

DECISION RECORD AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Kittitas County Public Utility District No. 1 Right-of-Way
(DOI-BLM-OR134-2009-EA-0001; Serial No. WAOR 65707)

A. Decision

It is my decision that Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) from Environmental Assessment #DOI-BLM-OR134-2009-EA-0001 be approved and a right-of-way offered to the Kittitas County PUD No. 1 for the subject electric distribution line. The right-of-way grant will be issued subject to the terms and conditions shown in Appendix #2 to the Environmental Assessment.

B. Rationale for the Decision

Pursuant to the authority granted in Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1761), the Bureau of Land Management may authorize the subject distribution line. The proposed action is subject to the Spokane District Resource Management Plan (1985) and Record of Decision (1987), and the 1992 RMP amendment and Record of Decision (ROD). Issuance of rights-of-way grants is listed under the heading "Administrative Actions" on page 5 (unnumbered) of the 1992 ROD.

Approval of this action will allow the Kittitas County PUD to upgrade an existing facility that is in poor condition and in danger of failing. Because its customers in eastern Kittitas County are located remote from its main power supplies, they rely upon this distribution line for a portion of their electricity. Although another crossing north of the subject line also provides power to this portion of Kittitas County, the Grant County PUD is unable to provide adequate capacity at that crossing point to fulfill the needs of KCPUD. Because of the long distance involved, a third distribution line that travels to the vicinity from the Ellensburg area also does not have adequate capacity to meet energy needs. According to KCPUD, upgrading this third line is not practical due to the long distance involved.

C. Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the effects discussed in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. None of the environmental effects identified meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR §1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This finding is based on the following:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed. The physical and biological effects are limited to the site of the proposed action and adjacent lands. **Rationale:** Ground disturbance for this project will be limited to a ¼ acre area on top of a rock bench where the existing wood tower will be

replaced by a steel structure set in concrete foundations. Stipulations will be included in the right-of-way grant that minimize impacts to cultural, wildlife, and visual resources.

2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. **Rationale:** Public safety would be enhanced by an increase in the reliability of the electric power distribution grid and the reconstruction of a tower that is in danger of failing.

3. There would be no adverse impacts to wetlands, floodplains, areas with unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas. **Rationale:** A timing restriction on construction activities will be used to minimize the possibility of disturbance to the striped whipsnake, a wildlife species which may occupy this site.

4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment. **Rationale:** The BLM's analysis along with the SEPA work conducted by the KCPUD did not discern any controversy associated with this alternative.

5. There are no known effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. **Rationale:** Because this is a rebuild of existing line, there is a high degree of certainty as to the effects.

6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented in the future. **Rationale:** Each powerline project is individually judged based on its merits and the anticipated impacts. Approval of this project will not set a precedent for the approval of like projects.

7. This alternative is not related to any other existing or anticipated actions with cumulatively significant impacts. **Rationale:** No related projects or BLM management actions are in process, planned or anticipated for the lands in the vicinity of the project.

8. Based on recent cultural resource surveys, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. **Rationale:** As specified in the EA, an archaeologist will be present during blasting and excavation activities to ensure that no damage is caused to existing cultural features.

9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act were identified. **Rationale:** No federally threatened or endangered wildlife or plant species occur in the project area.

10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State and local laws; and regulations and requirements for the protection of the environment. **Rationale:** The project is compliant with all relevant environmental laws, regulations and requirements.

/s/ Karen Kelleher
Field Manager, Wenatchee Resource Area

5-8-09
Date

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SPOKANE DISTRICT, WASHINGTON STATE**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TITLE PAGE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. DOI-BLM-OR134-2009-EA-0001	SERIAL NUMBER WAOR 65707	DATE OF REPORT May 6, 2009
RESOURCE AREA Wenatchee		COUNTY Grant
TYPE OF ACTION Application for Electric Distribution Line Right-of-Way		
APPLICANT'S NAME Kittitas County PUD No. 1		ADDRESS (Include zip code) 1400 E. Vantage Highway Ellensburg, Washington 98926
DATE(S) OF FIELD EXAMINATION October 8, 2008		

LANDS INVOLVED

Township	Range	Meridian	Section	Subdivision	Acres
15 N.	23 E.	Willamette	10	Portion of Lot 5	1.01

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To identify the environmental effects of authorizing an existing 13.2kV aerial electric distribution line located on public land. As part of this action, the applicant would be permitted to replace an aging tower structure and upgrade the capacity of the powerline.

**Environmental Assessment #DOI-BLM-OR134-2009-EA-0001
For Kittitas County Public Utility District No. 1 Distribution Line Right-of-Way
BLM - Spokane District, Wenatchee Resource Area**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background Information

The Kittitas County Public Utility District #1 (KCPUD) has filed a right-of-way application for an existing 13.2kV aerial distribution powerline that travels in an east to west direction, crossing the Columbia River in the vicinity of Sentinel Bluffs/Sentinel Gap, in Grant and Kittitas Counties. The powerline provides electricity to lands on the west side of the river (eastern Kittitas County); it is energized through a connection to an existing Grant County PUD distribution line that travels in a north-south direction on the east side of the river.

The proposal would affect public land situated on the east side of the river, legally described as Lot 5, Section 10, T.15N., R.23E., WM, Grant County. Although BLM records do not show an authorization for the existing powerline, according to the KCPUD, it has existed since the 1940's. In its application, KCPUD states that the powerline was originally constructed by Pacific Power & Light, sold to the Grant County PUD in 1957, and subsequently resold to the KCPUD in 1978. Documentation of these transfers was provided to BLM by KCPUD's consultant, D. Hittle & Associates. The lack of a BLM authorization for the easterly segment recently came to light after the consultant determined that the river crossing structures were in poor condition and in need of replacement. Unable to locate an easement for the powerline, the consultant contacted this office to determine if BLM had previously authorized the facility.

A search of BLM's MTP and HI records did not reveal the presence of an authorization. For that matter, the Grant County PUD distribution line (to which the subject powerline connects) also appears to be unauthorized. Because this property was at one time withdrawn by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, it is possible they issued the original authorization for placement of this facility.

According to the KCPUD application, its customers in eastern Kittitas County are located remote from KCPUD main power supplies. To provide electricity to this area, KCPUD contracts for energy from BPA, who delivers it to KCPUD via Grant County PUD distribution powerlines. Besides the subject line, the KCPUD also has a crossing just west of Beverly, north of the subject. However, the Grant County PUD is unable to provide adequate capacity at that crossing to fulfill the needs of KCPUD. Although a third distribution line travels to the vicinity from the Ellensburg area, the KCPUD claims that this powerline has little capacity to meet energy needs, and upgrading is not practical due to the long distance involved.

B. Purpose and Need

As described above, the purpose is for the KCPUD to obtain an authorization for its existing powerline on public land, thereby allowing them to rebuild and upgrade the facility by replacing a deteriorated structure and installing new conductors.

The Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLPMA) of 1976 provides BLM with the authority to grant such rights-of-way when it is in the public interest. Specifically, Sec.501 [43 USC 1761] states “The Secretary, with respect to the public lands...are authorized to grant, issue, or renew rights-of-way over, upon, under or through such lands for-- (4) systems for generation , transmission, and distribution of electric energy...”

The Spokane Resource Management Plan (1987) identifies “issuance of rights-of-way, small tract leases, and/or other leases and permits” as a high priority.

C. Conformance with Land Use Plans

As noted above, the proposed action is subject to the Spokane District Resource Management Plan (1985) and Record of Decision (1987), and the 1992 RMP amendment and Record of Decision (ROD). Issuance of rights-of-way grants is listed under the heading "Administrative Actions" on page 5 (unnumbered) of the 1992 ROD.

D. Relationship with Existing Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

Granting rights-of-way on BLM administered federal lands is authorized by Section 501 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA; 43 U. S. C. 1767).

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Two alternatives were considered to address KCPUD’s right-of-way application, Alternative 1 (Proposed Action), and Alternative 2 (No Action - No authorization of the existing powerline or permission to upgrade). These alternatives are described below. Orthophoto and topographic maps of the project area are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Alternative 1 – Authorize Existing Powerline (Proposed Action)

The Proposed Action is to grant a right-of-way (r/w) to authorize the existing aerial distribution powerline, including upgrades. The right-of-way would have dimensions of 100’ wide by approximately 440’ long, and comprise 1.01 acres. The authorization would allow the KCPUD to replace the single wood structure on the BLM public land, upgrading both the structure and conductors to allow for future expansion of the line to 115kV, to provide additional electrical capacity to portions of eastern Kittitas County. Overall, construction activity would include replacement of the two existing deteriorated wooden structures which support the segment of line that crosses the river. The replacement

structures will consist of steel poles on concrete reinforced bases, with guy wires and anchoring devices installed for each pole. Foundation holes and rock anchors would be excavated by drilling and blasting. Access would be by existing rights-of-way and roads; there would be no new road construction. Spoils will either be returned to the excavations or disposed of offsite.

The area of ground disturbance on the BLM is anticipated to be ¼ acre, and would include excavation for four pole foundations, installation of anchoring structures, and removal of the wooden support structure. The KCPUD also proposes to replace 2,200 linear feet of conductor wire that crosses the river (between the Grant County PUD point of delivery to the KCPUD voltage regulator station on the west side of the river). Less than 400 feet of the wire crossing is over BLM land. The existing three wire conductor crossing would be upgraded to four conductors. The new conductors would be pulled into place using the existing conductors, in order to avoid construction activity on the river surface.

Project Design Features/Mitigation

1. Because of the project's location near known archaeological sites and the possibility of burials nearby, the Kittitas County PUD would be required to provide professional archaeological monitoring for all excavation activities and for the effects of blasting on the rock features on the east side of the river.

If additional cultural or paleontological resources are discovered in the project vicinity during construction activities, changes may be needed to avoid the resource. If cultural sites cannot be avoided, consultation with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, tribal governments or historical societies as appropriate, and in some cases the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation would be undertaken and mitigation measures developed and implemented, if necessary, before such activities would be allowed to continue.

2. Due to the project's location near an area occupied by striped whipsnakes, the Kittitas County PUD would be required to delay project work until after June 1 in order to avoid impacting snakes that may be denning underground. Also, any ground disturbing activities must be concluded by September 15.
3. To minimize impact to visual resources, the Kittitas County PUD would be required to use materials and colors in the replacement tower structure and conductors that minimize the visual impact to the surrounding landscape.
4. The authorization to be issued by BLM would include the stipulations attached to this report as Appendix 2. Incorporated into Exhibit 'C' of the stipulations are items 1-3 listed above.

Alternative 2 (No Action) - Reject R/W Application

Approval of this alternative would require BLM to reject the right-of-way application filed by the KCPUD. Therefore, KCPUD would not be allowed to either continue using the facility or perform upgrades. With no authorization for the facility, the KCPUD would need to remove the east and west bank towers and the conductors. However, KCPUD is obliged to continue supplying electric power to its customers in the area and would need to upgrade or construct additional powerlines in the general area, but outside the current Area of Potential Effect (APE), to carry this power.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Physical Environment

General Setting: The subject public land is situated in the western portion of the Saddle Mountains, just east of where they are bisected by the Columbia River at Sentinel Gap. The Saddle Mountains are a dry and east-west trending ridge of mountains in south-central Washington. The closest major town to the project area is Mattawa, about five miles to the south. Section 10 is bisected by the Columbia River, with the western portion private land and the eastern portion BLM public land. The BLM land is also bisected by State Route #243. Runoff from this area drains to the west to the Columbia River, but no perennial streams are present. The lands in the immediate project vicinity are moderately steep to steep sloping (20-45%+) with a large amount of basalt rock outcrop interspersed with sandy soils. The actual tower location is on a semi-level portion of a rock bench that sits 207 feet above the elevation of the Columbia River. The subject area is depicted on the USGS “Beverly” 1:24,000 scale topographic map.

Vegetation

Vegetation - Affected Environment: The area is found within a shrub-steppe habitat zone and is a mixture of sandy soil areas interspersed with lithosols. Dominant species include Indian ricegrass, scabland sagebrush, Sandberg bluegrass, and green rabbitbrush. The following table lists sensitive species that have been located within a mile of the project area:

<i>Sensitive Plant Species that may Occur in Right-of-way Vicinity</i>			
<i>Latin Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Habitat</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
Ammannia robusta	Grand redstem	Found along the Columbia River in riparian mudflat wetlands dominated by annual species.	Unlikely habitat
Astragalus geyeri	Geyer’s milk vetch	Depressions in mobile or stabilized dunes, sandy flats, and valley floors. Associated species include gray rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i>) and Indian ricegrass (<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>). Often found with a high cover of annual weedy plants like cheatgrass (<i>Bromus tectorum</i>).	Unlikely habitat

Cryptantha rostellata	Beaked cryptantha	Found in scattered patches of a few individuals along dry drainages. The sites are kept open by the harshness of the environment and/or slight erosion.	Unlikely habitat; usually on slopes
Minuartia nuttallii spp. fragillis	Nuttall's sandwort	Found on desert ridges (raised basalt) in rocky to gravelly or sandy soil. Associated species include <i>Artemisia rigida</i> , <i>Phlox hoodii</i> , and buckwheats.	*Possible
Camissonia pygmaea	Dwarf evening primrose	Found on unstable soil or gravel in steep talus, dry washes, banks and roadcuts. Associated with big sagebrush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i>) & bitterbrush (<i>Purshia tridentata</i>).	Unlikely habitat; usually on slopes
Cryptantha leucophaea	Gray's cryptantha	Found on sandy substrate along the Columbia River within the Columbia Basin physiographic province.	Possible but unlikely; found on stabilized sand dunes
Cryptantha spiculifera	Snake River cryptantha	Dry, open, flat, or sloping areas in stable or stony soils. Occurs where overall cover of vegetation is relatively low. Other species include <i>Artemisia rigida</i> , <i>Artemisia tridentata</i> , and <i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i> .	*Possible
Lomatium tuberosum	Hoover's desert parsley	Loose talus, most typically on east to north facing slopes (45-60 degrees). There are often a few associated species.	Possible but unlikely; usually on slopes
Oenothera caespitosa ssp. caespitosa	Caespitose evening primrose	Open sites on talus or other rocky slopes, as well as along the flat river terrace of the Columbia River. It can also colonize roadcuts and other exposed sites. It occurs within general areas that are dominated by <i>Artemisia tridentate</i> or <i>Artemisia rigida</i> .	*Possible
Astragalus columbianus	Columbia Milkvetch	Sagebrush-steppe; but only known to exist on the west side of the Columbia River.	Unlikely; wrong side of Columbia River

Vegetation - Potential Impacts - Alternative 1 (Proposed Action): There are no listed, Endangered Species Act (ESA) threatened, endangered, or candidate plant species expected on the project site. The other species listed as “*possible” are sensitive in status. Although a formal plant survey was not conducted, if any of these species are present, the minimal short term disturbance anticipated from replacement of the east bank tower would not substantially alter the rarity of these species nor cause a change in status.

Vegetation - Potential Impacts - Alternative 2 (Reject Application): Impacts from this alternative would be about the same as the proposed action, as some short term disturbance would occur from the use of heavy equipment to remove the existing KCPUD structures and powerline.

Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife Habitat - Affected Environment: The general area of the proposed right-of-way is inhabited by several wildlife species common to shrub-steppe areas of south-central Washington (see following table):

Wildlife Species Likely to Occur in Right-of-Way Area		
Birds	Mammals	Reptiles
Golden Eagle	Mule Deer	Striped Whipsnake
Prairie Falcon	American Badger	Gopher Snake
Peregrine Falcon	Black-tailed Jackrabbit	Western Rattlesnake
Ferruginous Hawk	White-tailed Jackrabbit	Racer
Sage-grouse	Washington Ground Squirrel	Night Snake
Sage Thrasher	Merriam's Shrew	Sagebrush Lizard
Loggerhead Shrike	Sagebrush Vole	Side-blotch Lizard
Songbirds	Bats	Short-horned Lizard
Waterfowl		
Shorebirds		

As noted above, the affected area is characterized by very sandy soils and broken basalt outcrops with sparse vegetation consisting mostly of green rabbitbrush and Indian rice-grass. The slope rises steeply to the east where talus slopes and basalt cliffs ranging from approximately 20-200 feet high can be found. The basalt outcrops and shrubs in this vicinity provide habitat for one of two known populations of the striped whipsnake in Washington. Part of the area has active sand dunes inhabited by sagebrush and side-blotch lizards, the primary prey of striped whipsnakes. In the past, golden eagles, various hawks, prairie falcons and peregrine falcons have been observed nesting on the cliffs adjacent to the river. Crevices in the cliffs and rock outcrops provide roosting areas for bats that forage on insects along the river. The river and shoreline are used by many species of waterfowl and shorebirds, such as great blue heron and long-billed curlew.

The area lies within the Saddle Mountain Sage-Grouse Recovery Unit, which, although not considered to be currently occupied by resident, breeding sage-grouse, is nonetheless occasionally visited by the birds (based on observations). Habitat mapping conducted in 2005 indicated that this particular area of the Saddle Mountains does not provide suitable habitat for sage-grouse because of its steep slopes and lack of big sagebrush cover. Sandy soils make the project area unusable for Washington ground squirrels, which are known to exist both to the north and east, on Smyrna Bench and elsewhere in the Saddle Mountains.

Wildlife Habitat - Potential Impacts - Alternative 1 (Proposed Action): Because the project proposes to replace the existing structures, there would be no new long-term impacts to wildlife or wildlife habitat. Drilling, blasting and other construction work associated with the project would cause short-term disturbance to resident wildlife, and has the potential to cause direct harm or mortality to ground dwelling species such as the striped whipsnake, rodents and possibly bats. Proper timing of the construction of the east bank tower would help to lessen potential impacts to the whipsnake.

The support towers, guy wires and powerlines themselves have the potential to cause direct mortality to birds due to collisions with the structures. There is also potential for raptors to use the structures for perching, which could aid their predation of small mammals, birds, reptiles and fish. Replacement of the existing structures would not cause these effects to increase, however.

Wildlife Habitat - Potential Impacts - Alternative 2 (Reject Application): Under this alternative, the existing structure and conductors would be removed from the public land. Although some disturbance would be associated with the removal of the structures, overall, the impacts to wildlife would be less than Alternative 1. The potential short term impacts from blasting and construction work to the whipsnake and other ground dwelling resident wildlife would not occur, and removal of the structure and conductors would decrease collision mortality from bird species. However, the KCPUD is obliged to continue supplying electric power to its customers in the area and would need to upgrade or construct another river-crossing powerline in the general area to fulfill the need. Construction of a new powerline elsewhere has the potential to possibly impact more wildlife habitat than the proposed action on the subject lands.

Cultural/Paleontological Resources

Cultural Resources - Affected Environment: The project area (Area of Potential Effect or APE) is situated on both banks of the Columbia River at the base of the Sentinel Bluffs, one mile south of the confluence with Lower Crab Creek and approximately 10 miles northeast of Priest Rapids. The Sentinel Bluffs form the western edge of the Saddle Mountains. The area is within the traditional territories of the Sahaptin-speaking Wanapum Band of Indians (represented by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation) and the Salish-speaking Sinkayuse (Moses-Columbia) peoples, members of the Colville Confederated Tribes.

Systematic studies of Native Plateau cultures did not begin in earnest until the early to mid-20th century with the efforts of James Teit (1928), Verne Ray (1933, 1936, 1939), and others (Spier 1938). These early oral histories and ethnohistories recount that the Saddle Mountains were once part of the resource territories utilized by both Salishan and Sahaptin speakers on the mid-Columbia Plateau prior to Euro-American contact. Territorial boundaries between groups were fairly fluid, as many tribes shared resource procurement areas (Smith 1982:59; Griffin 2001); occasionally, villages were shared by a number of different tribes from across the Columbia Plateau (Ruby & Brown 1995:49).

Inhabitants of the Columbia Plateau seasonally exploited available resources; they established permanent winter villages along the Columbia River and its tributaries where they subsisted primarily on foodstuffs collected earlier in the year. Spring drew villagers to the foothills to hunt small game and collect root crops and plants; fishing began for early runs of steelhead and spring-run Chinook along the Columbia River and its tributary streams. Short-term campsites were established at higher elevations near root gathering and hunting grounds, and were often situated along water courses or near springs. Subsistence

procurement activities continued into summer months when berries were collected and larger social gatherings took place at major trading and fishing centers; one such center was located along the Columbia River at Priest Rapids, southwest of the project area. By autumn, activities focused on fishing, hunting large game (e.g. deer, elk, bison) and preserving foods for winter consumption.

Ray's early research noted that the nearest Sinkayuse village, *nqwalqwalmi'n* ("roasting place") was situated on the west bank of the Columbia, just north of Vantage, approximately 9 miles north of the Lower Crab Creek confluence (1936:119, 143). Later studies revealed the locations of additional villages, including the large village of *logas'tan* (named for the Saddle Mountains themselves), located on the east (left) bank of the Columbia River south of Lower Crab Creek at the foot of the Saddle Mountains (Ray 1974:429). Ray's informants indicated that five Wanapum villages had existed along the west (right) bank of the Columbia River, from Priest Rapids to just below the confluence of Lower Crab Creek (1936:119). These include, from south to north, *p'mna''* (at Priest Rapids), and *ca'p'tilik* (also known as *sháp'tilik*, site of the Priest Rapids Longhouse), where approximately 40 people lived when Ray conducted his research. This village was still inhabited into the 1990s. Priest Rapids was not only a village site and important regional fishery, it was also the sacred site of Whale Rock which is central to the Wanapum Creation story (Ruby & Brown 1989:23). Other Wanapum villages included *waya'new*, *tamacsk'uni'skuni*, and *xa'txamtcanuwi'tac*; this last village site is the one closest to the Sentinel Bluffs project area.

The Sentinel Bluffs and Saddle Mountains lie within an extensive area ceded to the US government in the Treaty of Camp Stevens (1855). The treaty provided for a reservation for the Yakama and affiliated tribes whose representatives signed it; however, other tribes in north central Washington Territory who were not signatories were without a reservation. In the late 1870s, Sinkayuse Chief Moses requested reservation lands solely for the use of his people; lands within the project area APE were included in the Moses Reservation proposal. In 1880, the Moses Reservation was created by Executive Order, but lands in the project area were excluded from the reservation and remained opened to settlement.

A review of the available literature and archival sources was completed by the BLM in an effort to identify potential properties having traditional cultural significance in the project APE (Perry 2008). The literature review was unable to identify specific TCPs within the APE, but noted that fishing sites near the Sentinel Bluffs were still used by tribal members during the late 1980s. The nearby Saddle Mountains are culturally significant to members of the Wanapum tribes (Ruby & Brown 1989; Relander 1956), and to Wenatchi and Moses-Columbia tribal members (Shannon 2003). The review thus concluded that culturally significant properties could likely exist within the APE given the project area's proximity to the culturally significant Saddle Mountains.

Historical records and archives including the Historical Index (HI), Master Title Plat and the General Land Office maps and field notes for 19th century surveys in the region were reviewed for the project area. The cadastral survey map for T.15N., R23E., (Van Vleet

1881) Section 10 shows a small segment of trail, coursing N-S, in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the section; a similar trail segment appears across the Columbia River in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the section. Van Vleet observed that the mouth of Lower Crab Creek was dry at the time of the survey (late summer-fall 1881). No other cultural features are evident in Section 10. There are nonetheless, other trails and cultural features on the early cadastral map; a corral “for branding cattle” existed a short distance north of the mouth of Lower Crab Creek on the Columbia’s left bank (VanVleet 1881:64). Two short trails lead northwards from the corral, one of these parallels the Columbia. A fenced Indian garden, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ acre in size is identified on the Columbia’s right bank in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 15 (1881:40), and an Indian graveyard (“fenced with a good picket fence”) is also identified on the right bank in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20 (1881:46). Networks of trails paralleling the Columbia River exist along both banks, and a trail coursing E-W, potentially leading to the Wahluke Slope, is also evident in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the township. Throughout his field notes, Van Vleet identifies these trails as “Indian trails.” The BLM’s HI shows that no homestead patents were ever issued for lands in the project area. It indicates that these lands were withdrawn by Executive Order for a power reserve in 1912.

Previous cultural resource inventories and BLM and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation databases were also reviewed for this power line right-of-way. Lands in the project area were examined in the 1940s – 1950s as part of the Smithsonian River Basin Survey. This survey and more recent subsequent surveys have identified cultural resources in the vicinity of the APE; however, a Class III examination of the APE by Cultural Resources Consultants, Inc. in 2008 (Schumacher 2008) has indicated that they are unlikely to be disturbed by the proposed power line project.

Palaeontological Resources - Affected Environment: There are no known palaeontological resources in the project area, though the adjacent Saddle Mountains are a known source of petrified wood.

Cultural Resources - Potential Impacts- Alternative 1 (Proposed Action): The 2008 Class III survey has indicated that cultural resources in the vicinity of the APE in both Kittitas and Grant Counties are unlikely to be adversely impacted by the proposed transmission line project. Nevertheless, the BLM would require Kittitas County PUD to provide professional archaeological monitoring of construction activities that occur during the power line replacement. If cultural materials are found in the course of excavation or construction, work in the immediate area of the find would be halted and a BLM archaeologist notified. Washington State DAHP, BLM and Tribal Cultural Resources Program representatives would be consulted for possible mitigation options.

Cultural Resources - Potential Impacts- Alternative 2 (Reject Application): Known cultural properties in the vicinity of the APE would not be affected. Professional monitoring of construction activities would not be necessary. However, KCPUD is obliged to continue supplying electric power to its customers in the area and would need to upgrade or construct powerlines in the general area to carry this power. In this instance, the potential adverse

impacts to cultural resources in the general area may be greater than those of the proposed action.

Visual Resources

According to the Spokane RMP, visual resources are to be evaluated as a part of activity and project planning (page 52 in the 1985 RMP document). Evaluation would consider the significance of the proposed project and the visual sensitivity of the affected area. Spokane District does not currently have an inventory of visual values on the public lands within the District.

Visual Resources - Affected Environment: Although not listed by the Washington DOT as a scenic highway or byway, the landscape adjoining the portion of State Route 243 that passes through the project area has a number of striking visual features, including the dramatic basalt cliffs of Sentinel Bluff, Aeolian sand dunes, and a rugged stretch of Columbia River shoreline composed of basalt. The BLM public land on the east side of the river makes up a sizeable part of the backdrop for this portion of the highway, even if only one mile of the road actually crosses public land. The main man-made features present on the eastern side of the river include three separate steel lattice-tower transmission lines that pass through Sentinel Bluffs, and the highway itself. A single-pole/single cross-arm electric distribution line and the subject facility also are present. On the western side of the river is a large fruit orchard, with Lombardy poplar trees planted around the perimeter of individual orchard blocks.

Visual Resources - Potential Impacts - Alternative 1 (Proposed Action): Because a similar sized structure would replace the current wood tower, the affect on visual resources would not appreciably change, unless materials with high reflectance were used. To ensure that the visual impacts from the new structure and conductors are kept to a minimum, a stipulation would be included that requires coordination with the BLM on the finishes used (see Appendix 2).

Visual Resources - Potential Impacts - Alternative 2 (Reject Application): If this alternative is chosen, the existing structure and conductors would be removed, thereby enhancing the visual resources in the Sentinel Bluffs/Sentinel Gap area. The impacts from this alternative would therefore be less than the Proposed Action. Since the KCPUD is obliged to continue supplying electric power to its customers in the area, they would likely need to construct another river-crossing powerline in the vicinity to fulfill the need. Construction of a new powerline elsewhere is likely to have a negative effect upon the visual resources at the location chosen.

Recreation

Because the steep terrain and narrow highway limit accessibility, recreation use in the immediate area of the subject project is believed to be minimal or non-existent. Recreation use does take place about ¼-½ mile farther to the north, where convenient access is

available to drive off the highway to the east and west to reach the public lands. The primary use that takes place is off-road vehicle (ORV) travel in a sand dune area located to the east of the highway. The Columbia River shoreline on the west side of the highway can be accessed for a variety of uses, including picnicking, fishing, and sightseeing.

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

Kittitas County is located in the geographical center of the state and comprises approximately 1,481,600 acres. Over one-half of the county consists of timbered mountainous land and one-third is rough, broken land usually in association with shallow soil with rock outcrops and scabland. Since 1990 to the present, Kittitas County has increased in population from 26,725 to approximately 39,400 (2008 estimate). Incorporated cities include Ellensburg (County seat), Cle Elum, South Cle Elum, Roslyn, and Kittitas. Primary industries in the County are agriculture/food products, tourism and wood products. The county is the largest producer of oats and hay in Washington State. The county is also home to the U.S. Army's Yakima Training Center, a military reservation that encompasses most of that portion of eastern Kittitas County situated south of Interstate 90 and east of I-82.

The major economic activity in the portion of eastern Kittitas County served by the subject powerline is fruit orchard, mostly operated by Auvil Fruit Company. The orchard land is situated on a narrow terrace that is bounded by the Columbia River on the east and the Yakima Training Center on the west. Due primarily to its low elevation, it is one of the few areas in Kittitas County suitable for orchard fruit production.

There are no minorities or low income populations in the vicinity of the proposal that would indicate an environmental justice concern, as described in Executive Order 12898.

Public Safety

According to KCPUD, the current crossing structures have deteriorated to the point where maintenance personnel can no longer safely work on them. Consequently, the risk of catastrophic failure has increased. Besides cutting off one of the sources of electric power for eastern Kittitas County, the location of this facility above the Columbia River and a state highway poses risks to the general public if the structures were to collapse and the powerline fall.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative Impacts - Affected Environment: As noted elsewhere in this report, the lands in the vicinity of the subject project have been impacted by a number of land disturbing actions. Included are electric transmission and distribution lines (including the subject powerline), the state highway, the Priest Rapids and Wanapum Hydroelectric projects, orchard development, and increases in off-road vehicle recreation use on portions of the public land. Of these uses, a 500kV transmission line built by the Bonneville Power

Administration in 2004-5 is the most recent project (this line is located about ¾ mile to the east of the subject project). The orchard developments and the increases in ORV recreation are next, having occurring during the last 20 years. The distribution powerlines and features associated with the Priest Rapids/Wanapum projects are the oldest, having been place for over 50 years.

Cumulative Impacts - Alternative 1 - (Proposed Action): If the existing powerline and its reconstruction are approved, no increase in cumulative impacts is anticipated as the existing situation would continue (i.e., the powerline would continue to be operated and maintained). The exception would be if the needed reconstruction work caused impacts to the Pre-contact rock features, unknown archaeological resources, and/or the striped whipsnake. The required mitigation measures would minimize impacts to these resources but may not totally eliminate the possibility of some negative effects. In order to lessen the potential for any continuing impacts to raptors, the BLM would require that the reconstructed powerline be consistent with the guidelines issued by the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. (see Appendix 2). To limit any increase in visual impacts, the KCPUD would be required to consult with BLM on the materials used for the new structure and conductors.

Cumulative Impacts - Alternative 2 - (Reject Application): The cumulative effects are expected to be less (than Alternative 1) if the powerline and its reconstruction are not authorized. Lack of an authorization would require removal of the existing structures and the conductors. Over the long term, the absence of this facility means that less bird mortality would occur from collisions with the powerline. However, because no data on collision mortality from this powerline is available, the level of decrease is unknown. Although some disturbance would be associated with the removal of these features, it would be less than that caused by the planned reconstruction work. Therefore, impacts to cultural features and/or the striped whipsnake are not as likely. However, KCPUD is obliged to continue supplying electric power to its customers in the area and would need to upgrade or construct a new powerline in the general area to carry the electricity. Construction of new powerline is likely to affect more land and could have greater cumulative impacts than the proposed action.

B. Land Status

The BLM's Master Title Plats indicate the surface and mineral estate of the above described public lands are owned by the United States. Besides the subject facility, there are two other powerlines crossing public lands in the immediate vicinity. One is a Grant County PUD owned, wood-pole w/cross-arm distribution line that the subject powerline connects to. This facility is not noted on BLM's records. The second is a steel lattice-tower, 230kV transmission line, also owned by the Grant County PUD, that was authorized by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as part of Power Project #2114 (see below). According to BLM's records, public land just south of the subject facility is crossed by a buried telephone cable that roughly parallels the highway (WAOR 44025), and a 13.2kV Grant County PUD distribution line that travels in a southwest-northeast direction (WAW 04773). The portion of State Route 243 that crosses the parcel does not appear on BLM's records. However, it is

most likely that this highway was constructed under the authority of Revised Statute 2477 (now repealed), which did not require formal approval from the United States for the construction of highways on unreserved public land.

All of the public land in section 10 is withdrawn for Power Site Reserve #257 and Power Project #2114. Power Project #2114 is a withdrawal of the lands for the benefit of the Grant County PUD's Priest Rapids - Wanapum Hydroelectric Project. Lastly, the subject BLM land is subject to oil and gas lease #WAOR 58770.

Primary Uses of Subject Public Lands: These lands serve as a ground transportation and electricity transmission/distribution corridor and have important plant, wildlife habitat, and cultural resource values. This public land also serves as a scenic backdrop for the State Highway. Recreation use occurs on public lands located a short distance away, to the north and west of the subject project.

IV. COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES, GROUPS, OR INDIVIDUALS

A. Consultation

Formal consultation was initiated with the Yakama Nation, Consolidated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT) and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) by letters sent December 4 and 5, 2008. No response was received from the letters sent to the Tribes. However, by letter dated December 8, 2008, the DAHP stated they had reviewed the cultural resources survey report and concurred with the proposed cultural resources stipulations. They requested that a copy of the monitoring report (mentioned in BLM's letter) be sent to them once it is prepared.

B. Public Involvement

The KCPUD's completed a SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) environmental checklist for this project and issued a Notice of Determination of Non-significance (DNS) on August 25, 2008. In accordance with Washington State SEPA regulations, the DNS and checklist were provided to agencies having jurisdiction over the project area (see list in casefile) and made available to the public. The Notice of DNS was published in the Ellensburg Daily Record and the Columbia Basin Herald on August 29, 2008 with a comment period ending on September 12, 2008.

In response to the DNS notice, KCPUD's consultant received two letters, one from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and one from the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE). The letter from WDFW noted that because the project crossed the Columbia River, a Hydraulic Project Approval is required from WDFW before the work can be undertaken. The WDOE letter provided guidelines to be followed if water needs to be obtained for dust abatement purposes, and pointed out that erosion control measures must be in place prior to any clearing, grading, or construction to minimize the potential of storm water runoff carrying soil materials into surface waters. After considering the comment letters, the KCPUD decided to retain the DNS decision they previously made.

C. Spokane District personnel who provided input to this environmental assessment:

- Pamela Camp, Botanist, Wenatchee Field Office
- Erik Ellis, Wildlife Biologist, Wenatchee Field Office
- William Schurger, Realty Specialist, Wenatchee Field Office
- Françoise Sweeney, Archaeologist, Wenatchee Field Office
- Karen Kelleher, Field Manager, Wenatchee Field Office
- Timothy Murphy, Forester, Wenatchee Field Office

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A p p e n d i x

1..... Topographic and Ortho Site Maps
2 Exhibit B & C Stipulations

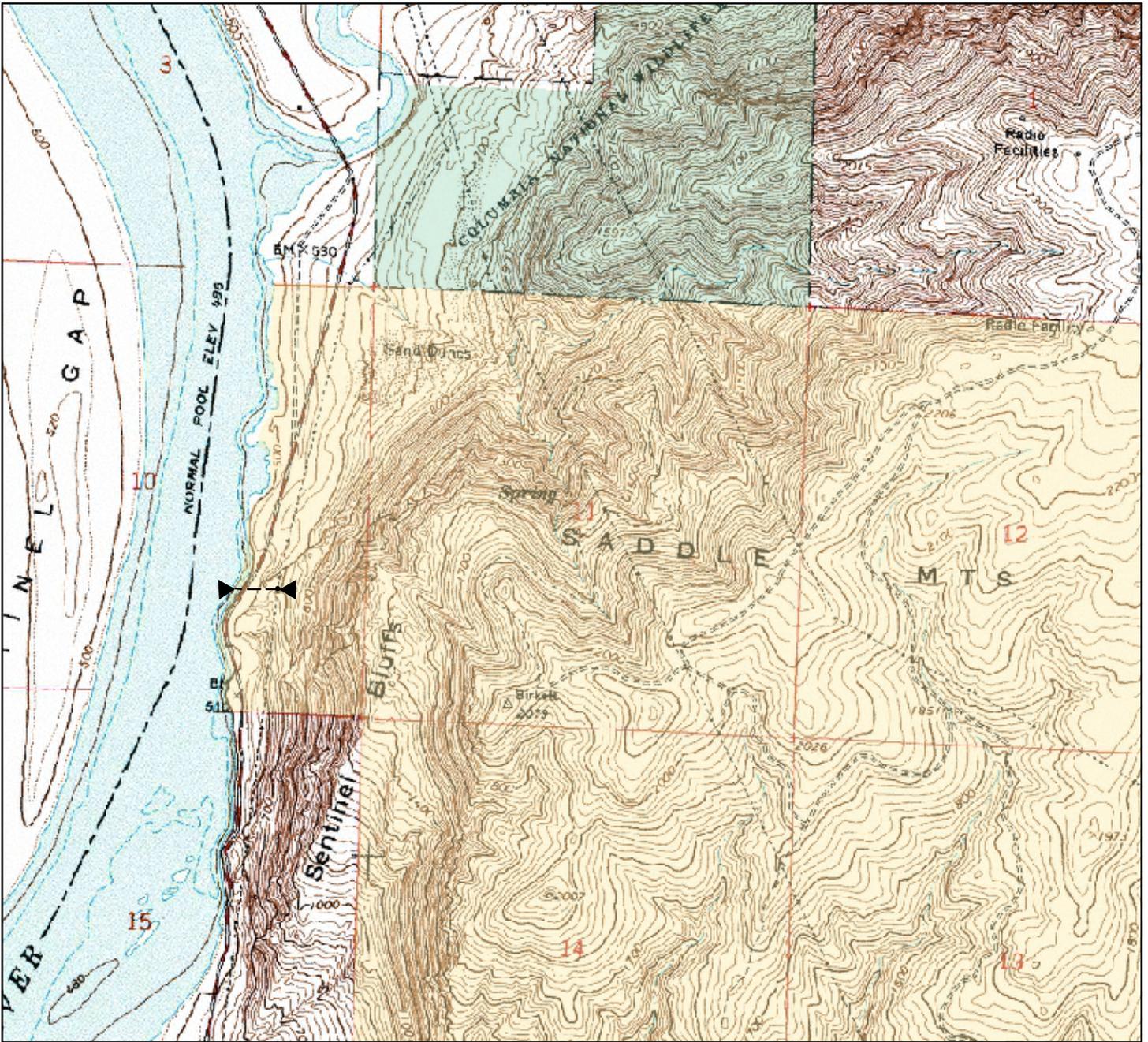
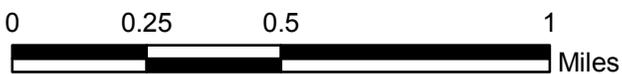


EXHIBIT A (WAOR 65707)
Kittitas County PUD
Columbia River Crossing Powerline
Portion of Lot 5, Sec. 10, T.15N., R.23E., W.M., Grant County

Legend:

- ▶ --- ◀ Powerline Alignment
- BLM
- USFWS - Columbia National Wildlife Refuge



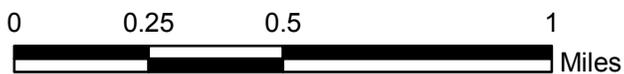
No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. The product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.



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EXHIBIT "B"

ADDITIONAL TERMS

1. This grant is renewable; subject to Holder's satisfactory compliance with all grant requirements. If renewed, the grant will be renewed for a period of thirty (30) years.
2. This grant shall be reviewed at the end of the twentieth year and at regular intervals thereafter not to exceed ten (10) years and may be made subject to regulations existing at the time of review and such other terms and conditions deemed necessary to protect the public interest.
3. The lands affected by this grant are withdrawn as Power Site Reserve No. 257 and for Power Project 2114. If the withdrawn land is required for reservoir or hydroelectric development, any improvements thereon interfering with such development shall be removed or relocated to eliminate such interference at no cost to the United States, its permittees or licensees.
4. Unless Holder chooses to pay the full amount of rent in advance for the term of the grant, rent shall be paid in advance for a period of ten (10) years, subject to the Bureau of Land Management's right to reappraise and collect additional fair market value rental when warranted.
5. A pre-construction conference shall be held between Holder's project field supervisor and the Authorized Officer prior to any construction activity on the right-of-way (r/w). Failure of Holder to comply with this requirement shall result in a temporary suspension of the r/w grant.
6. The Secretary of the Interior, or his lawful delegate, reserves the right to grant additional rights-of-way or permits for compatible uses on, over, under, or adjacent to this grant.
7. The Authorized Officer, or his representative, may at any time inspect the onsite construction, maintenance, and operation of Holder's project. Officials of State and other Federal agencies may also inspect such activities if necessary to the performance of official duties relating to the project. The right to inspect includes the right to use private roads belonging to Holder in order to reach the site.
8. Holder shall survey and clearly mark the exterior limits of the right-of-way (r/w) during construction. All activities directly or indirectly associated with the construction, use, or maintenance of this project must be conducted within the limits of the r/w grant.
9. Holder shall apply for amendment of this r/w grant at any time additional land, equipment, and/or new uses are proposed which are beyond the scope of the rights herein granted.

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10. Holder, at least fifteen (15) days prior to start of construction, reconstruction, or any surface disturbing activity shall notify the Authorized Officer of the intent to proceed with such work, the date it is to commence, and the delegated representative of Holder. Such delegated representative is the person authorized by Holder to carry out the terms and conditions of the grant and act on behalf of Holder. The notice of the delegated representative shall include a current mailing address and telephone number.
11. The Holder shall seed all disturbed areas, using a method and species list suitable for the location, as determined by the Authorized Officer. Seeding shall be repeated if a satisfactory stand is not obtained as determined by the authorizing officer upon evaluation after the first growing season.
12. Holder shall minimize disturbance to existing fences and other improvements on public lands. Holder is required to promptly restore damaged improvements to at least their former state. Functional use of these improvements will be maintained at all times. When necessary to pass through a fence, the fence shall be braced on both sides of the passageway prior to cutting the fence. Stress panels or rock jacks will be constructed and installed according to BLM standards approved by the Authorized Officer (AO). Gates shall be installed during construction. These gates shall be closed at all times when not in use. When construction has been completed, the AO will identify the gates that Holder will replace with a stationary section of fence.
13. Holder's replacement support structure and replacement wire arrangement shall conform to those found in Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Powerlines, (2000 edition or newer), the report distributed by Raptor Research Foundation, Inc., for Edison Electric Institute.
14. If an archaeological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) is discovered by holder or any person working on the holder's behalf, on federal lands, holder shall immediately stop all operations in the area, immediately notify the Authorized Officer (AO: Field Manager, Wenatchee Field Office) verbally, and follow such verbal notification with a written confirmation (certified mail recommended). In accordance with 43 CFR §10.4 (c)(d) and (g), if the discovery includes human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony, operations shall remain suspended and the discovery protected for thirty (30) days or until a written notice to proceed is issued by the AO. An evaluation of the resource or remains will be made by the AO and appropriate mitigation actions will be identified in consultation with the SHPO, consulting tribes, and holder. Holder shall be responsible for evaluation and mitigation costs. All archaeological materials shall remain the property of the United States.
15. Holder shall remove and dispose of all construction, operation, or maintenance-generated waste in a manner consistent with federal, state, and local laws. Waste means all discarded matter, including, but not limited to, human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, containers, unused products and equipment.

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16. Holder shall protect all survey monuments. Survey monuments include, but are not limited to, General Land Office and Bureau of Land Management Cadastral Survey Corners, reference corners, witness points, U.S. Coastal and Geodetic benchmarks and triangulation stations, military control monuments, and recognizable civil (both public and private) survey monuments. If a survey monument is in danger of being lost or damaged, Holder shall reference the monument in a manner allowing the point to be reestablished and remonumented or rehabilitated after construction. If a monument is damaged or lost, Holder shall immediately report the incident, in writing, to the Authorized Officer (AO) and the respective installing authority if known. Where General Land Office or Bureau of Land Management monuments or references are involved, Holder shall secure the services of a registered land surveyor or a Bureau cadastral surveyor to restore the disturbed monuments and references using surveying procedures found in the Manual of Surveying Instructions for the Survey of the Public Lands of the United States, latest edition. Holder shall record such survey in the appropriate county and send a copy to the AO. Holder shall be responsible for all federal and non-federal survey costs.
17. The United States will not be liable for any damage that may occur to facilities authorized by this grant as a result of fire, wind, or other natural disasters, or as a result of its management of the public lands. If it becomes necessary to move, relocate, or replace Holder's facilities because of federal land management activities, Holder shall bear the costs incident thereto.
18. The Authorized Officer (AO) may order revocation or suspension of this grant, after notice and hearing, upon a final administrative finding of a violation of any term or condition of this grant, including, but not limited to, terms and conditions requiring compliance with regulations under Acts applicable to the public lands and compliance with applicable State or Federal air or water quality standard or implementation plan: Provided, That such violation occurred on public lands covered by this grant and occurred in connection with the exercise of rights and privileges granted by it: Provided further, That the AO shall terminate any such suspension no later than the date upon which he determines the cause of said violation has been rectified: Provided further, That the AO may order an immediate temporary suspension prior to a hearing or final administrative finding if he determines that such a suspension is necessary to protect health of safety or the environment: Provided further, That where other applicable law contains specific provisions for suspension, revocation, or cancellation of a permit, license, or other authorization to use, occupy, or develop the public lands, the specific provisions of such law shall prevail.
19. Upon termination of the grant, whether by default, abandonment, or the running of the term, Holder shall remove its personal property or improvements of any kind and restore the land to its original condition, within six months. Improvements not removed shall be considered abandoned and disposed of accordingly. Holder shall remain liable for costs of removal and/or restoration of the land.
20. Non-use of this right-of-way for five (5) consecutive years shall be deemed abandonment, and the grant shall be terminated.

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21. Holder shall be responsible for weed control within the right-of-way, and shall consult with the Authorized Officer or local authorities for acceptable weed control methods. All equipment and vehicles crossing public lands shall be inspected and determined to be free of weeds and weed seeds prior to each crossing.
22. Pesticide use shall comply with applicable Federal and State laws. Pesticides shall be used only in accordance with their registered uses and within limitations imposed by the Secretary of the Interior. Prior to pesticide use, Holder shall obtain from the Authorized Officer (AO) written approval of a plan showing the type and quantity of material to be used, pest(s) to be controlled, method of application, location of storage and disposal of containers, and any other information deemed necessary by the AO. Emergency pesticide use shall be approved in writing by the AO prior to such use.
23. Holder shall comply with Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, as amended, (15 U.S.C. 2601 et seq (1982)), regarding any toxic substances that are used, generated, or stored on the right-of-way or in facilities authorized by this grant (40 CFR 702-799, especially see polychlorinated biphenyls, 40 CFR 761). Any release (leaks, spills, etc.) of toxic substances in excess of the reportable quantity established by 40 CFR 117, shall be reported as required by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, section 102b. A copy of any report required or requested by any federal or state agency as a result of a reportable release of toxic substances shall be furnished concurrently to the Authorized Officer.
24. Holder agrees to indemnify the United States against any liability arising from the release or threatened release of any hazardous substance or hazardous waste (as defined in Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation & Liability Act of 1980, 42 U.S.C. 9601, et seq., or the Resource Conservation & Recovery Act of 1976, 42 U.S.C. 6901 et seq.) on the right-of-way (unless the release or threatened release is wholly unrelated to Holder's activity on the right-of-way). This agreement applies to releases caused by Holder, its agents or unrelated third parties.
25. Holder shall comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.).
26. Holder shall designate a representative with authority to act on instructions from the Authorized Officer (AO). Holder's representative shall be available for communication with the AO within a reasonable time when construction or other surface disturbing activity is underway.
27. Holder shall comply with the special stipulation(s) of Exhibit 'C'.

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EXHIBIT "C"

SPECIAL STIPULATIONS

1. Holder shall have an approved, qualified Archaeologist on site during all excavation and blasting activities to monitor potential effects to cultural resources or sites. Upon completion of construction work, the Archaeologist shall provide a monitoring report to the Authorized Officer.
2. Construction activity and surface disturbance is annually prohibited during the period from September 30th to June 1th for the protection of striped whipsnakes. Any exceptions to this requirement must have prior written approval from the Authorized Officer.
3. The Holder shall coordinate with the Authorized Officer on the design and color of the poles and transmission lines to achieve the minimum practicable visual impacts.