommends the following actions:
  - o Use existing corridors and rights-of-way.
  - o Utilize a 2-mile buffer around leks (Category 1 habitat) and a half-mile buffer around springs or wet meadows (Category 2 habitat).
  - o Avoid construction during the key breeding period from March 1 – June 30.
- The following are habitats of concern in Baker and Union counties:
  - o Wetlands
  - o Riparian areas
  - o Springs
  - o Aspen stands
  - o Intact sagebrush
  - o Winter range for deer and elk
- Recommendations for big game winter range (Category 2) include the following:
  - o Avoiding construction and limiting post-construction access from December 1–March 31
  - o Controlling weeds
  - o Avoiding new road construction
  - o Re-vegetating disturbed areas
- Wetlands, riparian areas, aspen stands, and springs are limited in the area and should be avoided or subject to Category 2 mitigation.

## **Community Criteria Discussion**

During the first Central PAT meeting, concerns and suggestions submitted by Central PAT members were developed into community criteria. The community criteria will be presented at the public meetings in August 2009 and will be used with the regulatory and engineering criteria during the mapping sessions.

At the second Central PAT meeting, Rosemary Curtin facilitated a discussion with the team members to identify if any of the draft community criteria needed to be added or changed.

Team members provided the following feedback on the draft community criteria (see also Appendix 4 for flipchart transcriptions):

- Avoid medical facilities.
- Under historic landmarks, specifically avoid the Oregon Trail.
- Where can you rout the line along I-84? What sections would work?
- Avoid airports.
- Go to the south hills of La Grande rather than just avoiding city limits.
- Avoid developed recreation areas (e.g., Morgan Lake, Wolf Creek and other areas used by the public).
- Avoiding the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center should be included with avoiding view sheds.
- Avoid the Powder River Valley.
- Include burying the transmission line as a placement opportunity.
- Currently designated scenic routes (i.e., scenic highways) should be avoided.
- Placement opportunity outside city limits should be changed to avoid areas within city limits.
- Acknowledge Union County as part of the Central area.
- List public lands as an avoidance area instead of just an opportunity area.
- Add designated high priority noxious weed sites as avoidance areas.
- Avoid the Powder River below Thief Valley Reservoir.
- Avoid Howard Meadows area because it is a designated wetland area.
- Consider a route that goes more through southern Oregon (i.e., John Day area) and existing corridors. McCarthy noted that PAT members are welcome to consider any routes but no corridor exists going north from Burns.
- The community criteria should be specific for each of the three advisory areas.
- Team members were also given a Community Criteria comment sheet to provide input.
- Eight team members completed the Community Criteria comment sheet. Team members were asked if additional community criteria needed to be included and if the existing criteria

needed to be changed. Transcriptions of the community criteria comment sheets are available in Appendix 3. Responses included:

- Wildlife areas need protection.
- Scenic byways and tour routes should be included.
- Take the route through Buchanan.
- Idaho Power should look at alternative technologies.
- No team members responded that the existing community criteria needed to be changed.

Team members were informed at the meeting that the recommended changes would be made to the draft community criteria and the final version would be distributed to team members for review. The final community criteria would be distributed at the public meetings in August.

## **Panel Questions and Answers**

Team members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the resource agency representatives and Idaho Power representatives. Below are the questions asked by team members and the answers provided by the resource agency representatives and Idaho Power at the meeting.

The presenters have added information to this summary in order to clarify a point or more accurately answer a question that was asked during the meeting. Comments added by the resource agency representatives after the meeting are in [blue print and underlined](#).

### **At the mapping session, will there be one map with all the information?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power is still working out the best way to present the information, but there will be a GIS operator and system to display the GIS data.

### **What will the scope of the map be? Will maps show the west side of the Blue Mountains and the state of Idaho (i.e., areas beyond Baker County)?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power is still working out how to represent such a broad area to meet people's needs. Some data aren't available for all areas.

McCarthy, Idaho Power: One idea is to have a high altitude look for the first mapping session then a closer look for the second mapping session.

### **Are Caucasian burial sites given the same status as Native American sites?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Cemetery sites are a GIS layer that can be viewed, all sites will be weighted equally. [It will also be up to the PATs to determine which sites are most important to the communities.](#)

**Is Howard Meadows available for consideration as a historic site? Howard Meadows runs between Ladd Canyon, Glass Hill, and Anthony Lakes and is named after a leader from the Nez Perce wars.**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power will have to get back to the PAT on that question. After the meeting Idaho Power provided the following information: There are four Howard Meadows in eastern Oregon, with information available on two: (1) Howard Meadows, Grant Co., three miles south of Dale is named for Charles L. Howard, who filed on these lands in 1891; and (2) Howard Meadow, Wallowa Co., east of Howard Butte, named for Abe Howard who took up a homestead in the vicinity about 1885. Howard was killed when a horse fell on him, and his sons buried him on the north edge of the meadow named for him. Neither of these matches the location near Ladd Canyon and Glass Hill. General O.O. Howard is the US Army leader who chased the Nez Perce out of the Wallowa Valley in 1876 and chased them through eastern Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. But, this chase largely started in Wallowa Valley east of the location near Ladd Hill, with Howard joining in after the Nez Perce reached Idaho. If this location is named after General Howard, it does not appear to be directly related to his actions in the Nez Perce War and probably has no more significance than any other place name. Based on the information we could find, the site is not considered a historic site. A location that is named after a historic figure is typically not considered eligible as a historic site. However, if a historic event occurred at the location, it may be eligible to be considered a historic site.

**Do federal criteria for visual resources take into account areas immediately outside wilderness (i.e., views from the wilderness area)?**

ODOE: The State of Oregon's protected area standard (found in the table) doesn't just prohibit placing something in a certain area but also examines the impact of its placement. However, whether being able to see something from an area is a negative impact or not would have to be debated with EFSC balancing the arguments.

USFS: USFS lands have visual standards, but those would not necessarily prohibit structures because of the view from the wilderness area. However, the USFS does consider that issue and try to mitigate to decrease the impact on the wilderness user looking out.

BLM: The BLM has similar standards to the USFS. Based on agency guidance and input from the public and other agencies, the BLM will select Key Observation Points and prepare visual simulations. The simulations will be available in the draft EIS. The BLM will also apply mitigation to reduce visual impacts. Mitigation will be included in the draft EIS.

**Does the ODFW collect the data for wildlife, and how do they get that data from private land? If there is a lek on private property, does it count?**

ODFW: The agency provides available data, but when it comes to categorizing and surveying, Idaho Power and its consultants will collect data. It's irrelevant whether wildlife data is on public or private land—it all counts.

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power has worked with the ODFW to develop survey protocols and appropriate timing. The surveys have to meet their requirements.

**Who monitors that?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power is subject to the agencies' review.

**Does the EFSC process look at whether contractors are reporting accurately?**

ODOE: It is the applicant's responsibility to make its case and present evidence in support of a finding of compliance. EFSC takes that evidence and reviews it, which may involve ground-truthing through an EFSC consultant. Also, if a member of the public thinks Idaho Power did not accurately report on their property, EFSC has permission to look at that land. [EFSC could look at the landowner's evidence as well.](#) EFSC would make every effort to come out and resolve the dispute. If the ODFW doesn't agree with Idaho Power's contractor, they would be the first to weigh in. However, a member of the public can question the evidence too. If someone doesn't like EFSC's verification, it enters the contested case phase.

BLM: The issues in the scoping process are analyzed for public, private and federal land. The more information available, the better the EIS can be written. [The data collected by BLM's NEPA contractor is carefully reviewed by a BLM interdisciplinary team of specialists. All data must meet BLM standards. Once the data are determined to be accurate and complete, the BLM adopts the data as its own.](#)

**Are there known leks within two miles of the existing corridors, perhaps in the corridor towards the Juntura/Burns area?**

ODFW: In Baker and Union counties there is one lek slightly less than two miles from a corridor. Nick Myatt, the representative from ODFW said the area towards Juntura and Burns is out of his district and he isn't familiar with the location of the corridors. There was a line put in around this area near a lek, and the lek declined after the power line was put in.

**Will the existing corridors be available in GIS?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Yes, existing power lines and other corridors are in GIS and will be available in the mapping sessions.

**What is the net difference in cost between building the transmission line and building a new plant to get the power Idaho Power wants?**

Angell, Idaho Power: The purpose and need meeting in July referenced information from the 2006 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). Later this year we'll be able to answer that question with updated information. (A PowerPoint presentation with information about the 2006 IRP is included in Appendix 6).

**Why aren't Harney and Grant counties considered for public meetings since those areas present viable route alternatives?**

McCarthy, Idaho Power: Those counties have been involved in the southern meetings and Harney County has asked for a public meeting. Grant County has been invited but hasn't been involved yet.

**Is it possible to provide new data in the next few months? Leks won't be available for viewing until next spring. Lots of data still needs to be collected. With the timeline in front of us, how can PAT members assume a valuable collection of studies will be conducted in the few months ahead of us?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power is working with the agencies to develop a survey protocol, which involves appropriate timing. Lots of species surveys are time specific. Surveys

can't begin until there are identified routes. However, Idaho Power is working out protocols for species they expect to survey. These surveys may take longer than expected, but Idaho Power will do them in accordance with protocols. [The surveys may take longer because of timing.](#)

BLM: Lots of the information is already available and many of the data gaps will be on private land. [BLM is collecting data for public lands with ODFW in a variety of areas.](#)

**Aren't there leks in Union County that haven't been surveyed for a while and aren't they doing that right now?**

ODFW: As part of survey protocol, surveys have to be done during a correct time period. Right now, the ODFW has a sample of leks in Union and Baker counties that are monitored every year—some on private land too. The ODFW also does helicopter searches and conducts visits to monitor the big picture and find new leks.

**Is the ODFW investing money right now to ramp up those efforts?**

ODFW: This spring the ODFW completed additional surveys, but those happen every five years or so. Those survey results are public and available.

**Has anyone talked to any landowners along the power line that runs from The Dalles down through Cook County to see what they think about the lines?**

McCarthy, Idaho Power: No, Idaho Power has not talked to them. Only one of those lines is a direct current 500 kV line.

**Which power line is built over a lek? Who owns it?**

ODFW: It's in the utility corridor on the edge of the valley under the visitor center. [After the meeting Idaho Power confirmed they do have a 230 kV transmission line that runs through the Baker Valley and is located west of the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.](#)

**Has there ever been so many obstacles it's impossible to get from point A to B with a line, or does it always come down to mitigating, weighing and balancing?**

ODOE: That is one of the key differences between state and federal processes. On the state side, EFSC doesn't balance standards against each other. It's a set of criteria and the applicant has to meet every standard. It's a test where the applicant has to get 100%.

USFS: On the federal side, it is a balancing act. NEPA does not say a project can't have impacts. It is acceptable to have environmental impacts in an acceptable range as long as there is mitigation and full disclosure of the process and decisions to the public.

BLM: Cumulative impacts have to be analyzed and identified in the EIS.

**In one of the BLM slides, it says that "all routes, including CAP developed routes, will be presented by BLM ..." What non-CAP routes are there?**

ODOE: The state does not propose routes, just accepts applications and reviews them.

BLM: The other routes came from Idaho Power and a route developed by BLM, which were identified during the initial scoping phase. All these routes will go back to the public during the next scoping process. Then the counties and cooperating agencies will see which routes are feasible and should be fully analyzed in the EIS.

**Aren't all routes off the map?**

McCarthy, Idaho Power: Yes. When Idaho Power resubmits the revised application to the BLM, those initial routes won't be in there. However, they are part of the record because they were already submitted to the BLM. Those aren't the routes Idaho Power is going forward with.

Angell, Idaho Power: After this CAP process, Idaho Power will amend the application for the proposed and alternate routes. All the other routes will just become alternates then. Slide 6 from the purpose and need meeting addressed the earlier questions about the cost difference between building the line and building a new plant. Angell offered to show this slide to anyone interested at the conclusion of the meeting and it can be found in Appendix 6.

BLM: All public routes addressed in the scoping report will be analyzed further, but not all will be fully analyzed. Although some routes won't be fully analyzed in the NEPA process, they will be disclosed with an explanation of why they were discarded. They will be in the EIS as routes that were considered and looked at but not fully analyzed in terms of all resources and concerns.

**Does the EIS only cover federal lands?**

BLM: Any of the major items that have been identified as important resources/[issues](#) will be analyzed as much as possible for the land where data is available.

USFS: Federal agencies only have authority to make decisions on federal lands. However, NEPA requires them to look at direct, indirect and cumulative effects, which is when private land is taken into account (e.g., cumulative effects for sage grouse). How far the boundary extends off public land for consideration of effects is a gray area right now.

**In Malheur and Grant counties, clear cuts are prohibited or limited in size. How would a 250-foot clear cut be handled in terms of weighing and balancing? A clear cut wouldn't be allowed for timber harvest, so why would it be allowed for power line building?**

USFS: It's a special use that's being proposed. The forest service may have to amend its forest plan and the USFS would have to disclose the impacts. The forest plan standards guide the USFS, but the USFS does have the legal authority to step outside of those standards as long as they disclose impacts and make a reasonable, informed decision.

**What impact do the transmission lines have on sage grouse since there are ways to deter raptors from perching on the towers?**

ODFW: There are a couple of impacts. The first is the raptor issue. Although it is possible to use deterrence measures on poles so they are not as friendly for raptor perching, this is not always effective. Another issue is the associated infrastructure—roads, disturbance, towers, etc. However, the biggest issue seems to be sage grouse avoiding the area. They're not using those areas around the lines even if suitable habitat exists there. These findings are based on Christian Hagen's (ODFW) literature reviews and quite a few studies looking at the effects of power lines on sage grouse.

**If the power line is projected to go across private land, what happens if the landowner says no?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power will work with the landowner to find an agreement suitable for both parties and look at other options. Idaho Power can also pursue legal means.

**How is Idaho Power going to weigh, analyze and choose between all the proposed routes?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: It all comes back to the PAT members to help refine the numerous routes. Idaho Power will provide feedback on the routes and quantify some of the impacts for the PAT, but it is up to the PAT to work as a group to decide, based on the criteria, which routes will be carried forward. Internally, Idaho Power is still trying to figure out how to make these mapping sessions most effective for the PATs.

**All of these power lines will involve roads, and roads create wildlife concerns. Locally, the effects on deer and elk have been documented. Can you speak to these wildlife concerns?**

ODOE: EFSC considers the project to be not just the power line, but all the related facilities. The application has to describe the roads as well. The State of Oregon can review the proposed location of the roads and determine that those places are the only locations roads can be built. The applicant would have to amend the application to change the location and number of roads.

BLM: That also includes temporary structures and staging areas. [Access roads would be analyzed to the same level of detail as the power line in the EIS. BLM would encourage Idaho Power to share existing roads where possible to reduce disturbance and impacts.](#)

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power also tries to use existing roads and implement best management practices.

USFS: Strict density standards exist on USFS land, so the USFS would probably make new roads closed to the public.

**Is it possible to have access to the map information before the mapping session?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power would like to provide that information in advance [but is still working out how to do that.](#)

**What about new technology to make transmission lines more efficient in terms of energy loss? Also, so much of people's reluctance is about the size of the towers. This is a pivotal time in this country for energy, but Americans are still using the same technology. Something seems to be missing. Is there a way of using newer technology? There are examples in Australia in other countries.**

Angell, Idaho Power: The bigger picture isn't here today. The conversation about the way this country uses, makes and transports energy is in flux. But in the next five years there is going to be a need for additional energy in southeast Oregon and southern Idaho. Idaho Power is applying the technology that is economical and available now, but is glad to look at newer technology if people can bring that to them. Idaho Power will be submitting a proposal to the DOE for smart grid technology. Idaho Power also uses substantial energy efficiency programs and peak reduction demand programs. The company has seen quite a bit of load reduction. But the energy used by homes, in general, continues to increase and Idaho Power has an obligation to serve with an economical approach.

**Rural areas are paying for urban sprawl and that shouldn't continue.**

Angell, Idaho Power: It doesn't matter where people live today because most don't live where all the resources are (gas, oil, etc.).

**Some things are not available in this area, but we are supposed to lay open the land for everything people want in the city. We're not using these products (e.g., high-speed internet)—partly because they're not available and partly because we choose not to. Build power plants in Idaho.**

Angell, Idaho Power: Idaho Power is currently building a natural gas plant in Idaho and many units have come online since 2002.

**Cost is also about quality of life, environmental impacts and the fact that technology is catching up. What's done today might be completely obsolete 10 years down the road.**

Angell, Idaho Power: Today, wind, geothermal, natural gas and solar energy are being added to the grid. Along with reducing usage, those are the available options. Since wind, geothermal and solar can't work everywhere transmission lines will be crisscrossing a lot of areas all over the nation.

**Aren't there more efficient lines?**

Angell, Idaho Power: No. There are either AC lines, like Idaho Power uses, or DC lines. DC lines are more economical at 400–500 miles long but, at shorter distances, are about even.

ODOE: Adam Bless explained he recently spent three days in Seattle for a meeting of the National Association of Public Utility Commissioners; 60 percent of the sessions were on demand response (smart grid). The head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission was there along with senior management from the DOE, and PUC chairs from 30–40 states, including all western states. National labs were there talking about smart grid goals for the next 10 years. Much of the discussion was about how to use the smart grid to improve efficiency. The keynote speaker discussed demand response—how to lower the peak to increase efficiency. All those people are trying to work in concert to coordinate their efforts and money. So although this is a focused routing session, the PAT should know people are talking about this.

Need is a standard for EFSC. The Integrated Resource Plan will be reviewed for evidence that Idaho Power is doing the best it can to lower demand [using techniques such as demand response](#). Whether or not Idaho Power needs the line is a different question than where should it go. Both are valid, but different, questions. The need and routing discussions are happening at the same time for good reasons, and Bless can cover the reasons for the parallel processes in detail at a different time for those who would like.

**What is the mitigation process if the line does go into an avoidance area, and who decides that?**

USFS: It depends on land ownership. Federal land mitigation would be decided by the deciding official. Mitigation offsets the effects of the project or minimizes impacts. For example, sedimentation caused by roads can be reduced by laying out the road properly or closing the road after it is no longer needed.

BLM: Mitigation could also include rehabilitation and restoration or purchasing other lands. [Some mitigation is required by agency policy or regulations. The public can also propose mitigation during scoping or when commenting on the draft EIS. BLM specialists with knowledge of specific resources will also propose mitigation to further reduce impacts. All will be disclosed in the EIS.](#)

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power can also make temporal or spatial considerations or maintain a buffer around a resource.

**Regarding property taxes, the Oregon Department of Revenue will not let a county appraise a utility plant. If transmission lines are treated like utility plants, the amount the utility will pay in taxes is a smaller percentage than what a homeowner would pay. Is a transmission line treated the same way?**

Baczkowski, Idaho Power: Idaho Power will have to get back to the PAT about that question.

After the meeting Idaho Power provided the following information: The Oregon Revised Statutes dictate that the Oregon Department of Revenue (ODR) assess utilities (Idaho Power Company). ODR assesses all of Idaho Power Company's property as one combined value. That value includes tangible and intangible property (custom software, etc.). The Oregon Department of Revenue then allocates to each county and to each taxing district where Idaho Power has property its share of the Company's 100% market value as prescribed by law (formula). There are different formulas for transmission lines and production facilities. Utilities pay property taxes based upon 100% of market value for its tangible and intangible property, whereas all other taxpayers pay property taxes based upon 100% of market value for tangible property.

## Comments

During the question-and-answer session, team members also provided the following comments:

- A judge from Grant County noted that Grant County residents would like meetings in their area if routes through the county are being seriously considered.
- A team member noted that both the power lines through the valley (discussed earlier) belong to Idaho Power. Oregon Trail Electric Consumer's Cooperative (OTECC) rents the poles on the south side of the freeway, but it is Idaho Power's right-of-way.
- A team member commented that with the recent amendment to the cap-and-trade legislation that allows agencies and states more power to site lines quickly, this is the opportunity to show that the public process works and that the PAT can come up with a good route.

## Next Steps

McCarthy displayed dates and locations for the upcoming public meetings in Baker City (August 12) and La Grande (August 13). The team members were informed that notices will be sent to approximately 86,000 people. Notices about the public meetings will also appear in newspapers. McCarthy asked that Move Idaho Power post the dates of the public meetings on their Web site as well.