

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE GRAND TETON SUBSTATION DIRECT LAND SALE



Prepared for:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
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PROJECT NAME: Direct Sale for Grand Teton Substation Property

PROJECT #: 2007-345

CASE FILE #: N-83621

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Mt. Diablo Meridian, Nevada
T. 19 S., R. 61 E., Section 8: Lot 13
(Approximately 5.20 acres)

CASE TYPE: Direct Sale

APPLICANT: Nevada Power Company (NPC)

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A BLM Right of Way (ROW) (N-76305) was granted to the Nevada Power Company (NPC) to construct, operate and maintain the Grand Teton electrical substation, overhead 230 kV electrical transmission line, and access road on approximately 5.20 acres of public land in March of 2004. This grant was authorized prior to the completion of the BLM's Las Vegas Disposal Boundary Final EIS (Disposal EIS) (BLM 2004a) and Record of Decision (ROD) (BLM 2004b) which identified the approximately 5,000 acre Conservation Transfer Area (CTA) in December of 2004. Under the ROD, lands within the CTA would not be available for disposal until further analysis and additional public input were conducted. Lands that include sensitive biological, ecological, and paleontological resources would need to be managed under a conservation agreement, signed by the managing entity and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Land not suitable for management of sensitive resources could be sold.

The Grand Teton Substation ROW grant is located east of Aliante Parkway and north of Grand Teton Avenue within the CTA. Through the course of the CTA Stakeholder's meetings since 2005, BLM and NPC have informed the stakeholders of this ROW grant and BLM's authorization to NPC for construction and development of this facility. Construction on the substation commenced in the summer of 2006 as authorized by the grant and will serve present and future development in the master planned community of Aliante. The substation is scheduled to be in service by June 1, 2008.

The NPC proposes to acquire the 5.20 acre Grand Teton Substation property in 2008 through a direct land sale. In December of 2006, NPC submitted a request to BLM for a direct land sale of the Grand Teton substation property. BLM has made a determination that moving forward with the direct sale of the substation property can meet the requirements of the Disposal Boundary ROD as the property in question no longer has any natural features and therefore has no conservation value. This Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared to analyze the impacts of the administrative action for the direct sale and to determine if this 5.20 acre property is critical to managing resources in, and has any suitability to, the CTA.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

North Valley Enterprises, LLC (NVE) and NPC are developing the Grand Teton substation to provide electrical service to the Aliante Master Planned Community. An agreement between NVE and NPC requires NPC to apply for a direct purchase of the 5.20 acre substation property (Figure 1). BLM regulations (43 CFR 2711.3-3) allow for the direct sale of land when the authorized officer determines that a competitive sale is not appropriate and the public interest would be best served by a direct sale. The ROW grant and current authorized development on the property make it unavailable for other public purposes and unsuitable for management by any other entity. The purpose for a direct sale is to best meet the public interest of local residents.

1.3 CONFORMANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAND USE PLANS AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

The proposed action is in conformance with the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan decision LD-1, disposal of public lands (BLM 1998). The proposed action is in compliance with the Disposal EIS/ROD (BLM 2004a, 2004b). Completion of this environmental assessment and opportunities for public participation through CTA stakeholder meetings and newsletters are necessary for compliance with conditions of the Disposal EIS and ROD that require additional site specific analysis and public participation before lands in the CTA would be eligible for disposal.

1.4 EXISTING NEPA DOCUMENTATION

The following documents are tiered to as appropriate for direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts; the Las Vegas Valley Disposal Boundary FEIS/ROD signed on December 23, 2004; and the Grand Teton Substation ROW optional EA, FONSI, and Decision Record Form (BLM 2004c) signed on March 9, 2004. The Grand Teton Substation EA/FONSI and Decision Record analyzed the impacts of ground disturbance associated with construction and operation of the substation. Copies of the EA/FONSI and Decision Record are available for public review at the BLM Las Vegas Field Office.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The NPC proposes to acquire the 5.20 acre Grand Teton Substation property in 2008 through a direct land sale. Direct sale of the substation lands is in the best interest of the public. This is an administrative action only.

2.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The land would not be offered for direct sale to the NPC, and the Grand Teton Substation would be built and operated as authorized by the existing BLM ROW and NVE would continue to reimburse NPC for the annual lease payments which may increase depending on the appraised value over time.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 GENERAL SETTING & LAND USE

The 5.20 acres of BLM managed lands are located in Clark County, Nevada within the Conservation Transfer Area. The property has been graded and developed as authorized by the ROW grant, and is scheduled to be in-service by June 2008. Access to the property is from Aliante Parkway and Grand Teton Avenue. The following table presents a list of resources considered for analysis by BLM Resource Specialists.

Table 1. Resources considered by BLM Resource Specialists

Resources	Present and Analyzed		Resources	Present and Analyzed	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality		X	Native American Religious Concerns		X
ACECs		X			
Cultural Resources		X	T&E Species (animal or plant)		X
Visual Resources		X	Paleontological Resources		X
Environmental Justice		X	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Water Quality, Drinking/Ground		X
Floodplains		X			
Lands and Realty	X		Soil		X
Migratory Birds		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zone		X
Vegetation		X	Socioeconomics	X	
Noxious Weeds/Invasive Non-Native Species		X	Range		X
			Recreation		X
			Wild and Scenic Rivers		X
General Wildlife		X	Wilderness		X

3.2 RESOURCES NOT AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSED ACTION

Resources considered and found not present, as presented in Table 1, would not be affected by the proposed direct land sale; therefore no further analysis is required.

3.3 RESOURCES PRESENT AND BROUGHT FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS

3.3.1 LANDS AND REALTY

The proposed sale area is located in the northeast Las Vegas Valley on federal land managed by the BLM. Proposed sale of land will change land title only, no new disturbance or development will occur with the project area. Current construction and land use of the area was previously analyzed by Optional EA 2004-227. The 5.2-acre parcel proposed for sale is within the CTA. The property is almost completely developed and will be operating as an electrical substation by June 2008.

3.3.1.1 PROPOSED ACTION

No direct or indirect effects to lands and realty would occur as a result of the direct sale. The substation property can serve no other public purpose. The direct sale would result in a transfer of land title from BLM to NPC. There would be no change in the condition or use of the property.

3.3.1.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

With the selection of the No-Action Alternative, the land would not be offered for direct sale to the NPC, and the Grand Teton Substation would be built as authorized by the existing BLM ROW and the current condition of lands and realty would remain at its present state.

3.3.2 SOCIOECONOMICS

Clark County’s economy is one of the more dynamic and robust in the country, with gaming and related tourism providing the dominant stimulus. There are also major commercial and industrial

operations in the region providing a firm base to the region's prosperity and welfare. With a favorable business climate to encourage investment, the jobs created by these industries are responsible for much of the region's population growth, which is largely the result of the population coming in from other states (BLM, 2004b). The RMP, Disposal EIS and other BLM documents tiered to them describe the socioeconomic environment of the Las Vegas Valley in detail.

3.3.2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

Direct beneficial effects to socioeconomics would be minor and long term. The direct sale would stop the annual lease fees associated with substation ROW. The anticipated direct sale cost is equivalent to the cost of approximately nine years in lease fees. After nine years, minor beneficial financial impacts to the Aliante Master Planned Community would result from the proposed direct sale.

3.3.2.2 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Direct adverse effects to socioeconomics would be minor and long term. With the selection of the No-Action Alternative, the land would not be offered for direct sale to the NPC, and the Grand Teton Substation would be built as authorized by the existing BLM ROW. Lease fees would continue until patent.

3.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts could result from individually minor, but collectively significant actions, taking place over a period of time (Council on Environmental Quality, Regulations for Implementation of NEPA, 1508.7).

The area of analysis for cumulative impacts is the Las Vegas Valley. As ownership of lands within the Valley changes, development is expected to continue. The cumulative impacts of land disposal and development on resources in the Las Vegas Valley have been previously addressed in the Disposal EIS pages 4-58 through 4-67 (BLM 2004a). Resources identified as present and analyzed in this EA include Lands and Socioeconomics.

3.4.1 LANDS AND REALTY

Implementation of the proposed action would result in a change in ownership of the property. Because this is only an administrative action, there would be no change in the development or use of the property as a result of the direct sale. Therefore, the proposed action would have negligible cumulative impacts to land use within Las Vegas Valley.

3.4.2 SOCIOECONOMICS

Implementation of the proposed action would result in minor beneficial impacts to socioeconomics associated with the elimination of annual lease fees. Combined with the continuing development within Las Vegas Valley, the proposed direct sale would have negligible cumulative impacts to socioeconomics within Las Vegas Valley.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF MITIGATION MEASURES

Based on the nature of the proposed administrative action and the sensitivity of the public land surrounding the sale parcel currently being analyzed for potential conservation, NPC would install a fence or permanent barricade along the eastern boundary of the transmission line ROW from the Grand Teton road alignment north to the substation – a distance of approximately 330 feet. The type of fence would be determined by NPC, taking into consideration the conductivity effects from the overhead transmission line, cost and ease of maintenance and similarity to fencing currently being installed in this vicinity by other entities.

5.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

5.1 INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND RECORD OF CONTACTS

Through the course of the CTA Stakeholder’s meetings since 2005, BLM and NPC have informed the stakeholders of the ROW grant and BLM’s authorization to NPC for construction and development of the substation. A notice of the proposed direct land sale was included in the March, 2008 CTA Stakeholder Newsletter.

5.2 LIST OF PREPARERS/REVIEWERS

Name	Title	Affiliation	Responsibility
Data Providers and Reviewers			
Gayle Marrs-Smith	CTA Project Manager	BLM	Vegetation and Special Status Plants, CTA
Mark Slaughter	Biologist	BLM	Wildlife and Special Status Animals
Sarah Peterson	Hydrologist	BLM	Soil, Air, Water, Riparian Resources
Jeff Steinmetz	Environmental Coordinator	BLM	NEPA
Beth Domowicz	Lands and Realty Specialist	BLM	Lands and Realty
Manuela Johnson	Project Manager	BLM	Document Review
Susanne Rowe	Archaeologist	BLM	Cultural, Native American, and Paleontological Resources
Robert Wandel	Recreation Supervisor	BLM	Recreation
Preparers			
Steve Leslie	Environmental Planner	SWCA	Project Management, NEPA
Justin Streit	Environmental Specialist	SWCA	Biological Resources
Eric Koster	Las Vegas Office Director	SWCA	Quality Control/Project Oversight

6.0 REFERENCES AND LITERATURE CITED

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 1998a. *Proposed Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement*. Las Vegas: U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Las Vegas Field Office. May.
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