



# 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  
Vantage to Pomona Heights 230kV  
Transmission Line Project

January 14, 2011

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is intended to provide you with an update on Pacific Power's proposed Vantage to Pomona Heights Transmission Line Project and to seek your comments on changes that have been made to the alternatives proposed for analysis in the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). After the conclusion of a formal scoping period earlier this year, numerous changes were made to the route alternatives proposed for consideration in the EIS.

Pacific Power has applied for rights-of-way across Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Army Yakima Training Center (YTC) lands for the construction of a new 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line, connecting the Vantage and Pomona Heights substations in central Washington. 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 will work with Cooperating Agencies to conduct the environmental analysis and prepare the EIS. To date, Grant and Yakima Counties have expressed interest in being Cooperating Agencies.

## **EIS Scoping Period - Route Alternatives Revised**

A formal scoping period for the EIS began on January 5, 2010 and ended on March 8, 2010. As part of scoping, public meetings were held in Selah and Mattawa on February 3 and 4, 2010, respectively. During this scoping period, three main routes were presented for public and agency comment: a northern route crossing YTC roughly parallel with the existing Pacific Power Pomona-Wanapum transmission line and two southern route alternatives, one that mostly crossed YTC land just inside their south boundary and a second route mostly on private land, approximately one-half mile south of the YTC boundary. Numerous sub-routes were also presented.

Due to public and agency input received during the scoping period and a significant military aviation safety issue identified afterwards, it became necessary to eliminate certain route alternatives and to make major adjustments to other alternatives. The following is a description of the routes eliminated and the issues driving the changes:

- The Northern Routes 1, 2 & 3, and portions of the Southern YTC Routes 1, 2 & 3, are no longer viable. The Army determined that the overhead transmission lines on these lands would create significant aviation safety issues and conflict with the facility's core mission. To mitigate that risk, the Army would require that portions of these proposed alignments on YTC land be placed underground. The Army also concluded that portions of the existing Pacific Power Pomona-Wanapum line crossing YTC lands should be reconstructed underground. Because of technical issues and much higher expense, it would not be feasible for Pacific Power to construct the new transmission line underground.
- Both the Northern Route alternatives and portions of the Southern YTC Route alternatives cross important high-density sage grouse habitat with active leks.
- The western portion of the Northern Route alternatives cross public lands included in the BLM's Yakima River Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). These lands were designated an ACEC in order to protect recreational, botanical, wildlife and scenic values.
- The sub-route following State Route 243 in Grant County (part of Southern YTC Route 1 and Southern Route 1) was eliminated to address concerns about aircraft safety at the Desert Aire Airport.
- Portions of the Southern Routes that crossed the Columbia River just below the Priest Rapids Dam were eliminated due to extremely rugged terrain and constructability issues.
- Portions of the Southern Routes (Southern YTC Routes 2 and 3 & Southern Routes 2 and 3) located just east of Mattawa were eliminated due to potential impacts to existing agricultural uses.

Subsequently, Pacific Power met on its own with elected officials, planning authorities and landowners in Yakima, Grant, and Kittitas Counties, and the YTC in an effort to identify new feasible route alternatives. Pacific Power then held its own open house meetings in Yakima and Mattawa on September 8 and 9, 2010, respectively, to present the newly proposed routes and obtain input. After the meetings, Pacific Power submitted the new proposed routes to the BLM and YTC for consideration. Pacific Power also filed amended right-of-way applications with both the BLM and YTC that included the routes described below.

Based on the project developments described above, the following four alternatives will be carried forward into the environmental analysis process. These current route alternatives, as well as the routes previously considered and eliminated, are shown on the enclosed map.

**1. Railroad Right-of-Way (ROW) Route A:** From the Pomona Heights Substation, this alternative would use portions of YTC land within the southern boundary of the installation and use an abandoned railroad right-of-way on the west side of the Columbia River, largely in Yakima County, then cross the Columbia River from Kittitas County into Grant County terminating at the Vantage substation, a distance of approximately 61 miles.

2. Railroad Right-of-Way (ROW) Route B: This alternative is mostly the same as described above for Railroad ROW Route A, except that a portion of the route south of YTC would be moved farther south, parallel to and crossing a portion of the Pacific Power Union Gap-Midway 230kV transmission line. The total distance of this route is approximately 63 miles.

3. "N" Road Route A: From the Pomona Heights Substation, this alternative would also use portions of YTC land within the southern boundary of the installation and cross the Columbia River near the Midway Substation into Grant County and then proceed north following N Road. This alternative would then proceed to the northwest, parallel to the existing BPA Hanford-Vantage 500kV transmission line over the Saddle Mountains and into the Vantage substation, a distance of approximately 65 miles.

4. "N" Road Route B: This alternative is mostly the same as described above for "N" Road Route A, except that a portion of the route south of YTC would be moved farther south, parallel to and crossing a portion of the Pacific Power Union Gap-Midway 230kV transmission line. The total distance of this route is approximately 67 miles.

Local Routing Options: Besides the alternatives shown above, several local routing options (LROs) would be considered. These LROs are minor adjustments of portions of the alignment along the south boundary of the YTC, and affect all of the routes listed above. The basic purpose of the LROs is to allow consideration of a route that either crosses YTC lands or other ownerships. To do so, the LROs would make minor adjustments to the identified portions of the route alignments to situate them on adjacent non-YTC ownerships, which are primarily private lands but also include some BLM and DNR lands. The principal LRO is located in the western portion of the project area from the end of Sage Trail Road to the Kittitas Canyon area to Mieras Road. A more detailed map that depicts the LROs can be viewed at the BLM Spokane District website.

### **State Environmental Policy Act Considerations**

In order for the affected Counties to issue permits for the proposed transmission line, it is necessary for the project to comply with the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Yakima and Grant Counties intend to be co-lead agencies for the purposes of SEPA compliance and may choose to adopt the NEPA EIS to meet SEPA requirements for approvals in their respective counties as allowed by WAC 197-11-610. The Counties will provide additional public notice as required by State and local statutes when completing the SEPA review process.

### **Next Steps**

The next major step is to begin evaluating the potential impacts of each of the alternatives. The EIS will evaluate environmental impacts potentially created from the construction, operation and maintenance of the new 230kV transmission line. The EIS will fully describe the alternatives and identify impacts that could be caused by the project. The EIS will also identify mitigation measures that could avoid or reduce potential impacts. When complete, the Draft EIS will be released for public review and comment. Additional opportunities for public involvement will be announced via direct mailings, local news media outlets, and on the BLM website. It is

anticipated that a Draft EIS will be completed and available for public review and comment in early fall of 2011.

### **Public Input Needed**

Please submit your comments on the revised route alternatives by **February 4, 2011**.

Comments may be submitted by email to: [OR\\_Wenatchee\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:OR_Wenatchee_Mail@blm.gov) (please specify Vantage to Pomona Heights EIS in the subject line), or you may submit written comments to: BLM Wenatchee Field Office, Attn: Vantage to Pomona Heights EIS, 915 Walla Walla Avenue, Wenatchee, WA 98801-1521

For all comments submitted, please identify whether you are submitting them as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. All comment submittals must include the commenter's name and address. *Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment- including your personal information-may be made publically available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.*

### **For More Information**

Additional information regarding the Vantage to Pomona Heights 230kV Transmission Line Project, including detailed maps of the route alternatives, is available on the following BLM Spokane District website:

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

If you have questions about this project or the NEPA process you may contact the following agency representatives:

BLM: Bill Schurger at (509) 665-2100

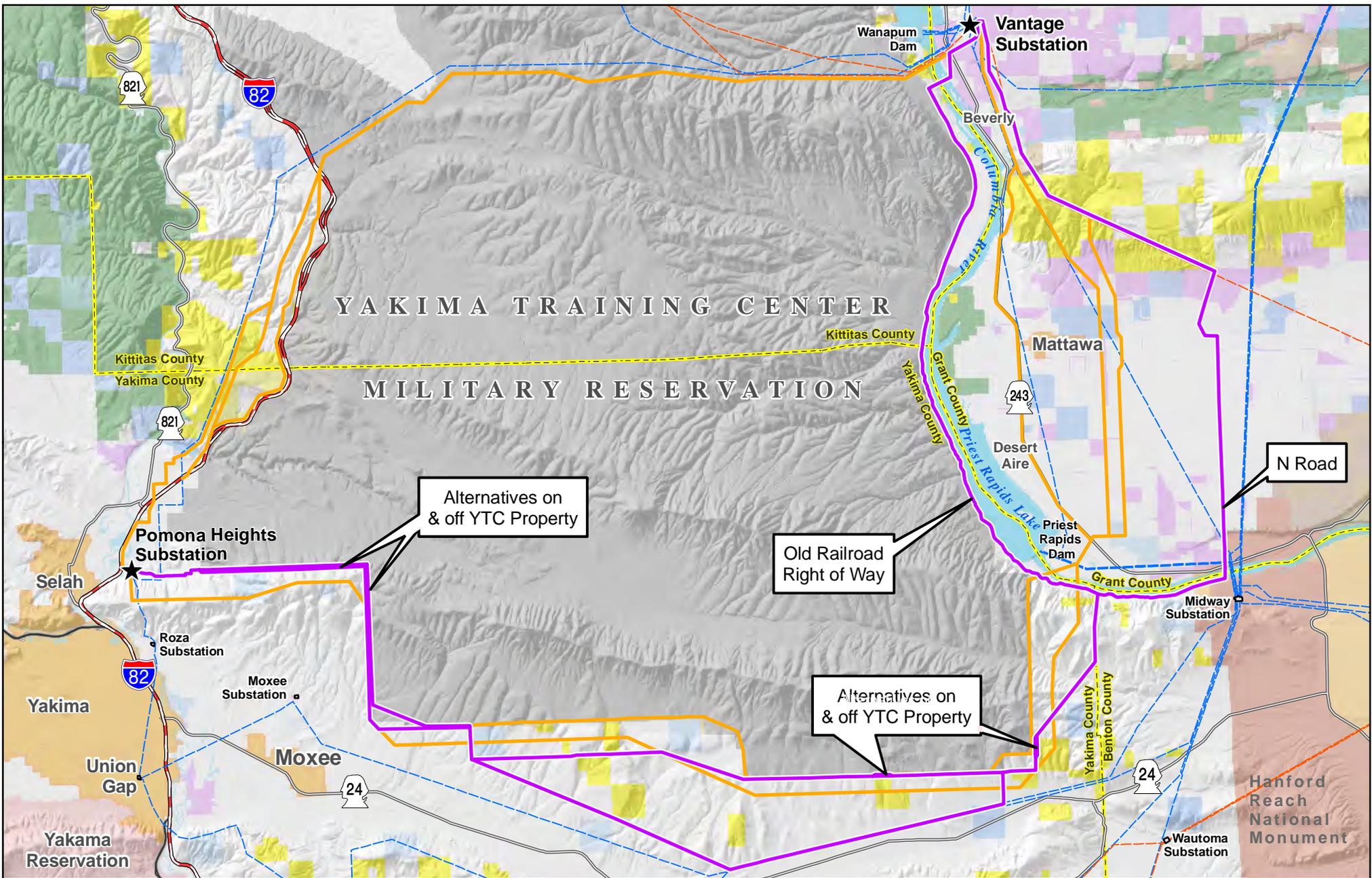
YTC: Margaret Pounds at (509) 577-3151

Sincerely,

Karen Kelleher  
Field Manager

1 Enclosure

1 - Map



Alternatives on & off YTC Property

Old Railroad Right of Way

Alternatives on & off YTC Property

N Road

<p><b>Vantage - Pomona Heights 230kV Transmission Line Project</b></p> <p><b>Routes and Jurisdiction</b></p>	<p><b>Project Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative Route</li> <li>Eliminated Route</li> <li>Project Substation</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Transmission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500 kV Transmission</li> <li>230 kV Transmission</li> <li>Substation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transportation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interstate Highway</li> <li>US Highway</li> <li>State Highway</li> </ul> <p><b>Base Features</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County Boundary</li> <li>Municipality</li> </ul>	<p><b>Land Ownership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bureau of Land Management</li> <li>Bureau of Reclamation</li> <li>State of Washington</li> <li>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</li> <li>Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>Yakama Reservation</li> <li>Yakima Training Center</li> </ul>	<p>0 0.5 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</p> <p>Miles</p> <p>1 inch = 4 miles</p> <p></p> <p> <b>PACIFIC POWER</b> A DIVISION OF MICROGRID</p> <p> <b>POWER ENGINEERS</b></p>	<p>WASHINGTON</p> <p>PROJECT LOCATION</p> <p>OREGON IDAHO</p>
	<p><b>Legend</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative Route</li> <li>Eliminated Route</li> <li>Project Substation</li> <li>500 kV Transmission</li> <li>230 kV Transmission</li> <li>Substation</li> <li>Interstate Highway</li> <li>US Highway</li> <li>State Highway</li> <li>County Boundary</li> <li>Municipality</li> <li>Bureau of Land Management</li> <li>Bureau of Reclamation</li> <li>State of Washington</li> <li>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</li> <li>Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife</li> <li>Yakama Reservation</li> <li>Yakima Training Center</li> </ul>				

**Request To Be Removed From Project Mailing List**

If you would like to be removed from the project mailing list and not receive future project updates and notifications, you may submit this form and mail it to:

BLM Wenatchee Field Office, Attn: Vantage Pomona Heights EIS  
915 Walla Walla Avenue  
Wenatchee, WA 98801-1512

Or

You may submit your request to be removed from the mailing list by sending an e-mail to:

[OR\\_Wenatchee\\_Mail@blm.gov](mailto:OR_Wenatchee_Mail@blm.gov)

(please specify Vantage-Pomona Heights EIS Removal From Mailing List in the subject line)

CONTACT INFORMATION *(please print information clearly)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Representing Agency or Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)