



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>



DEC 05 2014

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review are the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Land Use Plan Amendments (LUPAs) for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (Project), as well as a list of reading rooms/document viewing locations. 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), including Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) 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. The potential LUPAs are identified for areas not consistent with the BLM and/or USFS land-use plans and were prepared pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, implementing regulations, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NMFA), as well as both the BLM and USFS land-use planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610 and 36 CFR 219.10, respectively.

This EIS has been prepared to analyze and disclose the potential impacts of granting a right-of-way across Federal land to the Idaho Power Company (the Applicant) for the purpose of constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed 500 kilovolt (kV), single-circuit, alternating-current electric transmission line, as well as a rebuild of portions of the existing 138 kV and 69 kV transmission lines. The new transmission line would begin at a substation near Boardman, Oregon, and would extend south and east to the existing Hemingway Substation near Melba, Idaho, a distance of approximately 305 miles. The Project also includes:

- (1) The addition of substation equipment in the existing Hemingway Substation near Melba, Idaho, for interconnecting the transmission line;
- (2) A potential new substation near Boardman, Oregon, or the interconnection of an existing substation in the same vicinity with new equipment inside the existing substation;
- (3) A communication system associated with the transmission line;
- (4) New and/or improved access roads to the transmission line structures where needed or where existing access is not available;
- (5) Other ancillary facilities, and
- (6) Rebuilding and reconfiguring the 138 kV and 69 kV transmission lines near Weatherby, Oregon.

The BLM has analyzed approximately 556 miles of route alternatives for the proposed 500 kV transmission line. Route locations are approximate and could vary by more than a half-mile. Portions of the alternatives cross land administered by the Vale and Boise BLM District Offices (the Malheur and Baker Field Offices in Oregon and Owyhee Field Office in Idaho), the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Oregon, and the Bureau of Reclamation in Oregon. The BLM determined the Project to be a major Federal action requiring preparation of an EIS. In addition, amendments would be required to land-use plans affected by any selected route. If the proposed

alternative or another action alternative is approved, the BLM would issue a decision and right-of-way grant, and the USFS would issue a decision and special use permit for constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed transmission line and associated facilities. Other affected Federal agencies may also tier to the analysis in this EIS if issuing a decision or use authorization.

The EIS is not a decision document. Rather, its purpose is to inform the public and other agencies of potential impacts associated with the Applicant's proposal. The Draft EIS and LUPAs have been distributed to agencies required to review the Draft EIS and LUPAs and to other agencies, organizations, and individuals that requested copies. A newsletter announcing the availability of the Draft EIS was sent to approximately 6,400 parties on the Project mailing list, including landowners within 2,070 feet on either side of the centerline of all alternative routes considered for the Project.

The BLM will host public meetings in Boardman, Pendleton, La Grande, Baker City, Durkee, and Ontario, Oregon, as well as Marsing, Idaho, to provide an overview of the Project and take comments on the proposed Project and the Draft EIS and LUPAs. The public meetings will be announced by the BLM at least 15 days in advance through newsletters and local and regional media releases, and will be posted on the Project website at:

<http://www.boardmantohemingway.com/>

The 90-day comment period begins with the publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Draft EIS in the *Federal Register*. The review period will close at the end of the 90-day period. Comments on the Draft EIS may be submitted electronically at comment@boardmantohemingway.com or mailed to the BLM by close of business March 19, 2014. Postal mail copies should be sent to:

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
P.O. Box 655
Vale, OR 97918

Hand-delivery of written comments will be accepted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Mountain Time, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays at:

Bureau of Land Management
Vale District Office
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918

Envelopes and the subject line of emails should state "Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project Draft EIS." Comments received during the 90-day comment period following publication of the NOA will be considered prior to a decision on the Proposed Action. Anonymous or faxed comments will not be accepted.

Comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to chapters, pages, and line numbers of the Draft EIS (e.g., Chapter 1, page 1-3, line 10), along with any sources that support your comments. Comments may address the adequacy of specific analyses in the Draft EIS and the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the document (40 CFR 1503.3). Please note that the Agency Preferred alternative may not be the final decision, so it is best to comment on what you like/do not like about each alternative. Additionally, if you identify a new proposed alternative route, identify how it would avoid/reduce/mitigate resource impacts better than the alternatives already being studied in the Draft EIS. Potentially affected landowners should review Chapter 3, Affected

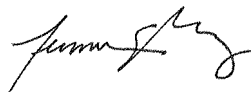
Environment and Environmental Consequences, including the associated maps in the Appendix. Include in your comments potential mitigation options that could be considered for the project. Substantive comments (40 CFR 1503.3) will be included in the Final EIS.

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

The Draft EIS is available for review and downloading from the project website noted above. Copies of the Draft EIS on compact disk are also available upon request. Printed copies of the Draft EIS are available for review at the locations on the attached list.

If you have any questions regarding the NEPA or the land-use planning process used to prepare the EIS and LUPAs or need additional information regarding the Project, please contact Tamara Gertsch, BLM National Project Manager, at (307) 775-6115.

Sincerely,



Jerome E. Perez
State Director
Oregon/Washington

Enclosures

B2H Transmission Line Project – DEIS Reading Rooms / Document Viewing Locations

Idaho Locations

- BLM—Boise District Office, 3948 Development Ave., Boise
- BLM—Owyhee Field Office, 20 1st Ave. W., Marsing
- Boise Public Library, 715 S. Capitol Blvd., Boise
- Nampa Public Library, 101 11th Ave. S., Nampa
- Owyhee County Planning Department, 17069 Basey St., Murphy

Oregon Locations

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