

Compensatory Mitigation in the Final SEIS

Compensatory mitigation includes measures taken to replace or provide substitute resources or environments to compensate, or offset, residual impacts from an authorized action after all measures have been taken to avoid and/or minimize impacts. Compensating is the last step in the Mitigation Hierarchy sequence.

Standards for what constitutes adequate compensation vary according to the resource impacted and the location of the impact.

Enhancement is the standard for resources in the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA; P.L. 103-64).

Net conservation gain is the standard for Greater sage-grouse and their habitat (Approved RMP Amendments, September 2015).

No net loss or where appropriate or required, **Net benefit** is the standard for impacts to important, scarce or sensitive resources outside the NCA — for example, wetlands, cultural resources and historic trails (Dept. of Interior Manual, Part 600, Section 6).

Residual impacts to resources which do not fall into any of these categories may remain uncompensated.

All compensatory mitigation measures will be designed to ensure durability, effectiveness, timeliness, commensurability, additionality and governance.

The Compensatory Mitigation Framework for NCA Resources

Appendix K of the Final SEIS presents a Framework for assessing compensatory mitigation in the Snake River Birds of Prey NCA. It supersedes the Mitigation and Enhancement Portfolio (MEP) proposed by the companies in their August 2014 revised application and Plan of Development. The BLM, cooperating agencies and the companies will use the Framework to develop a proposed Compensatory Mitigation Plan (CMP) that is project- and site-specific, after final route alignments are authorized in a Record of Decision (presuming that the No Action alternative is not selected).

The Framework addresses residual impacts to three primary categories of NCA resources:

1. Cultural resources/National Historic Trails
2. Recreation and Visitor services, and
3. Raptor habitat, including prey habitat.

It establishes three categories of compensatory mitigation actions for these resources:

- 1) Preservation and Protection
- 2) Restoration and
- 3) Establishment (which includes Science and Education).

Applying the Framework | Restoring raptor prey habitat

The Framework presents an accounting system to quantify and assess impacts to raptor habitat in the NCA, as a proxy for assessing effects on the raptor populations the NCA was established to conserve, protect and enhance.

Using current conditions of the NCA's vegetation communities, it assigns habitat values that correspond to each condition class to establish baseline conditions and desired future conditions for acres potentially affected by the project.

[This animation shows the accounting for hypothetical Habitat Restoration](#) in which acres in the vicinity of a transmission line are treated to restore or improve their ecological function.

Condition Class		Value
Ecological Potential	EP	1.0
Native Shrub/Grassland	NSG	0.8
Non-Native Seeding	NNS	0.6
Shrub/Invasive Annuals	SX	0.4
Invasive Annual Grass/ Forbs	X	0.2
Facility/Development	—	0.0

FRAME

- 1** Each acre of a 30-acre parcel in the NCA is assigned a habitat value based on its current vegetation condition class (see table *above*). The baseline average habitat value is **0.57**.
- 2** Building a transmission line results in permanent loss of all habitat value on 5 of the 30 acres, reducing the average habitat value of the parcel to **0.49**.
- 3** Initial treatment to improve vegetation on 5 other acres within the area raises the average to **0.55**, which remains below the pre-disturbance value (frame 1).
- 4** Additional treatment raises the average habitat value to **0.64** — above the baseline (frame 1), enhancing NCA resources, as required in law and policy.