

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko, Nevada

Finding Of No Significant Impact
BLM/EK/PL-2008/010

T G Power LLC Hot Sulphur Springs Transmission Line
2800 (N-83204)

T G Power LLC (TG Power) submitted a right-of-way (ROW) application to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Elko Field Office, for the construction of a 24.5-mile, 120 kilovolt (kV) electric power transmission line in Elko County, Nevada. The majority of the transmission line (16 miles) would be on private lands used for ranching and hay production, and 8.5 miles would cross public land administered by the BLM. The transmission line would connect a 32 net megawatt geothermal power plant in the northern portion of Independence Valley to an existing substation that is about 7 miles west of the intersection of State Routes 226 and 225.

Based on the attached environmental assessment (EA) for the Hot Sulphur Springs Transmission Line, I have determined that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required prior to BLM approval of the ROW. This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts, as discussed in the EA.

Context

The project area is in the South Fork of the Owyhee River basin, about 70 miles north of the small city of Elko, Nevada. Ranching is the dominant land use in the Independence Valley, and some mining occurs in the Independence Mountains. The majority of the transmission line route would be on private land that is primarily used for pasture and hay production. Upland areas are comprised of big sagebrush and low sagebrush communities. Development of the Hot Sulphur Springs Geothermal Power Plant and proposed transmission line would provide a sustainable, extremely low emission electrical power generation facility from northern Elko County. Current federal and state policies encourage the development of renewable energy to reduce consumption of non-renewable fossil fuels.

Intensity

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The transmission of electricity generated at the Hot Sulphur Springs Geothermal Power would supply energy to meet the intent of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and current federal and state initiatives for reducing dependence on imported oil supplies with renewable energy. Development of the geothermal resources in northern Elko County would provide an extremely low emission electrical power generation facility and

stimulate non-mining related economic growth by providing employment opportunities, adding to the tax base, and increasing County revenues. Ground disturbance would be limited to 107.5 acres along the 24.5 mile transmission line. Best management practices would be used to protect air and water quality. Potential adverse impacts on natural resources such as disturbance and loss habitat loss for fish and wildlife species of concern would be mitigated (avoided or minimized) by measures and best management practices required as a condition of permits issued for the construction and maintenance of the transmission line and related facilities.

2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

Potential impacts to public health and safety, including safety of workers, would be avoided by adherence to standard practices required for construction and maintenance activities. Providing energy from development of local domestic geothermal resources will help increase security of Nevada citizens by reducing our dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The transmission line has been located to avoid historic and cultural resources (see factor 8 for cultural resource survey results). No park lands, special recreation areas, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness study areas, or other area of critical environmental concern are present in the area affected by the proposed action. Impacts to migratory birds and fish and wildlife species of concern that use habitat in the project area would be avoided or minimized by implementation of the resource protection measures described as part of the proposed action in section 2.1.8, and the mitigation measures prescribed in section 3.4 of the EA.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The effects of electric transmission lines are well known and not highly controversial. Current policies support the development of geothermal resources to supply energy.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The effects of electric transmission lines are well known, and none of the effects on any resource evaluated in the EA are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. All construction methods proposed to be employed are accepted standard and best management practices.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

Granting the ROW for the transmission line would be concurrent with construction of a power plant on private land where BLM lacks jurisdiction. The development of additional geothermal resources in the vicinity is reasonably foreseeable, and the analysis does not anticipate any significant impacts on any resource from this development.

