



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Oregon State Office
P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208
<http://www.blm.gov/or>

NOV 25 2016

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review are the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Proposed Land Use Plan (LUP) Amendments for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H Project). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared the EIS in consultation with cooperating agencies and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as well as Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the Procedural Provision of NEPA at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508; U.S. Department of the Interior guidance at 43 CFR Part 46; U.S. Forest Service (USFS) NEPA procedures codified at 36 CFR 220; and other applicable laws and directives.

This EIS has been prepared to analyze and disclose the impacts on Federal, State, and private lands that may result if the Federal agencies grant a right-of-way to Idaho Power Company (the Applicant) to cross federally managed lands for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed 500 kilovolt (kV), single-circuit, alternating-current electric transmission line. The new 500-kV transmission line would begin at the proposed Longhorn Substation near Boardman in Morrow County, Oregon, and would extend south and east to the existing Hemingway Substation in Owyhee County west of Melba, Idaho, a distance of approximately 300 miles depending on the route selected. The B2H Project also includes:

- Constructing an internal communication system to control the transmission line and manage the flow of electricity with regeneration sites approximately every 40 miles.
- Potentially relocating approximately 0.9 mile of existing 230-kV transmission line in the vicinity of Flagstaff Hill located east of Baker City, Oregon, to allow for efficient placement of the 500-kV line.
- Potentially relocating an approximately 5.3-mile-long section of existing 138-kV line in the vicinity of Weatherby, Oregon, with an existing 69-kV line; the structures would be rebuilt to accommodate the two transmission lines (i.e., double-circuit 138/69-kV and a 12.5-kV line underbuild) enabling use of the 138-kV line right-of-way for the proposed 500-kV transmission line.

Also, although not part of the Applicant's Proposed Action, if an alternative route along the west side of Bombing Range Road on Naval Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman is selected, the existing Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) 69-kV line would have to be partially relocated. This additional action of replacing the BPA 69-kV transmission line is a connected action under NEPA; the effects of which have been analyzed and addressed in the Final EIS.

The proposed LUP Amendments are identified where alternatives and route variations are not consistent with the BLM and/or USFS LUPs and were prepared pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, implementing regulations, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976, as well as both the BLM and USFS land-use planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and 36 CFR 219.10 (for 1982 rule), respectively. The details on each proposed LUP Amendment can be found in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS.

The content of the Final EIS and Proposed LUP Amendments is substantially the same as the Draft EIS, except the Final EIS includes the comments received on the Draft EIS and Potential LUP Amendments; responses to those comments; and changes in, additions to, or clarification of the text of the EIS in response to comments on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS includes the full assessment of environmental impacts of the Applicant's Proposed Action and alternatives and variations, including the alternative of taking no action, and identifies the Agency Preferred Alternative for the B2H Project.

To address public comments received on the Draft EIS, the BLM has analyzed approximately 1,665 miles of alternative routes and route variations for the proposed 500-kV transmission line in the Final EIS. The alternatives cross land administered by the BLM Vale and Boise District Offices (the Malheur and Baker Field Offices in Oregon and Owyhee Field Office in Idaho), Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (La Grande and Whitman Ranger Districts) in Oregon, Bureau of Reclamation in Oregon (Pacific Northwest Region), BPA (who would own the proposed Longhorn Substation), and NWSTF Boardman. The BLM determined the B2H Project to be a major Federal action requiring preparation of an EIS. In addition, amendments would be required to LUPs affected by any selected route. If the Applicant's Proposed Action Alternative or another action alternative or variation is approved, the BLM would issue a decision and right-of-way grant, and the USFS would issue a decision and special-use authorization for constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed transmission line and associated facilities. Depending on the route selected for the transmission line, other potentially affected Federal agencies listed above may tier to the analysis in this EIS in issuing decisions and similar use authorizations.

An EIS is not a decision document. Rather, its purpose is to inform the public and interested parties of impacts associated with implementing the Applicant's Proposed Action and the alternative actions considered. The Final EIS and LUP Amendments have been distributed to agencies required to review the Final EIS and LUP Amendments and to other agencies, organizations, and individuals that requested copies. A newsletter announcing the availability of the Final EIS and Proposed LUP Amendments has been sent to 6,700 individuals and organizations on the B2H Project mailing list, including landowners within 2,070 feet of the reference centerline of alternative routes considered for the B2H Project.

The 30-day availability period of the Final EIS begins with the publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*. The availability period will close at the end of the 30-day period, the date of which will be posted on the B2H Project website at <http://www.boardmantohemingway.com>.

The BLM now hosts all of our current and ongoing planning documents on the new ePlanning site. This site allows you to search for projects by geographic location, project resource type, year, and other project-specific fields. The ePlanning number for the B2H project is **DOI-BLM-ORWA-V000-2012-0016-EIS**. The FEIS can be found on the website by using the following link (bitly) <http://bit.ly/2dWseZL>.

Protest of Proposed LUP Amendments of BLM Resource Management

Pursuant to the BLM's planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the plan amendment process for the B2H Project and who has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the planning decisions proposed by the BLM may protest the approval of the planning decisions within 30 days of the date the EPA's NOA of the Proposed LUP Amendments is published in the *Federal Register*. For further information on filing a protest and the required elements of your protest, see the protest regulations on Enclosure 1.

Emailed protests will not be accepted as valid protests, unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the emailed protest as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, direct emailed protests to protest@blm.gov.

All protests, including the follow-up letter to any protest emails, must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail
 Director (210)
 Attn: Protest Coordinator
 P.O. Box 71783
 Washington, D.C. 20024-1383

Overnight Mail
 Director (210)
 Attn: Protest Coordinator
 20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM
 Washington, D.C. 20003

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or any other personal identifying information in your protest, you should be aware that your entire protest—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request in your protest that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the BLM cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.

The BLM Director will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on each protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director will be the final decision of the Department of the Interior on each protest. The BLM will compile and formalize responses to protest issues in a Director's Protest Resolution Report, which will be available on the Internet at: http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/planning_overview/protest_resolution/protestreports.html.

Only those who submitted timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed B2H Project during a previous public comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file a protest.

Forest Service Public Review and Objection Period

The USFS previously notified the public that, pursuant to 36 CFR 219.59(a), the agency would waive its administrative review procedures and adopt the BLM's protest procedures for its decisions to issue a special use authorization and amend the land and resource management plan NOA for the Draft EIS, 79 Fed. Reg. 75834 (December 19, 2014). Following further review of the scope of decisions that the USFS will make and the applicable regulations, the USFS determined that it will instead follow the predecisional administrative review process described in 36 CFR § 218, Subparts A and B. This process will provide the public with a similar opportunity to participate in the administrative review by the USFS of the B2H Project as the public would have had under the BLM's protest process.

The USFS predecisional administrative review regulations provide for predecisional review of a Final EIS and draft ROD. A 45-day Objection Filing Period will begin when the USFS publishes a legal notice in the newspaper of record, the *Baker City Herald*, for the B2H Project. This publication would be concurrent with public release of the USFS draft ROD to the B2H Project websites and with publication of a NOA in the *Federal Register* guiding the reader to the BLM's website to access the B2H Project Final EIS. These announcements will include specific instructions for filing an objection.

If the USFS does not receive objections, the decision can be signed five business days after the end of the 45-day objection filing period. If timely objections to the USFS draft ROD are received and found to meet all other qualifications, a 45-day review period follows; this review period can be extended by an additional 30 days. By the end of the review period (45 or 75 days), the objection reviewing officer (for the B2H Project, this will be the Regional Forester or his/her designee) must provide a written response to all eligible objections. A decision can be signed once the objection reviewing officer's responses are complete and any concerns and instruction identified in the response have been addressed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Given that the USFS decision will apply to a small portion of the overall B2H Project Agency Preferred Alternative, the USFS plans to release its draft ROD concurrent with, or shortly after, the release of the BLM's ROD. Thus, if no objections are filed, the USFS will issue its final ROD at least 50 days after the BLM issues its ROD.

Availability of the Final EIS and Proposed LUP Amendments

The Final EIS and Proposed LUP Amendments document is available for review and downloading from the BLM website noted above. The Final EIS and Proposed LUP Amendments document also is available on DVD on request.

Printed copies of the Final EIS and Proposed LUP Amendments are available for review at the locations listed in Enclosure 2.

If you have any questions regarding the NEPA or LUP process used to prepare the Final EIS and LUP Amendments or need additional information regarding the B2H Project, please contact Tamara Gertsch, BLM National Project Manager, at (307) 775-6115 or by email at tgertsch@blm.gov.

Sincerely,



Ron Dunton
Acting State Director
Oregon/Washington

Enclosures (3)

This page intentionally left blank.

Attachment 1

Regulations for Filing a Valid Protest

[Code of Federal Regulations]

[Title 43, Volume 2]

[Revised as of October 1, 2002]

From the U.S. Government Printing Office via GPO Access

[CITE: 43CFR1610.5-2]

[Page 20]

TITLE 43--PUBLIC LANDS: INTERIOR

CHAPTER II--BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

PART 1600--PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING--Table of Contents

Subpart 1610--Resource Management Planning

Sec. 1610.5-2--Protest procedures.

(a) Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.

(1) The protest shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Director. The protest shall be filed within 30 days of the date the Environmental Protection Agency published the notice of receipt of the final environmental impact statement containing the plan or amendment in the Federal Register. For an amendment not requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the protest shall be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date.

(2) The protest shall contain:

- (i) The name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest;
- (ii) A statement of the issue or issues being protested;
- (iii) A statement of the part or parts of the plan or amendment being protested;
- (iv) A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and
- (v) A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong.

(3) The Director shall promptly render a decision on the protest. The decision shall be in writing and shall set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision shall be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(b) The decision of the Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

This page intentionally left blank.

Attachment 2

B2H Transmission Line Project Final EIS Reading Rooms and Document Viewing Locations

Idaho Locations:

- BLM-Boise District Office, 3948 Development Avenue, Boise
- BLM-Owyhee Field Office, 20 1st Avenue West, Marsing
- Boise Public Library, 715 S. Capitol Blvd., Boise
- Nampa Public Library, 101 11th Avenue South., Nampa
- Owyhee County Planning Department, 17069 Basey Street, Murphy

Oregon Locations:

- Baker County Planning Department, 1995 Third Street, Baker City
- Baker County Library, 2400 Resort Street, Baker City
- BLM-Baker Field Office, 3100 H Street, Baker City
- BLM-Prineville District Office, 3050 N.E. 3rd Street, Prineville
- BLM Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale
- Boardman City Library, 200 S. Main Street, Boardman
- Grant County Library, 507 S. Canyon Blvd., John Day
- Harney County Public Library, 80 West D Street, Burns
- Hermiston Public Library, 235 East Gladys Avenue, Hermiston
- La Grande Public Library, 2006 Fourth Street, La Grande
- Malheur County Planning Department, 251 B Street West, Vale
- Morrow County Planning Department, 205 N.E. Third Street, Irrigon
- North Powder City Library, 290 East Street, North Powder
- Ontario Library, 388 S.W. Second Avenue, Ontario
- Oregon Department of Energy, 625 Marion Street N.E., Salem
- Pendleton Public Library, 502 S.W. Dorion Avenue, Pendleton
- Umatilla County Planning Department, 216 SE Fourth Street, Pendleton
- Union County Planning Department, 1001 4th Street, Suite C, La Grande
- USFS-Wallowa Whitman National Forest Office, 3502 Highway 30, La Grande
- USFS-Wallowa Whitman National Forest, Whitman Ranger District, 1550 Dewey Avenue, Baker City

This page intentionally left blank.