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## BLM Releases Draft Plan for Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today released for public comment the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Land-use Plan Amendments for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project in Umatilla, Morrow, Union, Baker, and Malheur Counties, Oregon, and Owyhee County, Idaho.

Idaho Power Company is proposing a new 500-kilovolt overhead alternating current transmission line project to provide more reliable power between the Pacific Northwest and Intermountain West regions. The new transmission line would run from an existing or proposed substation near Boardman, Oregon, approximately 300 miles to the southeast to the existing Hemingway Substation near Melba, Idaho. Construction is projected to start in 2018 with completion expected by the end of 2020.

The Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line is one of the priority projects of the [Obama Administration's Interagency Rapid Response Team for Transmission](#), which aims to improve the overall quality and timeliness of the permitting process for electric transmission infrastructure. When built, these projects will help increase electric reliability, integrate new renewable energy into the grid, and save consumers money.

The Boardman to Hemingway Line is also a pilot project for the Pacific Northwest Regional Infrastructure team, which [Interior Secretary Sally Jewell announced in May 2013](#), that was specifically convened to enhance the partnership between state and federal agencies in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho to better align transmission, renewable energy, and other infrastructure siting and permitting processes. This inter-governmental team provides a forum for federal and state agencies in the region to advance common energy-related infrastructure development goals.

“By conducting concurrent state and federal reviews, we can move these types of critical infrastructure projects forward in a more efficient manner that trims months, if not years, off the time it takes to complete the necessary reviews,” said BLM Oregon/Washington State Director Jerry Perez. “We will continue to ensure that vital infrastructure is designed, built and maintained in a way that protects public health, safety and the environment, while creating jobs and expediting economic growth,” continued Perez.

The preferred alternative identified in the EIS largely follows the applicant's proposed route but does vary in a few key locations. Due to land ownership in eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho, approximately 33 percent of this project is located on public land (BLM, US Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation) with 67 percent located on private and state land. The underlying BLM decision would grant a Right of Way for those portions of the transmission line crossing public lands.

The design of the project and the development of project design features followed the standard hierarchy for mitigation and included avoidance, minimization and rehabilitation/restoration measures to ensure the Project's conformance with federal and state regulatory requirements. To offset residual effects, the developer will be required to include a compensatory habitat mitigation plan in the final plan of



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development, before issuance of a notice to proceed for any surface disturbing activities associated with the project.

Additionally, the Biological Resources Task Group, composed of project stakeholders, has developed a Sage-grouse Mitigation Blueprint and a draft Compensatory Habitat Mitigation Framework to guide the development of a Compensatory Habitat Mitigation Plan, which the agencies must review and approve prior to any Notice to Proceed for the project.

The BLM is the lead federal agency for the National Environmental Policy Act review process for the project. Cooperating agencies that assisted in the preparation of the Draft EIS are the Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, State of Idaho, Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Baker, Canyon, Malheur, Morrow, Payette, Umatilla, Union, and Washington counties in Oregon, cities of Boardman, Oregon, and Parma, Idaho, Owyhee Irrigation District, and the Joint Committee of the Owyhee Project.

**Public Review Period:** The public has until March 19, 2015, to review and comment on the Draft EIS. The 90-day public comment period will begin on December 19, 2014, and end on March 19, 2015. The Draft EIS is available for review online at: [www.boardmantohemingway.com](http://www.boardmantohemingway.com)

#### Ways to Submit Comments:

Online at: [www.boardmantohemingway.com](http://www.boardmantohemingway.com)

By email to: [comment@boardmantohemingway.com](mailto:comment@boardmantohemingway.com)  
(please specify Boardman to Hemingway Draft EIS in the subject line)

By mail to: B2H Project, P.O. Box 655, Vale, OR 97918

Written comments may also be hand-delivered to the BLM Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, Oregon 97918, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. Faxed comments and anonymous comments will not be accepted.

**Public Meetings:** The BLM will host seven public open house meetings to provide information about the Project and accept public comments on the Draft EIS. Open house meetings will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. at the following dates and locations:

**Monday, January 5:** Port of Morrow Riverfront Center, Riverfront Room, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman, Oregon.

**Tuesday, January 6:** Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate, Pendleton, Oregon.

**Wednesday, January 7:** Blue Mountains Conference Center, Conference Room, 404 12<sup>th</sup> Street, La Grande, Oregon.

**Thursday, January 8:** Best Western Sunridge Inn, 1 Sunridge Lane, Baker City, Oregon.

**Friday, January 9:** the Durkee Community Hall, 28716 Old Hwy 30, Durkee, Oregon.

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**Monday, January 12:** Four Rivers Cultural Center, 676 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ontario, Oregon.

**Tuesday, January 13:** Marsing Senior Center, Banquet Hall, 218 Main Street, Marsing, Idaho.

For a list of public reading rooms, to download the Draft EIS, or to request a CD copy of the Draft EIS, please visit: [www.boardmantohemingway.com](http://www.boardmantohemingway.com).

Following the 90-day public comment period, the BLM will analyze comments and prepare a Final EIS targeted for release in early 2016. For more information about the project, contact Tamara Gertsch, BLM National Project Manager, at [tgertsch@blm.gov](mailto:tgertsch@blm.gov) or (307) 775-6115.

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The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2013, the BLM generated \$4.7 billion in receipts from public lands.

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