



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Spokane District  
Wenatchee Field Office  
915 Walla Walla Avenue  
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
2850 (ORW020)  
WAOR 65753

May 31, 2013

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is an update on Pacific Power's proposed Vantage to Pomona Heights Transmission Line Project. In 2008, Pacific Power applied for a right-of way across the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for construction of a new 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line connecting the Vantage and Pomona Heights substation. Pacific Power needs the new line to enhance the overall operating flexibility and security of the regional transmission grid and to improve system reliability in the Yakima Valley. The BLM, acting as the lead agency for the proposed project, determined an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was required.

## **Public Input**

On January 4, 2013, the BLM released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public review and comment, identifying an Agency Preferred Alternative paralleling an existing transmission line in Yakima County, and generally following Road N and crossing the Saddle Mountains in Grant County (Alternative D). Public meetings were held in Selah and Desert Aire in February 2013 with more than 85 people attending to give their input on the DEIS and the Agency Preferred Alternative. The BLM received 66 letters and e-mails containing more than 250 comments during the comment period, ending on March 8, 2013.

## **New Route Alternative Identified**

As a result of the comments received at the meetings and submitted in writing, the BLM, Pacific Power and the Yakima Training Center (YTC) met and identified a new route that is located largely on YTC land (see Attached Map). This new route is similar to a northern YTC route that was eliminated from consideration because of Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) line separation requirements in place at the time the alternative was being considered. Previously, the separation distance required the placement of the line in areas that would create conflicts with YTC's aerial operations and military training on the facility. Recently the separation standards were revised by the electrical regulating authorities (WECC and the North American Reliability Corporation) that allow a much closer distance between existing lines and the proposed Vantage-Pomona Heights transmission line which would minimize impacts to YTC operations and allow that option to be reconsidered.

The new northern route being considered shares the same alignment along Sage Trail Road (Route Segment 1a) as the previous alternatives considered in the DEIS. However, at the boundary of YTC along Sage Trail Road, the new northern route would turn north onto YTC, and follow its boundary (adjacent to Shotgun Lane and along Firing Center Road/7<sup>th</sup> Ave.) through the installation headquarters area of YTC. The route turns north within YTC and crosses Interstate 82 near the rest area on the south side of Selah Cliffs. The route crosses the Selah Cliffs area on private and state owned land, and enters BLM managed land north of the cliffs, paralleling Pacific Power's existing

Pomona-Wanapum 230 kV transmission line. The new northern route continues to parallel the existing line on private land to a northern crossing of Interstate 82 where it re-enters YTC and stays within the base to the Columbia River. The route crosses the Columbia River parallel to four existing high voltage transmission lines and proceeds east into Bonneville Power Administration's Vantage substation. The new northern route would be located on YTC for over 27 miles of its approximately 41 mile length (66%). Less than seven miles of this route would be located on private land. This route would also be 20 to 25 miles shorter than those identified in the DEIS.

### **Next Steps**

As was done with alternatives analyzed in the DEIS, this new northern route must now be developed into an alternative and evaluated for potential impacts. This will require a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS). The SDEIS will fully describe the new alternative and identify impacts as well as mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce potential impacts. The BLM will remain the lead federal agency responsible for the preparation of the SDEIS along with Cooperating Agencies and other agencies with expertise or review, approval and permitting authority. The Cooperating Agencies are: Joint Base Lewis McChord Yakima Training Center, Bonneville Power Administration, Bureau of Reclamation, Washington Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Yakima County, and Kittitas County.

It is anticipated that the BLM will issue the SDEIS for public review and comment in late summer or early fall of 2013, and it will be available for public comment for 45 days. Opportunities for public involvement will be announced via direct mailings, local news media outlets, and on the BLM website at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans/vph230.php>. After comments are received on the SDEIS, the DEIS and SDEIS will be merged into the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Based on the analysis of all alternatives, a new Agency Preferred Alternative may or may not be identified. Following the release of the FEIS, the BLM will issue a Record of Decision (ROD) on transmission routing on public land based on the analysis of all alternatives presented in the documents.

### **For More Information**

Additional information regarding the Vantage to Pomona Heights 230kV Transmission Line Project, including detailed maps of the new northern route alternative and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is available on the following BLM Spokane District website:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans/vph230.php>

If you have any questions about the new northern route alternative or the SDEIS process you may contact the following agency representatives:

BLM: Janet Hutchison at (541) 416-6710

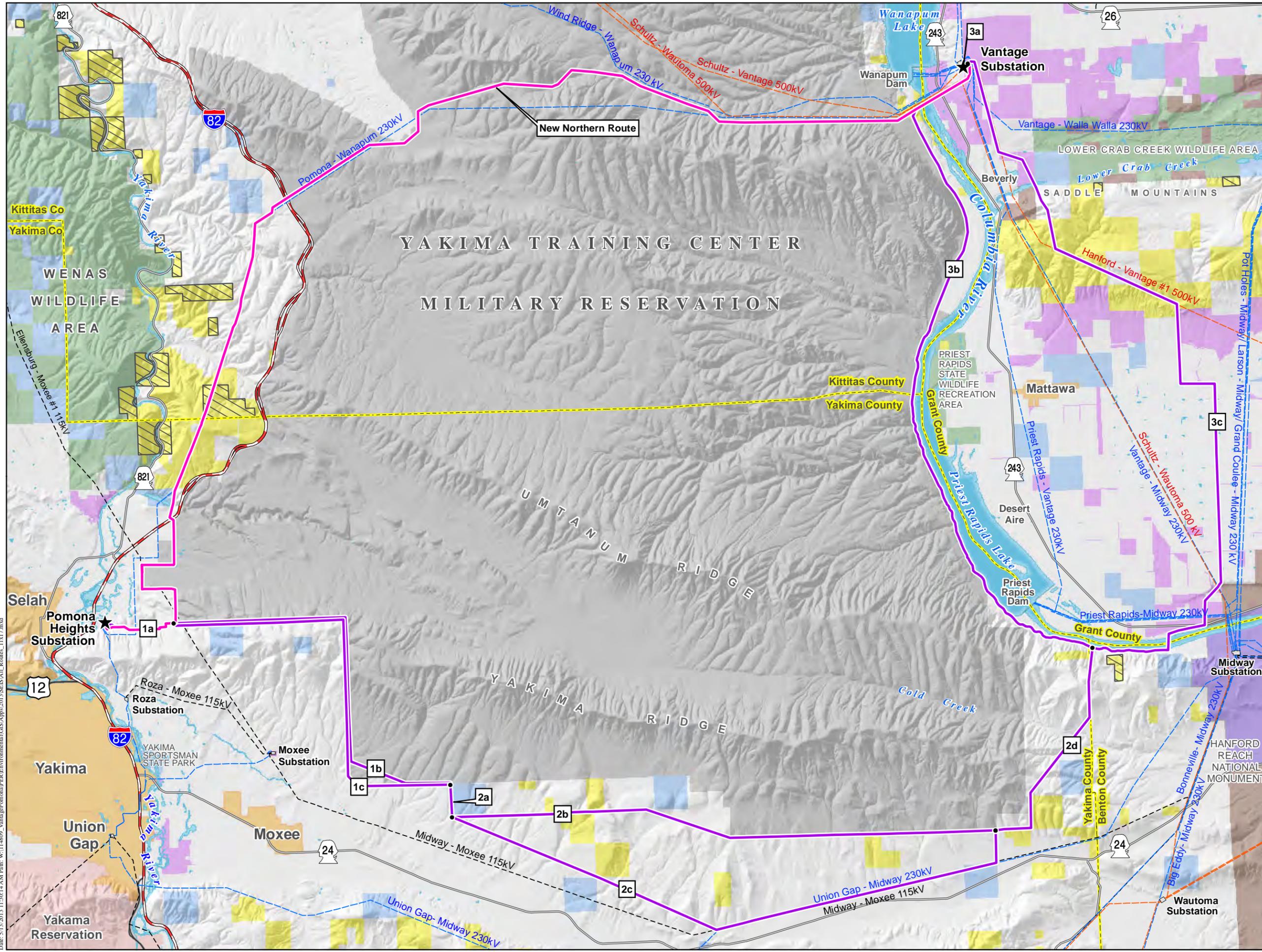
YTC: Margaret Taaffe at (509) 577-3151

Sincerely,



Linda Coates-Markle  
Field Manager

# New Northern Route



**Legend**

**Routes**

- New Northern Route
- DEIS Alternative Route

**1a** Route Segment Name

- Route Segment Node
- Project Substation

**Existing Transmission**

- 500kV
- 230kV
- 115kV
- Substation

**Jurisdiction**

- Private Individual or Company
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- State of Washington
- Yakima Training Center (DOD)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Department of Energy

**Roads**

- Interstate Highway
- US Highway
- State Highway

**Special Management Areas**

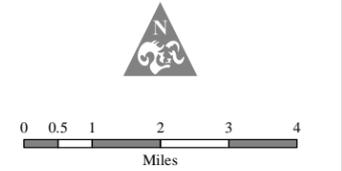
- BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

**Base Features**

- County Boundary
- Municipality



Data are projected in UTM Zone 10N, NAD83



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