

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0011-EA**

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**May 2015**

**LPEA Powerline ROW Renewal and Modification  
B141 Single to Three Phase**

***Location:***

New Mexico Principal Meridian, Colorado  
T. 34 N., R. 8 W.,  
Sec. 12;  
T. 34 N., R. 7 W.,  
Sec. 7.  
The area described contains 2.6 acres.

***Applicant/Address:***

**La Plata Electric Association, Inc.  
45 Stewart Street  
PO Box 2750  
Durango, CO 81302**

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Tres Rios Field Office  
15 Burnett Court  
Durango, CO 81301  
p. 970-247-4874



**LPEA Powerline ROW Renewal and Modification  
B141 Single to Three Phase  
DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0011-E**

**CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by SME Environmental, Inc. (SME) for the B141 Single to Three Phase Electrical Utility Easement project (proposed project), on behalf of La Plata Electric Association, Inc. (LPEA). LPEA proposes to renew and modify the Right-of-Way (ROW) easement for the B141 overhead power line, located on private land and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Tres Rios Field Office (TRFO) in Section 12 of Township 34 North, Range 8 West and Section 7 of Township 34 North, Range 7 West. This ROW easement continues onto adjacent private lands in a connected action (Figure 1, Figure 2). Within the renewed ROW, the B141 overhead powerline would be upgraded from a single phase to a three-phase electric line. The overhead line would be connected to the natural gas well pad location via an additional underground line in a separate action, which is analyzed in Categorical Exclusion document for the LPEA Underground Powerline ROW (DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0012-CX). If approved, construction of the power line would commence as soon as is feasible.

**1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to grant LPEA a 30 year Right-of-way (ROW) renewal and modification for the ROW for the B141 overhead powerline, which would be converted from a single-phase line to a three-phase electric line. The upgraded powerline would allow for increased capacity to deliver power to members in the area. The upgraded capacity would reduce or eliminate loss of power events and is part of a long range improvement project. The need for the Proposed Action is established by the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA to respond to a request for a ROW.

Additionally, an underground line would be installed to connect the overhead line to the Dry Creek Federal GU #1 natural gas well pad. This underground line is being constructed in a separate action, as detailed in the Categorical Exclusion document for the LPEA Underground Powerline ROW (DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0012-CX).

**1.3 CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN(S)**

The proposed action is in conformance with the following Land Use Plan (LUP): Tres Rios Field Office RMP, February 27, 2015. The proposed action would be consistent with the LUP as described in accordance with the Desired Condition (2.19.7) on page II-104. (Section 2.19).

## **1.4 RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS**

The Proposed Action is consistent with the terms, conditions of other Federal Laws, statutes, regulations, and other plans including:

- The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (USC 4321 et seq.)
- The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended (16 USC 703-712)
- The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, as amended (16 USC 668-668d)
- The Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948, as amended (33 USC 26)
- The Clean Air Act of 1963, as amended (42 USC 7401 et seq.)
- Clean Water Act of 1972, amended 1977 (33 USC 1251 et seq.)
- The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 USC 103)
- The Antiquities Act of 1906, as amended (16 USC 431–433)6
- The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 USC 470 et seq.)
- The Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (16 USC 469-469c)
- The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended (16 USC 470aa-mm)
- The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, as amended (42 USC 1996)
- The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (25 USC 3001 et seq.)
- Executive Order 12898 of 1994 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations"
- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 43, part 3101 section1-2, Surface Use Rights.

This EA considers the requirements of these laws and implementing regulations, as applicable, as part of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action, including associated applicant-committed mitigation measures, complies with the laws and implementing regulations indicated above.

## **CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This EA analyzes the Proposed Action and the No Action alternatives. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the Proposed Action. Other action alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis due to excessive cost or environmental impact.

### **2.2 PROPOSED ACTION**

LPEA proposes to renew and modify the ROW easement on lands administered by the BLM in order to upgrade the existing single-phase B141 overhead electric line to a three-phase electric line. The ROW generally parallels U.S. Highway 160 (US 160), approximately 10.0 miles east-southeast of Durango, CO. The ROW is 20 feet (ft) wide and approximately 5,578 ft (1.06

miles) long, for a total area of 2.6 acres. All existing power poles within the ROW would be replaced, and some additional power poles would be erected.

A total of approximately 19 power poles would be erected on BLM land. The poles would be transported to the project location using truck and trailer. Each power pole would require an installation disturbance area of 3-feet by 3-feet, for a total of 171 ft<sup>2</sup> (0.004 acre) of surface disturbance on BLM land. The power line would be constructed using bucket trucks, auger trucks, pickup trucks, backhoes, and all other equipment necessary to complete construction. Construction will take approximately 6 months to complete. All power poles and lines would be built in accordance with the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) Guidelines.

The project area would be accessed from BLM lands and construction would be conducted within the existing LPEA ROW on unpaved surfaces. The topography of the alignment to reach pole 29.2 is very steep, and would therefore be accessed by an approximate 0.15 mile detour from the alignment (Figure 2).

The ROW easement continues on adjacent privately held lands, and is included in this analysis as a connected action. The easement for the connected action is 20 ft wide and approximately 10,300 ft (1.95 miles) long, for a total area of 4.73 acres. In the connected action, approximately 39 power poles would be erected. Each power pole would require an installation disturbance area of 3-feet by 3-feet, for a total of 351 ft<sup>2</sup> (0.008 acre) of surface disturbance on private land. The connected action would be accessed via Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) ROW and by private driveways on unpaved surfaces. The entire LPEA ROW and the access route comprise the project area.

Mitigation measures for the proposed action will include several timing restrictions to protect wildlife resources. The project is located in an area mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a winter concentration area for elk and mule deer. A timing restriction of December 1 through April 30 will mitigate impacts of disturbance on big game from the construction of the new line. Raptors may be nesting in the area. A timing limitation from February through July 31 will cover the nesting time frames for most species. A raptor clearance survey may be conducted if construction is desired in that time frame, in place of a timing restriction. A timing limitation from May 1- June 30 will be implemented to protect nesting migratory birds if construction activities will impact and nesting migratory birds. If no vegetation will be removed the timing restriction for migratory birds will not apply. A clearance survey for nesting migratory birds can be conducted if vegetation removal is required during that time frame, in place of a timing restriction. A BLM-approved seed mix will be used to re-vegetate disturbed areas.

## **2.3 NO ACTION**

The No Action alternative would be to deny the ROW renewal and modification as proposed and continue the current ROW easement. With this alternative BLM would not approve the construction of the three-phase overhead line, and LPEA would not be able to provide increased capacity to deliver power to customers in the region. Therefore, LPEA would not reduce or eliminate loss of power events or proceed with the long range improvement project.

## **CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING**

The project area is located in La Plata County, Colorado, approximately 10.0 miles east-southeast of the City of Durango. The Proposed Action would be located in piñon-juniper woodlands, sagebrush shrublands, and irrigated agricultural fields, generally paralleling US 160 on its south side (Figure 3). The La Plata Mountains are visible to the northwest, and the San Juan Mountains are visible to the north.

The affected environment was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in the Interdisciplinary Team Checklist, which is available in the TRFO's administrative record for this project. The checklist indicates which resources of concern are either not present in the project area or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis. Resources which could be impacted to a level requiring further analysis are described in Chapter 3 and impacts on these resources are analyzed in Chapter 4 below.

#### **Issues Not Analyzed**

Resources that were included in scoping, but eliminated from further analysis by the interdisciplinary team include:

Air Quality	Recreation
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	Socio-Economics
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Fish Habitat	Water Resources
Forest Resources	Wild Horses and Burros
Fuels/Fire Management	Wild and Scenic Rivers
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Wilderness/WSA
Geology	Wildlife – aquatic
Solid Minerals	Wetlands – Riparian Zones*
Rangeland Health	

\*Wetlands – Riparian Zones were eliminated from further analysis as documented in the Interdisciplinary Team Checklist because no wetlands or riparian zones occur within the project area on BLM lands. However, wetlands would be impacted by the “connected action” on the adjacent private lands. These are discussed below in Section 3.1.20.

#### **Issues to be Analyzed**

##### **3.1.1 Cultural Resources**

The analysis area associated with the proposed action on BLM land was previously surveyed for cultural resources. One ineligible site, an artifact scatter of prehistoric cultural affiliation, was

identified (Eckhardt and Mutaw 2000, Rohman and Fetterman 2001). No cultural resources eligible for listing or currently listed on the National Register are present.

The analysis area associated with the connected action on adjacent private lands was surveyed by Stratified Environmental and Archaeological Services, LLC (SEAS) on November 4, 2014 and February 20, 2015 under State of Colorado Archaeological Permits 2014-19 and 2015-43. Report number SEAS 14-094 documents that one cultural resource (an abandoned segment of old State Highway 10) is present, but it is not eligible for listing or currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

### **3.1.2 Environmental Justice**

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Environmental Justice Geographic Assessment Tool was used to generate data for a 10-mile radius around the proposed project area for the proposed and connected actions. The resulting data is attached in Appendix A. The source of these data is the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey from 2006 to 2010. The data shows 21% of the population within the targeted area is from minority groups. Of the 15,270 households with the targeted area, 8% have annual incomes below \$15,000, 10% have annual incomes between \$15,000 and \$25,000, and 26% have annual incomes between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

### **3.1.3 Farmlands (Prime or Unique)**

There is no prime or unique farmland on the BLM parcel within the project area.

The connected action intersects soil types indicated as prime farmland (USDA 2014) within the privately held lands. Two segments of the project area intersect prime farmland comprised of the soil type, Bayfield silty clay loam, seeped, 1% to 3% slopes, for a total of approximately 1,730 linear feet, or approximately 0.79 acre, within the 20-ft ROW. Two additional segments of the project area intersect prime farmland, if irrigated, comprised of the soil type Bayfield silty clay loam, 1% to 3% slopes, for a total of 460 linear feet, or approximately 0.21 acre, within the 20-ft ROW (Figure 3).

### **3.1.4 Floodplains**

According to 2010 FEMA Floodplain data, the project area for the proposed and connected actions is "outside the 1% annual chance floodplain." The project area is found on the FEMA Map Panels 08067C0750F and 08067C0730F (La Plata County GIS 2014).

### **3.1.5 Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds**

Several species of noxious weeds listed under the Colorado Noxious Weed Act by the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) (2014) were observed during the site visit on May 29, 2014 within the project area for the proposed and connected actions. These include, but are not limited to: Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) (List B), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)

(List B), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) (List C), redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*) (List C), and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) (List C).

List B weed species are species for which the Commissioner, in consultation with the state noxious weed advisory committee, local governments, and other interested parties, develops and implements state noxious weed management plans designed to stop the continued spread of these species (CDA 2014).

List C weed species are species for which the Commissioner, in consultation with the state noxious weed advisory committee, local governments, and other interested parties, will develop and implement state management plans designed to support the efforts of local governing bodies to facilitate more effective integrated weed management on private and public lands. The goal of such plans will not be to stop the continued spread of these species, but to provide additional education, research, and biological control resources to jurisdictions that choose to require management of List C species (CDA 2014).

### **3.1.6 Lands/Access**

Access to the B141 overhead power line would be on BLM land on the eastern end of the power line. The existing LPEA ROW easement includes a provision that allows for access. No separate easement for access would be necessary.

The power line alignment for the connected action would be accessed via a CDOT ROW and via private land. The existing LPEA ROW easement includes a provision that allows for access.

### **3.1.7 Migratory Birds**

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implements various treaties and conventions between the United States and Canada, Japan, Mexico and the former Soviet Union for the protection of migratory birds. Under the MBTA, taking, killing or possessing migratory birds is unlawful. The MBTA makes it illegal for anyone to take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts, nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid permit issued pursuant to Federal regulations.

Vegetation within the project area for the proposed and connected actions offers nesting habitat for migratory birds.

### **3.1.8 Oil and Gas**

As previously stated, the Proposed Action would be associated with a separate action: the LPEA Underground Powerline ROW, which is analyzed under a Categorical Exclusion (DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2014-0012-CX). The LPEA Underground Powerline ROW will allow for the electrification of the BP Dry Creek Federal GU #1 well pad via an underground powerline that would tie into the overhead B141 powerline. Electrification of this well pad would allow for continued pumping of natural gas from this location.

### **3.1.9 Native American Religious and Other Concerns**

Tribal consultation was conducted by the BLM TRFO. No issues regarding Native American religious or other concerns were identified in association with the proposed action. (Jennifer Jardine, personal communication, BLM, March 9, 2015).

#### **3.1.10 NEPA Compliance**

The Proposed Action will be in compliance with NEPA because it is consistent with the Record of Decision for San Juan/San Miguel RMP and Final EIS, which states: “In general, public land is available for utility and transportation corridor development, however, applicants will be encouraged to locate new facilities within existing corridors to the greatest extent possible” (USDI/BLM 1985, page 20).

#### **3.1.11 Paleontology**

The project is located in early tertiary Animas Formation which has a PFYC of 3, indicating moderate or unknown potential for fossil resources. Aerial photography indicates that soils are relatively deep, such that bedrock is not visible at the surface (personal communication, James Blair, November 4, 2014).

#### **3.1.12 Soils**

A map of the soils in the project area for the proposed and connected actions is provided in Figure 3. Brief descriptions of the soils within the project area appear below:

##### Arboles clay, 3 to 12 percent slopes

The Arboles clay, 3 to 12 percent slopes is the most prevalent soil in the project area. This soil is comprised of fine-textured alluvium derived from shale. This soil is well drained, and water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. This soil does not meet hydric criteria, and it is not considered prime farmland (USDA 2014).

##### Bayfield silty clay loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes

The Bayfield silty clay loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes soil type is mapped in a small portion of the eastern end of the project area. The parent material consists of fine-textured alluvium derived from shale. This soil is well drained, and water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. This soil does not meet hydric criteria, and it is considered prime farmland if irrigated (USDA 2014).

##### Bayfield silty clay loam, seeped, 1 to 3 percent slopes

The Bayfield silty clay loam, seeped, 1 to 3 percent slopes soil type is found on approximately 1,730 linear feet in the mid-section of the project area. This soil is comprised of fine-textured alluvium derived from shale. This soil is poorly drained, and water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. This soil does not meet hydric criteria, and it is considered prime farmland (USDA 2014).

### Zyme-Rock outcrop complex, 12 to 65 percent slopes

The Zyme-Rock outcrop complex, 12 to 65 percent slopes soil type is found in the western portion of the project area. This soil is comprised of residuum weathered from shale. This soil is well drained, and water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. This soil does not meet hydric criteria, and it is not considered prime farmland (USDA 2014).

### Zyme clay loam, 3 to 25 percent slopes

The Zyme clay loam, 3 to 25 percent slopes soil type is found in a very small portion of the eastern end of the project area. The soil is comprised of residuum weathered from shale. This soil is well drained, and water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. This soil does not meet hydric criteria, and it is not considered prime farmland (USDA 2014).

### **3.1.13 Special Status Animal Species**

Special status fish and wildlife species were analyzed by a BLM wildlife biologist, and the results are included in the Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report in Appendix B. The species analyzed included Colorado BLM sensitive fish and wildlife species based on Information Bulletin No. CO-2000-14 (November 2009) for the Tres Rios Field Office. Bird species classified as Birds of Conservation Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Bird Conservation Region 16 that may occur on lands administered by the Tres Rios Field Office were also analyzed. As indicated in the Wildlife Clearance Report, there are no known occurrences of any special status species within the project area.

### **3.1.14 Special Status Plant Species**

A list of Colorado BLM sensitive plant species based on Information Bulletin No. CO-2000-14 (November 2009) for the Tres Rios Field Office is included in Appendix C. There is no habitat for any BLM sensitive plant species within the project area.

### **3.1.15 Threatened or Endangered Animal Species**

Federally-listed threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate wildlife species were analyzed by a BLM wildlife biologist, and the results are included in the Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report in Appendix B. There is no habitat within the project area for any listed, proposed, or candidate wildlife species.

An SME biologist surveyed the alignment for the proposed and connected actions on May 29, 2014. No individuals or habitat for any listed, proposed, or candidate wildlife species were observed.

### **3.1.16 Threatened or Endangered Plant Species**

Federally-listed threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate plant species were not analyzed in the Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report in Appendix B. Suitable habitat for federally-listed

plant species have been summarized in Table C in Appendix C. There is no habitat within the project area for any listed, proposed, or candidate plant species.

An SME biologist surveyed the alignment for the proposed and connected actions on May 29, 2014. No individuals or habitat for any listed, proposed, or candidate plant species were observed.

### **3.1.17 Vegetation**

Within the project area for the Proposed Action, vegetation within the project area is comprised of piñon-juniper woodland, sagebrush shrubland, open grasslands, and wetlands. Piñon-juniper woodland communities are dominated by Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) and two-needle piñon (*Pinus edulis*) with a strong Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*) shrub component. Other shrubs present include: alderleaf mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), Utah serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*), cliff Fendlerbush (*Fendlera rupicola*), Stansbury cliffrose (*Purshia stansburiana*), and big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). Agricultural areas are dominated by grasses including western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*) and smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*).

### **3.1.18 Visual Resources**

The visual resources of the project area for the proposed and connected actions have been previously disturbed by the construction of US 160, the existing Dry Creek Federal GU #1 natural gas well pad, the existing B141 power line and associated power lines, as well as private roads and low density buildings.

### **3.1.19 Wildlife (Terrestrial)**

The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report prepared by a BLM wildlife biologist is included in Appendix B. This report indicates that the project area is within an area mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a winter concentration area for mule deer and elk. The project area may also be used for nesting by migratory birds and raptors, including golden eagles.

An SME biologist surveyed the alignment for the proposed and connected actions on May 29, 2014. Numerous birds were identified during the field investigation. American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), black-billed magpie (*Pica hudsonia*), blue-gray gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), piñon jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), vireo (*Vireo* sp.) western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) were observed within the woodland canopy and flying overhead. An unidentifiable owl pellet was found in the project area. Piñon-juniper woodland, sagebrush shrubland, and wetland habitat throughout the project area offer nesting habitat for a majority of birds common to the southwestern United States.

In addition to birds, other signs of wildlife observed within the project area included mule deer, jackrabbit, cottontail rabbit, prairie dogs, small burrowing mammals, frogs, as well as domestic livestock.

### **3.1.20 Wetland and Aquatic Resources**

There are no wetlands or other jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. (WOUS) within the project area for the Proposed Action on BLM land. Therefore, wetlands or water resources were not included in the resources identified by the interdisciplinary team for analysis.

WOUS totaling 0.64 acre were identified within the alignment for the connected action. The wetlands and water resources are documented in the associated Wetland Delineation Report (SME 2014). Work associated with the connected action is authorized under Clean Water Act Section 404 permit (Nationwide Permit 12) as regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

## **CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **4.1 DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS – PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action is in conformance with the following LUP: Tres Rios Field Office RMP, February 27, 2015. The proposed action would be consistent with the LUP as described in accordance with the Desired Condition (2.19.7) on page II-104. (Section 2.19).

This section analyzes the impact of the Proposed Action to those potentially impacting resources described in Chapter 3, Affected Environment. A table summarizing these determinations is included in Appendix D.

#### **4.1.1 Cultural Resources**

No cultural resources eligible for listing or currently listed on the NRHP are located within the analysis area on BLM land (Eckhardt and Mutaw 2000, Rohman and Fetterman 2001). . Ground disturbing impacts associated with power line pole upgrades would occur within the boundaries of the two ineligible sites present in the analysis areas.

#### **4.1.2 Environmental Justice**

The proposed action would not disproportionately impact any minority or low income groups.

#### **4.1.3 Farmlands (Prime or Unique)**

There is no prime farmland within the BLM parcel of the project area. The proposed action would cause no impact to prime or unique farmland. However, areas outside of the BLM parcel

within the project area are mapped as potential prime farmland, if irrigated. These impacts are discussed in the Cumulative Impacts section.

#### **4.1.4 Floodplains**

The project area is in a location determined by FEMA to be outside of the 1% annual chance floodplain. The proposed action would not alter the natural topography within the project area and would cause no impacts to floodplains.

#### **4.1.5 Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds**

Ground disturbance, such as the augering involved in installing the power poles, can provide an opportunity for noxious weeds and non-native invasive species to become established and spread. Construction vehicles accessing the ROW could potentially spread noxious weeds and non-native invasive species. Mitigation measures and stipulations identified in the Proposed Action would limit the spread or introduction of noxious weeds.

#### **4.1.6 Lands/Access**

During the approximate 6-month construction period, construction vehicles would transverse vegetated areas on BLM and privately held lands to reach power pole locations. After construction is completed, occasional maintenance will be necessary and will be conducted within the LPEA ROW. Impacts would include, but are not necessarily limited to: increased noise, soil compaction, damage to vegetation, and disturbance to wildlife. Mitigation measures addressed in the Proposed Action would result in no impact to lands/access.

#### **4.1.7 Migratory Birds**

The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report (Appendix B) states that a timing restriction must be implemented to prevent impacts to nesting migratory birds. No vegetation removal may occur from May 1 through June 30. If no vegetation will be removed, then the timing restriction would not apply. If vegetation removal is required during the timing restriction, a clearance survey would be conducted. These mitigation measures would limit impacts to migratory birds. Temporary impacts to migratory birds would include increased noise and disturbance from construction activity. Additional impacts may occur during occasional maintenance of the overhead powerline in the form of human activity and noise from vehicles. Vegetation will be cleared outside peak nesting season or after a migratory bird clearance

#### **4.1.8 Oil and Gas**

As previously stated, an underground powerline will be constructed in a separate action to electrify the Dry Creek Federal GU #1 natural gas well pad. This underground powerline would tie into the B141 powerline. This would provide a beneficial impact for oil and gas.

#### **4.1.9 Native American Religious and Other Concerns**

No Native American religious or other concerns have been identified in association with the proposed action. Therefore, no impacts would occur.

#### **4.1.10 NEPA Compliance**

The proposed action is in conformance with the following LUP: Tres Rios Field Office RMP, February 27, 2015. The proposed action would be consistent with the LUP as described in accordance with the Desired Condition (2.19.7) on page II-104. (Section 2.19).

#### **4.1.11 Paleontology**

Surveying would be unlikely to conclusively determine whether there are fossil resources beneath each pole location, and any resources that were there would likely be rendered unidentifiable by the action of the auger. Because of this, a pre-disturbance survey, or monitoring during excavation would not be necessary. Therefore the project can proceed without further paleontological investigation. If the operator uncovers any significant vertebrate fossils during construction, work would cease at that particular pole location and the BLM would be notified immediately. BLM will then determine how best to record and or preserve the resource (personal communication, James Blair, November 4, 2014). Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to paleontology resources.

#### **4.1.12 Soils**

Soil would be removed at each power pole location using an auger, creating a total of approximately 0.004 acre of surface disturbance. Soil compaction may occur where construction vehicles access the project area. Impacts to soil would include temporary reduced capacity for plant growth due to removal and/or disturbance of the soil. Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to soil resources.

#### **4.1.13 Special Status Animal Species**

The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report (Appendix B) states that the project would not impact any special status wildlife species. Habitat may be available but disturbance is all existing except 0.6 acres – see wildlife clearance for more information.

#### **4.1.14 Special Status Plant Species**

No special status plants have potential to occur within the project area; therefore, no impacts would occur to any special status plant species. Based on the Colorado Natural Heritage Program Plant Database there are no known BLM Sensitive populations occurring within the project area.

#### **4.1.15 Threatened or Endangered Animal Species**

The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report (Appendix B) states that the project would not impact any special status wildlife species.

#### **4.1.16 Threatened or Endangered Plant Species**

There is no habitat for threatened or endangered plant species within the project area. No impacts to threatened or endangered plant species are anticipated.

#### **4.1.17 Vegetation**

Surface disturbance on BLM land will be limited to 0.004 acre in the areas where power poles are erected. Additional damage to vegetation will occur where construction vehicles would drive on vegetated surfaces. Revegetation would be completed on all disturbed surfaces, as required by the BLM TRFO. Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to vegetation.

#### **4.1.18 Visual Resources**

Visual impacts to the project area will not change from the existing conditions. The upgraded power line would have the same visual impact as the existing line. The proposed action will not create additional impacts to visual resources.

#### **4.1.19 Wildlife (Terrestrial)**

The project is located in an area mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a winter concentration area for elk and mule deer. A timing restriction of December 1 through April 30 will mitigate impacts of disturbance on big game from the construction of the new line. Raptors may be nesting in the area. A timing limitation from February through July 31 will cover the nesting time frames for most species. A raptor clearance survey may be conducted if construction is desired in that time frame, in place of a timing restriction. A timing limitation from May 1- June 30 will be implemented to protect nesting migratory birds if construction activities will impact and nesting migratory birds. If no vegetation will be removed the timing restriction for migratory birds will not apply. A clearance survey for nesting migratory birds can be conducted if vegetation removal is required during that time frame, in place of a timing restriction. These mitigation measures are discussed in the Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report, included in Appendix B.

#### **4.1.20 Wetlands/Riparian Zones**

No wetlands or riparian areas on BLM land will be impacted by the Proposed Action. Impacts created by the connected action are permitted under Nationwide Permit 12, as discussed in Section 3.1.20.

## **4.2 DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS - NO ACTION**

The No Action alternative would not meet the purpose and need for the Proposed Action. Under the No Action alternative, the ROW renewal and modification would be denied and continue the current ROW easement. With this alternative BLM would not approve the construction of the three-phase overhead line, and LPEA would not be able to provide increased capacity to deliver power to customers in the region. Therefore, LPEA would not reduce or eliminate loss of power events or proceed with the long range improvement project. The ROW for the B141 powerline would not be renewed and modified to allow for the construction of the upgraded three-phase powerline. LPEA would not provide increased capacity for electricity. The No Action alternative would result in the continuation of the current land and resource uses in the project area. There would be no environmental impacts from the No Action alternative as described above to Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Farmlands, Floodplains, Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds, Lands and Access, Migratory Birds, Native American Religious and Other Concerns, Paleontology, Soils, Special Status Animal or Plant Species, Threatened or Endangered Animal or Plant Species, Vegetation, Visual Resources, or Wildlife; and therefore, the environment would remain as described in Chapter 3.

## **4.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS (INCLUDING THE CONNECTED ACTION)**

This section analyzes the cumulative impacts of the Proposed Action to those potentially impacted resources described in the Chapter 3: Affected Environment. Cumulative impacts in the analysis area include the widening of US 160; oil & gas development, including access roads, pipelines, and well pad construction and maintenance; grazing; utility and infrastructure development; and continued rural use of the area.

The Proposed Action would result in approximately 0.004 acre of short-term disturbance. Following interim reclamation, the Proposed Action would not cause long-term disturbance outside of the existing disturbance.

The Proposed Action is not expected to cumulatively impact cultural resources, environmental justice, floodplains, Native American religious or other concerns, NEPA compliance, oil and gas, special status animal or plant species, threatened or endangered animal or plant species, or visual resources; as these resources are not expected to be directly or indirectly affected. The Proposed Action would result in cumulative impacts to farmlands, invasive species/noxious weeds, lands and access, migratory birds, soils, vegetation, and wildlife.

### **4.3.1 Farmlands (Prime or Unique)**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for prime farmlands is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. Past, present, and future developments are expected to result in a range of short and long-term impacts to prime farmlands including augering to erect power poles, soil compaction, temporarily increasing erosion and rutting, and increased soil loss to erosion as construction vehicles travel within the project area. A maximum of 1.0 acre of potential prime farmland (0.79 of prime farmland, if irrigated and drained; 0.21 acre of prime farmland if irrigated) would be disturbed within the project area on privately held lands, adjacent to BLM land. There would be

no impacts to prime farmland or potentially prime farmland from the Proposed Action. The connected action is not expected to contribute appreciably to cumulative impacts to potentially prime farmlands when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Cumulative impacts on approximately 1.0 acre of potential prime farmland affected by the connected action would be short term (approximately 6 months), with additional occasional impacts for maintenance of the powerline.

#### **4.3.2 Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for invasive species and noxious weeds is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. Past, present, and future developments are expected to result in a range of short and long-term impacts to soils including disturbance, temporarily increasing erosion prior to reclamation, and reducing soil loss to erosion where reclamation and re-vegetation occurs.

The easement for the connected action is 20 ft wide and approximately 10,300 ft (1.95 miles) long, for a total area of 4.73 acres. Installation of power poles will create approximately 0.008 acre of surface disturbance.

#### **4.3.3 Lands and Access**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for lands and access is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. Past, present, and future developments are expected to result in a range of short and long-term impacts to lands and access including noise, soil compaction, damage to vegetation, and disturbance to wildlife. The connected action would require access to the project area for approximately 6 months, and occasionally in the future for maintenance purposes. Therefore, any impact from the connected action is not expected to contribute appreciably to cumulative impacts to lands and access when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

#### **4.3.4 Migratory Birds**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for migratory birds is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. In the analysis area, impacts to migratory birds and their habitat have resulted from residential, commercial, and community development; agricultural and grazing land use; industrial development including oil and gas development; and land management activities such as prescribed burning. Habitat for migratory birds is widely distributed throughout the analysis area. Impacts from the connected action would be short term (approximately 6 months), with additional occasional impacts for maintenance of the powerline, and are not expected to contribute appreciably to cumulative impacts to migratory birds when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

#### **4.3.5 Soils**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for soil resources is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. Past, present, and future developments are expected to result in a range of short and long-term impacts to soils, including disturbance during boring to erect power poles, compaction, and

temporarily increasing erosion prior to reseeded. Approximately 0.008 acre of soil on private land would be disturbed by the connected action. Ongoing, occasional maintenance within the ROW for the overhead powerline may contribute to soil compaction and erosion. Any impact from the connected action is not expected to contribute appreciably to cumulative impacts to soils when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

#### **4.3.6 Vegetation**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for vegetation is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. Past, present, and future developments are expected to result in a range of short and long-term impacts to soils including disturbance, temporarily increasing erosion prior to reclamation, and reducing soil loss to erosion where reclamation and re-vegetation occurs. Impacts from the connected action are not expected to contribute appreciably to cumulative impacts to vegetation when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Re-seeding of disturbed areas will reduce long-term impacts to vegetation.

#### **4.3.7 Wildlife**

The cumulative impacts analysis area for wildlife is the San Juan/San Miguel planning area. In the analysis area, impacts to wildlife and habitat have resulted from residential, commercial, and community development; agricultural and grazing land use; industrial development including oil and gas development; and land management activities such as prescribed burning. Impacts from the connected action are not expected to contribute appreciably to cumulative impacts to wildlife when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

## CHAPTER 5 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

### 5.1 LIST OF PERSONS, AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED

**Table 5.1. List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted**

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Stephni Balzly Reliable Power Consultants	Information regarding the Proposed Action.	
Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer	National Historic Preservation Act	No historic properties affected.

### 5.2 LIST OF PREPARERS

**Table 5.2. List of Preparers**

<b>BLM Preparers</b>		
Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Jennifer Jardine	Realty Specialist	Project Lead Native American Religious and Other Concerns
Nathaniel West	Supervisory Wildlife Biologist	Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report, Special Status Animal Species, Threatened or Endangered Animal Species, Threatened or Endangered Plant Species
James Blair	Geologist	Paleontology
Bruce Bourcy	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources
<b>Non-BLM Preparers</b>		
Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Amanda Kuenzi	Botanist, Biologist SME Environmental, Inc.	Field survey, Special Status Plant Species analysis, Chapters 1-5, impacts analysis
Kerriane Zdimal	Senior Regulatory Specialist	Chapters 1-5, technical review

	SME Environmental, Inc.	
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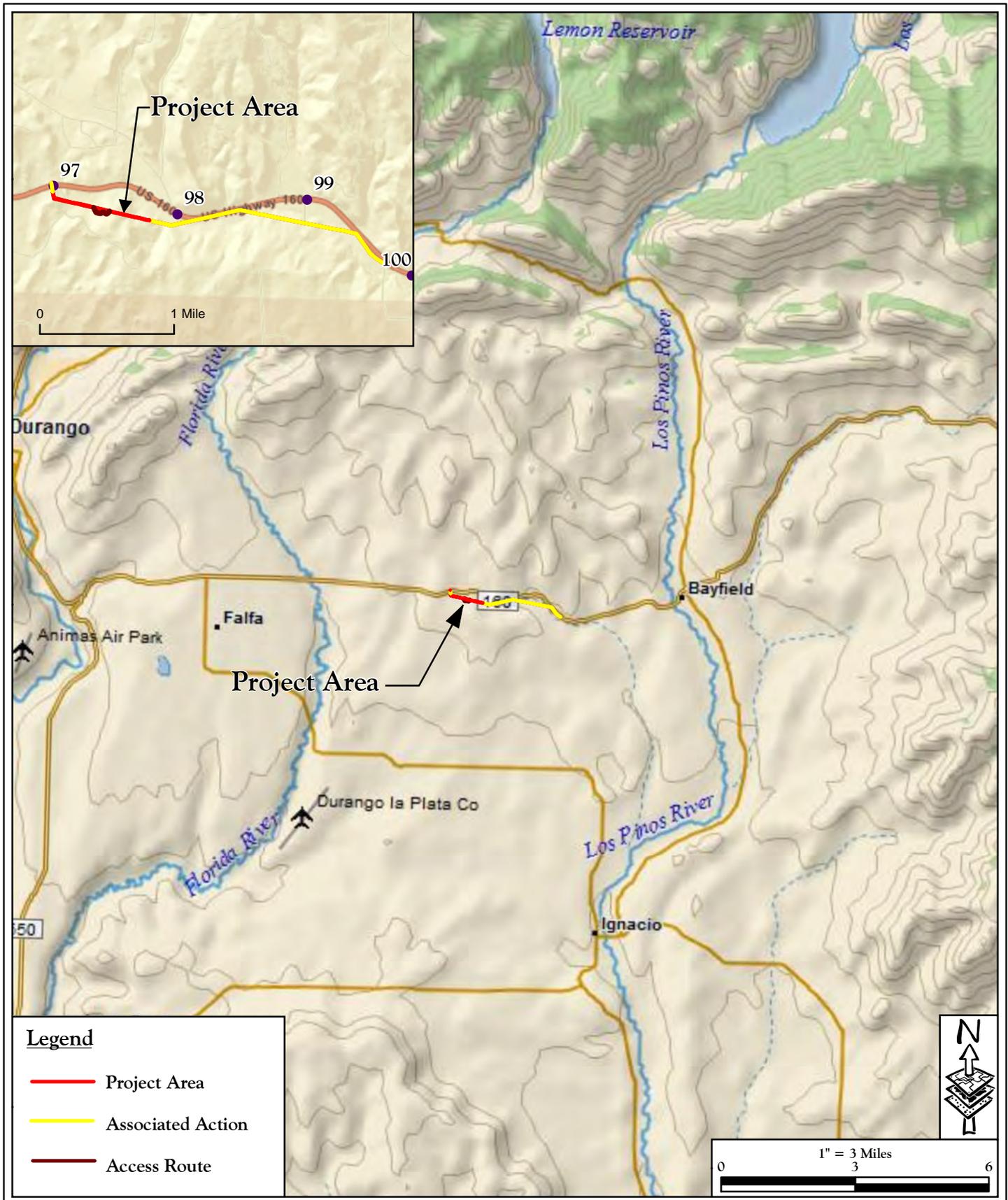
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- USDI/BLM. 2009. Information Bulletin No. CO-2000-14 (November 2009) for the Tres Rios Field Office.

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<b>FIGURE 1</b>	<b>Road/Vicinity Map</b>
<b>FIGURE 2</b>	<b>Project Location Map</b>
<b>FIGURE 3</b>	<b>Soils Map</b>

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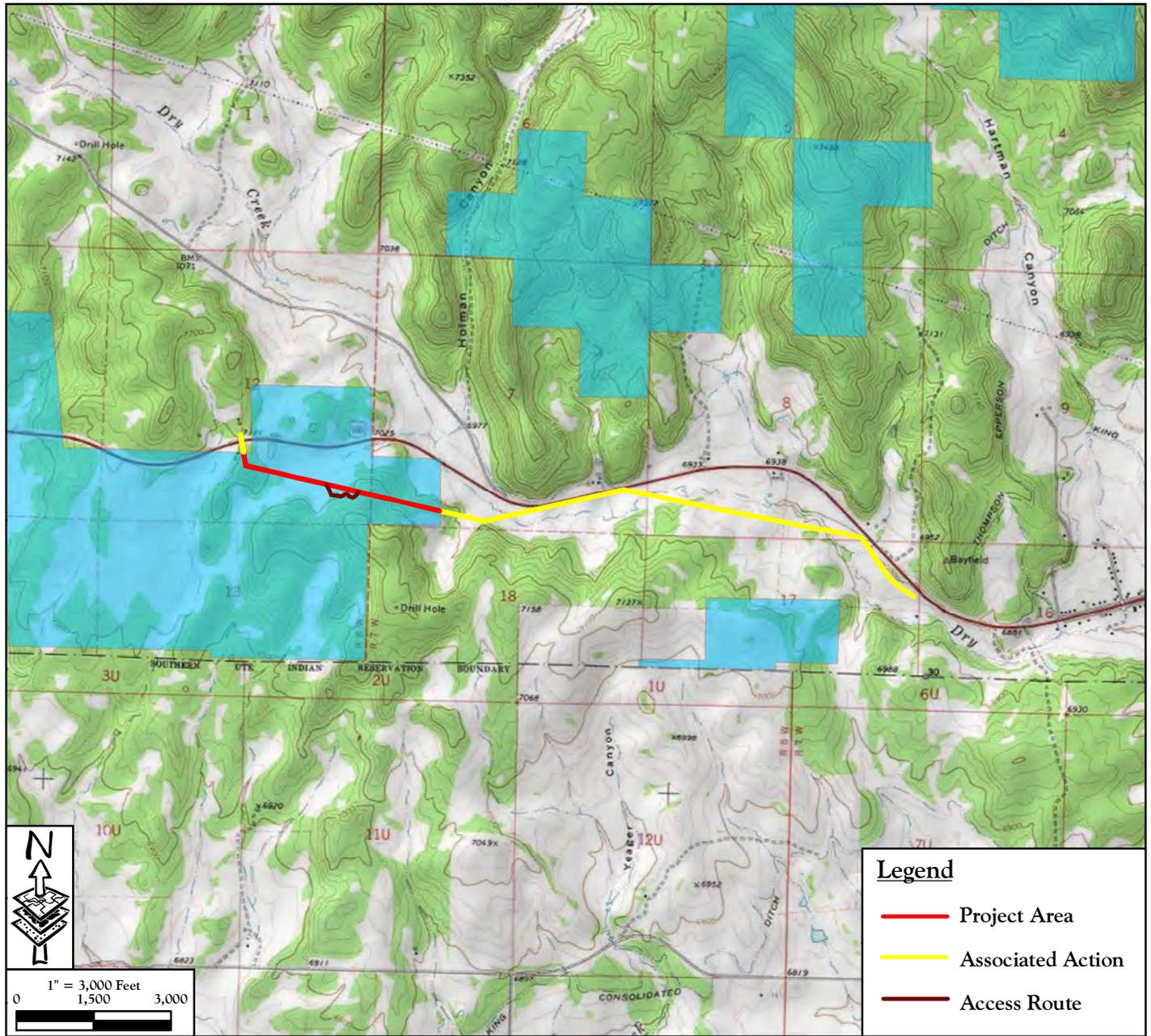
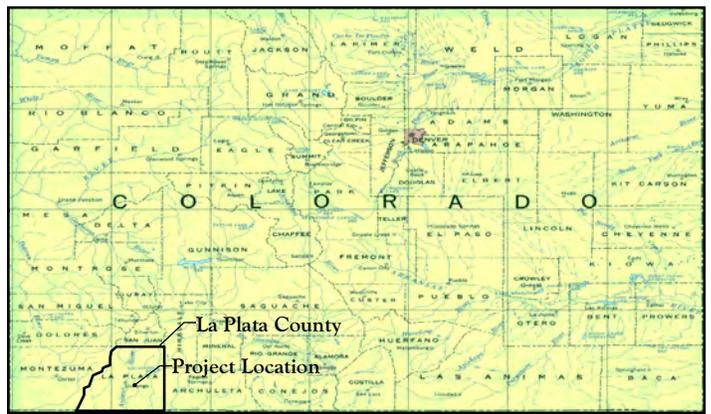
 <p>679 East 2nd Ave. Unit E2 Durango, Colorado 81301 www.sme-env.com (970) 259-9595</p>	<p><b>ROAD/VICINITY MAP</b></p> <p>LPEA POWERLINE ROW RENEWAL AND MODIFICATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT</p>	<p><b>FIGURE 1</b></p> <p>Sources: ESRI, DeLorme, AND, Tele Atlas, First American, ESRI Japan, UNEP-WCMC, USGS, METI, ESRI Hong Kong, ESRI Thailand, Procalcuto Prosis</p>
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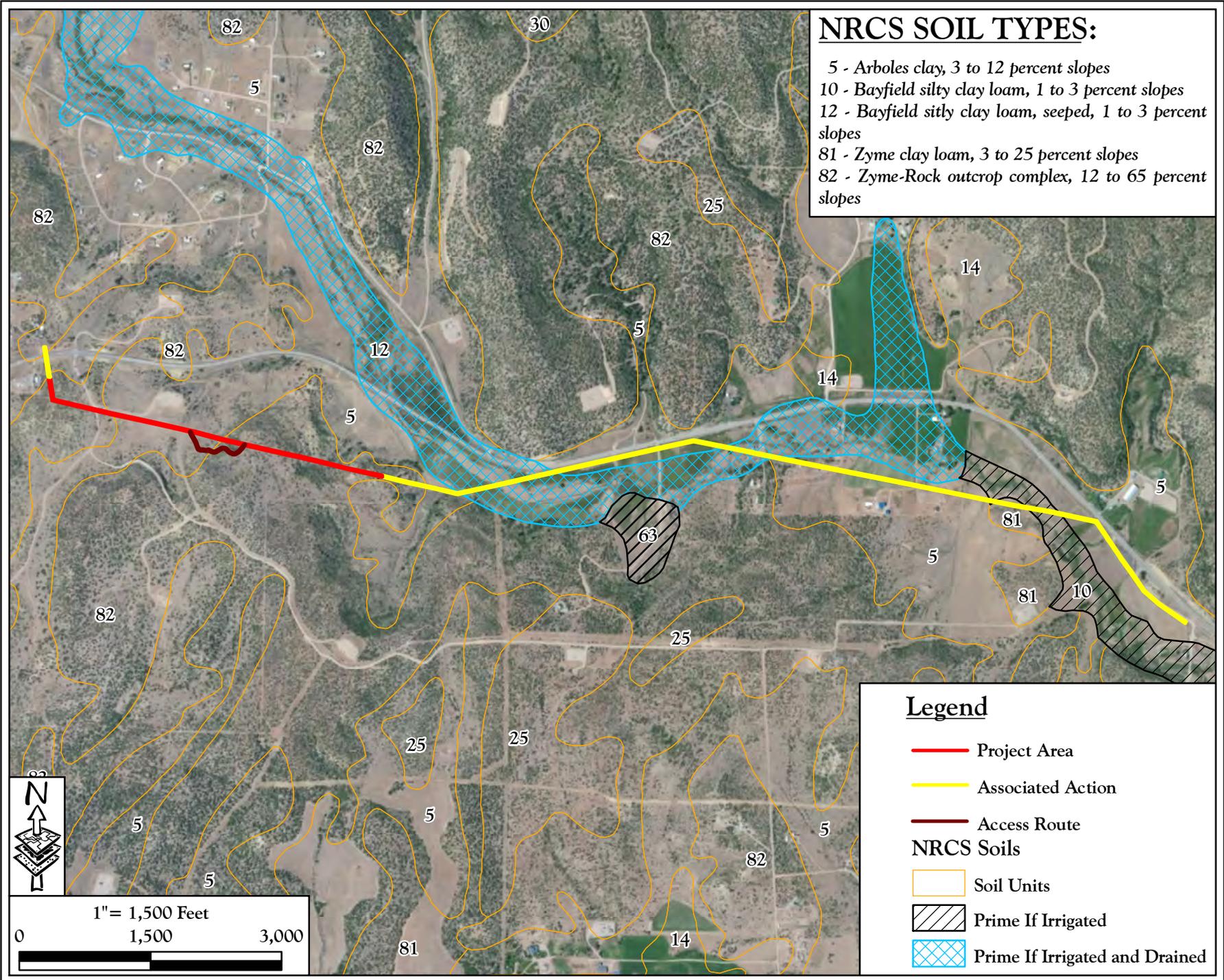
**PROJECT LOCATION:**

Township 34 North, Range 8 West, Section 12  
Township 34 North, Range 7 West, Section 7  
New Mexico Principal Meridian,  
La Plata County, Colorado.

**CENTROID LOCATION:**

Latitude: 37° 13' 24.028" N  
Longitude: 107° 40' 24.754" W





**NRCS SOIL TYPES:**

- 5 - Arboles clay, 3 to 12 percent slopes
- 10 - Bayfield silty clay loam, 1 to 3 percent slopes
- 12 - Bayfield silty clay loam, seeped, 1 to 3 percent slopes
- 81 - Zyme clay loam, 3 to 25 percent slopes
- 82 - Zyme-Rock outcrop complex, 12 to 65 percent slopes

**Legend**

- Project Area
- Associated Action
- Access Route
- NRCS Soils**
- Soil Units
- Prime If Irrigated
- Prime If Irrigated and Drained

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS  
 679 E 2nd Avenue Unit E2  
 Durango, CO 81301-5563  
 (p) 970-259-9595 (f) 970-259-0050



LPEA POWERLINE ROW RENEWAL  
 AND MODIFICATION  
 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Date: 7/24/2014  
 Pro. #: 140012  
 Name: Figure 3  
 Scale: 1" = 1,500'

Sources: ESRI  
 ArcGIS Online  
 and Web Soils  
 Survey

**Figure 3**  
 3

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## **APPENDIX A: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

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# EJView ACS Summary Report



Location:

Study Area:

**Summary of ACS Estimates** 2006 - 2010

Population
Population Density (per sq. mile)
Minority Population
% Minority
Households
Housing Units
Housing Units Built Before 1950
Per Capita Income
Land Area (sq. miles) (Source: SF1)
% Land Area
Water Area (sq. miles) (Source: SF1)
% Water Area

	2006 - 2010 ACS Estimates	Percent	MOE (±)
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**Population by Race**

Total
Population Reporting One Race
White
Black
American Indian
Asian
Pacific Islander
Some Other Race
Population Reporting Two or More Races
Total Hispanic Population
Total Non-Hispanic Population
White Alone
Black Alone
American Indian Alone
Non-Hispanic Asian Alone
Pacific Islander Alone
Other Race Alone
Two or More Races Alone

**Population by Sex**

Male
Female

**Population by Age**

Age 0-4
Age 0-17
Age 18+
Age 65+

**Data Note:** Detail may not sum to totals dues to rounding. Hispanic population can be of any race. N/A means not available.  
**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2006 - 2010.



# EJView ACS Summary Report



Location:

Study Area:

	2006 - 2010 ACS Estimates	Percent	MOE (±)
<b>Population 25+ by Educational Attainment</b>			
Total			
Less than 9th Grade			
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma			
High School Graduate			
Some College, No Degree			
Associate Degree			
Bachelor's Degree or more			
<b>POPULATION AGE 5+ YEARS BY ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH</b>			
Total			
Speak only English			
Non-English at Home <sup>1+2+3+4</sup>			
<sup>1</sup> Speak English "very well"			
<sup>2</sup> Speak English "well"			
<sup>3</sup> Speak English "not well"			
<sup>4</sup> Speak English "not at all"			
<sup>3+4</sup> Speak English "less than well"			
<sup>2+3+4</sup> Speak English "less than very well"			
<b>POPULATION AGE 5+ YEARS BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME</b>			
Total			
Speak only English			
Non-English Speaking			
<b>Population by Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born</b>			
Total			
Europe			
Asia			
Africa			
Oceania			
Americas			
<b>Households by Household Income in 1999</b>			
Household Income Base			
< \$15,000			
\$15,000 - \$25,000			
\$25,000 - \$50,000			
\$50,000 - \$75,000			
\$75,000 +			
<b>Occupied Housing Units by Tenure</b>			
Total			
Owner Occupied			
Renter Occupied			

**Data Note:** Detail may not sum to totals dues to rounding. Hispanic population can be of any race. N/A means not available.

**2006-2010 ACS 5-year Estimates:** The American Community Survey (ACS) summary files provide nation-wide population and housing characteristic data at all Census summary levels down to the Block Group level. This data was collected between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2010. ACS replaces the decennial census sample data, and is not the 2010 Census population counts data. (<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/#fragment-3>)

**Margin of error (MOE):** The MOE provides a measure of the uncertainty in the estimate due to sampling error in the ACS survey. Applying the MOE value yields the confidence interval for the estimate. For example, an estimate value of 50 and +/- MOE of 5 means the true value is between 45 and 55 with a 90 percent certainty ([http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data\\_documentation/Accuracy/MultiyearACSAccuracyofData2010.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/MultiyearACSAccuracyofData2010.pdf)). Maximum MOE is shown for each value within study area.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2006 - 2010.

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**APPENDIX B: FISH AND WILDLIFE CLEARANCE REPORT**

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## FISH AND WILDLIFE CLEARANCE REPORT BLM TRES RIOS FIELD OFFICE

**PROJECT NAME:** LPEA Underground Power line ROW (14-2014-0012-LPEA); LPEA power line ROW Renewal and Modification (14-2014-0011-LPEA)

**Location:** SE ¼, Sec. 12, T. 34 N., R. 8 W.

**Date Submitted:** 2/26/2014

**Wildlife Restriction:** Big game timing restriction, Raptor Timing Restriction, Migratory Birds

Table 1. Survey results.

	A field survey was completed on (date) by (name).		
X	No field survey is required.		
	A field survey is needed, but cannot be completed by required date due to:		
	Inappropriate season	Inadequate lead time	Higher priorities

### SPECIES CONSIDERED

Table 2. Federally listed species for the BLM Tres Rios Field Office based on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 list from the FWS and the quarterly updates received at the Tres Rios Field Office.

Species	Status	Presence	Project Effects	Rationale
Canada lynx	Threatened	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
New Mexico jumping mouse	Proposed	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Gunnison sage-grouse	Proposed	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Gunnison sage-grouse critical habitat	Proposed	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Mexican spotted owl	Threatened	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Southwestern willow flycatcher	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Yellow-billed cuckoo	Candidate	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Bonytail	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Colorado pikeminnow	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Greenback cutthroat trout	Threatened	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Humpback chub	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Razorback sucker	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Pagosa Skyrocket	Endangered	NP	NE	No habitat in project area
Mesa Verde fishhook cactus	Threatened	NP	NE	No habitat in project area

\*Project effect determinations are: no effect (NE); may affect (MA); not likely to adversely affect (NLAA); likely to adversely affect (LAA). Presence determinations are: habitat not present (NP); habitat present species not expected to occur (NS); suspected occurrence (S); known occurrence (K)

Initiation of section 7 consultation with U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not necessary.

**Table 3. Colorado Bureau of Land Management sensitive fish, plant, and wildlife species based on Information Bulletin No. CO-2000-14 (November 2009) for the Tres Rios Field Office.**

Species	Presence	Projects Effects	Rationale
<b>Mammals</b>			
Allen's big-eared bat	S	NI	The proposed project will not disturb any roosting sites.
Big free-tailed bat	NS	NI	Species prefers habitats with rocky landscapes and high cliff faces, may occasionally roost in trees. No roosting habitat will be disturbed.
Fringed myotis	S	NI	No potential roosting sites will be disturbed.
Spotted bat	NS	NI	Species generally associated with high canyons and cliffs with a riparian component. No habitat in project area.
Townsend's big-eared bat	NS	NI	No known mines or caves in project area. No habitat for this species will be disturbed.
Desert Bighorn Sheep	NP	NI	No habitat in the project area
Gunnison's Prairie Dog	NP	NI	No prairie dog colonies in project area
<b>Birds</b>			
American Bald Eagle	NP	NI	No known nest or winter roosts in the project area.
American peregrine Falcon	NP	NI	Species nests on high cliff faces. No habitat in the project area.
Ferruginous hawk	NP	NI	Project area is outside the species known breeding range.
Western Burrowing Owl	NP	NI	Habitat in project area is pinyon-juniper. No habitat for this species in the project area.
Colombian sharp-tailed grouse	NP	NI	No habitat for this species in the project area. Area is outside known occurrences for this species.
Northern goshawk	NP	NI	No habitat in the project area that would support breeding requirement for Northern Goshawks.
White-faced ibis	NP	NI	No habitat in the project area, species requires fresh water marshes, pond edges or irrigated lands.
Brewer's sparrow	NS	NI	Species is a sagebrush obligate. Habitat in the project area is pinyon-juniper with scatter sagebrush. No sagebrush will be disturbed as a result of the proposal.
Black swift	NP	NI	Species requires running streams with high waterfalls. No habitat in project area.
<b>Fish, Herps and Amphibians</b>			
Bluehead sucker	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area
Colorado River cutthroat trout	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area
Flannelmouth sucker	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area
Roundtail chub	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area
Desert spiny lizard	NS	NI	Habitat is near flowing streams or arroyos, no habitat in project area.
Longnose leopard lizard	NS	NI	Habitat is available in the project area, however no individual have been documented in the area. No habitat will be disturbed as a result of the proposed action
Canyon treefrog	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area
Northern leopard frog	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area

Boreal toad	NP	NI	No streams or riparian systems in project area
<b>Insects</b>			
Great basin silverspot butterfly	NP	NI	Habitat is associated with spring seeps and mashes with flowing water. No habitat in the project area.

**Table 4. Birds of Conservation Concern**

Species	Presence	Projects Effects	Rationale
Golden eagle	S	NI	No known nests or roosts in project area. Raptor timing restriction will project any unknown nests
Prairie falcon	NP	NI	No nesting habitat in project area, species nests on cliff faces in open country.
Flammulated owl	NP	NI	Species is a cavity nester in open pine forests or forests with similar features
Lewis' woodpecker	NS	NI	Habitat is available for this species in the project area. No habitat will be disturbed a result of the proposed action.
Willow flycatcher	NP	NI	Species nests in riparian areas, no habitat in project area
Gray vireo	S	NI	Habitat is available for this species in the project area. No habitat will be disturbed a result of the proposed action.
Pinyon jay	S	NI	Habitat is available for this species in the project area. No habitat will be disturbed a result of the proposed action.
Juniper titmouse	S	NI	Habitat is available for this species in the project area. No habitat will be disturbed a result of the proposed action.
Brown-capped rosy-finch	NP	NI	Alpine species, no habitat in the project area
Cassin's finch	NP	NI	
Grace's warbler	NP	NI	Species prefers habitats with ponderosa pine and oak understory. No habitat in project area.

**Only species in Bird Conservation Region 16 that may occur on the Tres Rios Field Office are addressed in table 4**

**Presence determinations** are: habitat not present (NP); habitat present species not expected to occur (NS); suspected occurrence (S); known occurrence (K)

**Project Impacts** are: No Impact (NI), May impact individuals or habitat (MIH)

**MITIGATION MEASURES:**

Big Game Species	Activity	Date	Stipulation Applies (yes/no)
Pronghorn	Production	May 1 – July 1 <sup>st</sup>	No
	Winter Concentration	Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Apr.30 <sup>th</sup>	No
Mule Deer	Production	No dates for mule deer production due to species biology	
	Winter Concentration	Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Apr.30 <sup>th</sup>	Yes
Elk	Production	May 15 <sup>th</sup> – June 30 <sup>th</sup>	No
	Winter Concentration	Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Apr.30 <sup>th</sup>	Yes
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep	Production	April 15 <sup>th</sup> – June 30 <sup>th</sup>	No
	Winter Concentration	Nov 1 <sup>st</sup> – Apr. 15 <sup>th</sup>	No
Desert Bighorn Sheep	Production	Feb. 1 <sup>st</sup> – May 1 <sup>st</sup>	No
	Winter Concentration	Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Apr. 15 <sup>th</sup>	No
<b>Bats</b>			<b>Stipulation Applies (yes/no)</b>
Maternity Sites	Timing Restriction Apr. 15 <sup>th</sup> – Sept. 1 <sup>st</sup>		No
Swarming Sites	Timing Restriction Aug 15 <sup>th</sup> – Oct. 30 <sup>th</sup> (30 min. prior sunset to 30 min after sunrise)		No
Winter Hibernaculum	Timing Restriction Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup> – May 15 <sup>th</sup>		No
<b>Gunnison sage-grouse</b>			<b>Stipulation Applies (yes/no)</b>
Lek Sites	No surface occupancy 0.6 miles		No
Winter Concentration	No surface occupancy on winter concentration areas		No

Areas			
Nesting habitat	Timing Restriction Mar. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Jun. 30 <sup>th</sup>	No	
Winter habitat	Timing Restriction Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup>	No	
Noise	Timing Restriction Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup> – May 15 <sup>th</sup> Noise may not negatively impact lek sites	No	
<b>Sharp-tailed grouse</b>			
Lek sites	No surface occupancy w/in 0.4 miles	No	
Nesting habitat	Timing Restriction Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup> – Jul. 30 <sup>th</sup> w/in 1.25 miles of a lek location	No	
Winter habitat	Timing Restriction Dec. 1 <sup>st</sup> – Mar. 30 <sup>th</sup>	No	
Noise	Timing Restriction Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup> – May 15 <sup>th</sup> Noise may not negatively impact lek sites	No	
<b>Migratory Birds</b>		<b>Stipulation Applies (yes/no)</b>	
Habitat Type	Timing Limitation		
Pinyon-Juniper	May 1 – June 30	Yes	
Sagebrush	May 1 – June 30	No	
Spruce-Fir	June 1 – July 30	No	
Ponderosa Pine	May 15 – July 15	No	
Oakbrush	May 15 – July 15	No	
<b>Raptors</b>			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Buffer</b>	<b>Stipulation Applies (yes/no)</b>
Golden Eagle	Timing Restriction Feb. 1 – July 15	½ mile	Yes
	No surface occupancy	½ mile	No
Bald Eagle	Timing Restriction Feb. 1 – July 15	½ mile	No
	No surface occupancy	½ mile	No
Bald Eagle Winter Roost	Timing Restriction Nov. 15 – Mar. 15	½ mile	No
	No surface occupancy	½ mile	No
Osprey	Timing Restriction Apr. 1 – Aug. 31	¼ mile	No
	No surface occupancy	¼ mile	No
Peregrine Falcon	Timing Restriction Mar. 15 – July 31	½ mile	No
	No surface occupancy	½ mile	No
Northern Goshawk	Timing Restriction Mar. 1 – Aug. 31	½ mile	No
	No surface occupancy	½ mile	No
Burrowing Owl	Timing Restriction Mar. 15 – Aug. 15	¼ mile	No
	No surface occupancy	¼ mile	No
Mexican Spotted Owl	Timing Restriction Mar. 15 – Aug. 31	½ mile of canyon rim.	No
Other Raptors	Timing and NSO varies by species	by species	Yes

### **DISCUSSION:**

The project is located in an area mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a winter concentration area for elk and mule deer. A timing restriction of December 1 through April 30 will mitigate impacts of disturbance on big game from the construction of the new line. Raptors may be nesting in the area. A timing limitation from February through July 31 will cover the nesting time frames for most species. A raptor clearance survey may be conducted if construction is desired in that time frame. A timing limitation from May 1- June 30 will be implemented to protect nesting migratory birds if construction activities will impact and nesting migratory birds. If no vegetation will be removed the timing restriction for migratory birds will not apply. A clearance survey can be conducted if vegetation removal is required during that time frame.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The proposed project will have no impact on species listed under the endangered species act or BLM special status species if the mitigation measures identified below are implemented.

- 1 –Timing limitation – no activity December 1 through April 30 in order to protect big game winter concentrations of elk and mule deer.
- 2—Timing limitation – No activity February 1 through July 31, unless a clearance survey for nesting raptors is completed.
- 3—Timing limitation – No vegetation removal may occur May 1 through June 30 to protect nesting migratory birds.
- 4-- When upgrading or maintaining poles or lines, ensure that poles and lines are built in accordance with APPLIC Guidelines (most recent version).

**SPECIALIST (Signature):**

**Date:**

*/s/ Nathaniel B. West*

20140327

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Nathaniel West  
 Supervisory Wildlife Biologist  
 BLM Tres Rios Field Office

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**APPENDIX C: BLM SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES**

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Table C. Federally-listed plant species

Common name	Scientific name	Designation of other agencies: CNHP Global and State Ranking G_/S_ ; Forest Service FS	Distribution and Habitat	Potential to Occur
Jones' bluestar	<i>Amsonia jonesii</i>	G4/S1	Known from Colorado in Mesa and Montezuma Counties. In dry, open areas with clay, sandy, or gravelly soils, in desert-steppe, rocky gorges and canyons (CNHP 2013).	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no desert-steppes, rocky gorges, or canyons in the project area.
Naturita milkvetch	<i>Astragalus naturitensis</i>	G2G3/S2S3	Known from Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose and San Miguel Counties. Occurs on sandstone mesas, ledges, crevices and slopes in pinyon-juniper woodlands. Elev. 5000-7000 ft. (CNHP 1997)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no sandstone mesas in the project area.
Sleeping Ute milkvetch	<i>Astragalus tortipes</i>	<i>Federal Candidate</i>	Endemic to Colorado (Ute Mountain Ute Reservation, Montezuma Co.). Mixed desert scrub community, on lower slopes of ridges and knolls, in gravels derived from a volcanic intrusion into Mancos Shale. Elev. 5400-5700 ft. (CNHP 1997)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. The project area is above the elevation range for this species.
Valley cateye	<i>Cryptantha gypsophila</i>	G1G2/S1S2	Colorado endemic known from Delta, Mesa, Montrose and San Miguel counties, found on barren, shale substrate (CNHP 2013).	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no barren, shale substrates within the project area.
Fragile rockbrake	<i>Cryptogramma stelleri</i>	G5/S2	Known from San Juan, Archuleta, Grand, Gunnison, Conejos, San Miguel, Summit, and Ouray Counties. Grows in horizontal crevices of moist, shaded limestone cliffs, which tend to be mossy, and are often	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There is no moist, shaded limestone habitat in the project area.

Common name	Scientific name	Designation of other agencies: CNHP Global and State Ranking G_ / S_ ; Forest Service FS	Distribution and Habitat	Potential to Occur
			associated with waterfalls and under shallow rock overhangs. (CNHP 2013)	
Kachina fleabane	<i>Erigeron kachinensis</i>	G2/S1	In Colorado, known from Dolores, Gunnison, Mesa, and Montrose counties. Occurs in wet, saline soils in alcoves, seeps, and hanging gardens on sandstone cliffs and canyon walls (CNHP 2013).	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no alcoves, seeps, or hanging gardens in the project area.
Comb Wash buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum clavellatum</i>	G2/S1	Known from Montezuma County in Colorado. This species is found in fine textured soils, sandy silt to clay silt. Elevation: 4,813 - 6,033 feet (CNHP 2013)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. The project area is above the elevation range for this species.
Lone Mesa snakeweed	<i>Gutierrezia elegans</i>	G1/S1	This species is known only from Dolores County, Colorado. This species is found on outcrops of grayish, argillaceous, bare Mancos shale outcrops with thin soil over the shale. (CNHP 2013)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no bare shale outcrops in the project area.
Pagosa skyrocket	<i>Ipomopsis polyantha</i>	Federal Candidate	Known only from Archuleta county, Fine-textured soils derived from the Mancos Formation. On barren shale; or in ponderosa pine, pinyon-juniper or scrub oak communities. Elev. 6800-7200 ft. (CNHP 1997).	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no barren shale outcrops in the project area.
Pagosa Springs bladderpod	<i>Lesquerella pruinosa</i>	G2/S2; FS	Known from Archuleta and Hinsdale Counties. Occurs on Mancos Shale, open clay barrens surrounded by montane grasslands,	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no barren shale outcrops in the project area.

Common name	Scientific name	Designation of other agencies: CNHP Global and State Ranking G_ / S_ ; Forest Service FS	Distribution and Habitat	Potential to Occur
			sometimes in open Pinus ponderosa stands with Quercus gambelii, it can also be associated with Douglas fir and Englemann spruce communities at the upper limits of its range. Elevational range 6800-8300 ft (CNHP 2013).	
Dolores River skeletonplant	<i>Lygodesmia doloresensis</i>	G1G2/S1	Known from Mesa County in Colorado. Reddish purple, sandy alluvium and colluvium of the Cutler Formation between the canyon walls and the river in juniper, shadscale, and sagebrush communities. 4,475 - 6,125 feet, 1,364 - 1,867 meters (CNHP 2013)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no redding purple sandy soils in the project area, and the project area is above the elevation range for the species.
Eastwood's monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus eastwoodiae</i>	G3G4/S1	Known from Delta, Mesa, Montrose and San Miguel Counties. Shallow caves and seeps on steep canyon walls. Elev. 4700-5800 ft. (CNHP 1997)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no shallow caves, seeps, or steep-walled canyons in the project area. The project area is above the elevation range for the species
Aromatic Indian breadroot	<i>Pedimelum aromaticum</i>	G3/S2	Known from Mesa and Montrose counties. Open pinyon-juniper woodlands, in sandy soils or adobe hills. Elevation: 4,623 - 6,693 feet. (CNHP 2013)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no sandy soils or adobe hills in the project area.
Cushion bladderpod	<i>Physaria pulvinata</i>	G1/S1	Known from San Miguel and Dolores counties. Occurs on widely scattered outcrops of grayish, argillaceous (Mancos) shale. Elevation: 7,543 - 8,487 feet. (CNHP 2013)	None. Not known to occur in La Plata county. There are no shale outcrops in the project area.

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## APPENDIX D: TABLE OF DETERMINATIONS

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**Table D: Determinations**

<b>Determination</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Rationale for Determination*</b>
PI	Cultural Resources	No cultural resource are present that are eligible for listing or currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
NP	Environmental Justice	No minority or low-income groups would be disproportionately affected by health or environmental effects, none are present.
NP	Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	There is no prime farmland within the BLM parcel of the project area. The Proposed Action would cause no impact to prime or unique farmland. However, areas outside of the BLM parcel within the project area are mapped as potential prime farmland, if irrigated. These impacts are discussed in the Cumulative Impacts section.
NP	Floodplains	The project area is in a location determined by FEMA to be outside of the 1% annual chance floodplain. The Proposed Action would not alter the natural topography within the project area and would cause no impacts to floodplains.
PI	Invasive Species/ Noxious Weeds	Ground disturbance, such as the augering involved in installing the power poles, can provide an opportunity for noxious weeds and non-native invasive species to become established and spread. Construction vehicles accessing the ROW could potentially spread noxious weeds and non-native invasive species. Mitigation measures and stipulations identified in the Proposed Action would limit the spread or introduction of noxious weeds.
NI	Lands/Access	During the approximate 6-month construction period, construction vehicles would transverse vegetated areas on BLM and privately held lands to reach power pole locations. After construction is completed, occasional maintenance will be necessary and will be conducted within the LPEA ROW. Impacts would include, but are not necessarily limited to: increased noise, soil compaction, damage to vegetation, and disturbance to wildlife. Mitigation measures addressed in the Proposed Action would result in no impact to lands/access
NI	Migratory Birds	The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report (Appendix B) states that a timing restriction must be implemented to prevent impacts to nesting migratory birds. No vegetation removal may occur from May 1 through June 30. If no vegetation will be removed, then the timing restriction would not apply. If vegetation removal is required during the timing restriction, a clearance survey would be conducted. These mitigation measures would limit impacts to migratory birds. Temporary impacts to migratory birds would include increased noise and disturbance from construction activity. Additional impacts may occur during occasional maintenance of the overhead powerline in the form of human activity and noise from vehicles. Vegetation will be cleared outside peak nesting season or after a migratory bird clearance
PI	Oil and Gas	As previously stated, an underground powerline will be constructed in a separate action to electrify the Dry Creek Federal GU #1 natural gas well pad. This underground powerline would tie into the B141 powerline. This would provide a beneficial impact for oil and gas.
NP	Native American Religious and other Concerns	No Native American religious or other concerns have been identified in association with the proposed action.
NI	NEPA Compliance	The proposed action is in conformance with the following Land Use Plan (LUP): Tres Rios Field Office Resource Management Plan, February 27, 2015. The proposed action would be consistent with the LUP as described in accordance with the Desired Condition (2.19.7) on page II-104. (Section 2.19).
NP	Paleontology	Surveying would be unlikely to conclusively determine whether there are fossil resources beneath each pole location, and any resources that were there would likely be rendered unidentifiable by the action of the auger. Because of this, a

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*
		pre-disturbance survey, or monitoring during excavation would not be necessary. Therefore the project can proceed without further paleontological investigation. If the operator uncovers any significant vertebrate fossils during construction, work would cease at that particular pole location and the BLM would be notified immediately. BLM will then determine how best to record and or preserve the resource (personal communication, James Blair, November 4, 2014). Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to paleontology resources.
NI	Soils	Soil would be removed at each power pole location using an auger, creating a total of approximately 0.004 acre of surface disturbance. Soil compaction may occur where construction vehicles access the project area. Impacts to soil would include temporary reduced capacity for plant growth due to removal and/or disturbance of the soil. Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to soil resources.
NI	Special Status Animal Species	The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report (Appendix B) states that the project would not impact any special status wildlife species. Habitat may be available but disturbance is all existing except 0.6 acres – see wildlife clearance for more information
NP	Special Status Plant Species	No special status plants have potential to occur within the project area; therefore, no impacts would occur to any special status plant species. Based on the Colorado Natural Heritage Program Plant Database there are no known BLM Sensitive populations occurring within the project area.
NI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	The Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report (Appendix B) states that the project would not impact any special status wildlife species.
NP	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	There is no habitat for threatened or endangered plant species within the project area. No impacts to threatened or endangered plant species are anticipated.
NI	Vegetation	Surface disturbance on BLM land will be limited to 0.004 acre in the areas where power poles are erected. Additional damage to vegetation will occur where construction vehicles would drive on vegetated surfaces. Revegetation would be completed on all disturbed surfaces, as required by the BLM TRFO. Mitigation identified in the Proposed Action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in negligible impacts to vegetation.
NI	Visual Resources	Visual impacts to the project area will not change from the existing conditions. The upgraded powerline would have the same visual impact as the existing line. The Proposed Action will not create additional impacts to visual resources.
PI	Wildlife-terrestrial	The project is located in an area mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a winter concentration area for elk and mule deer. A timing restriction of December 1 through April 30 will mitigate impacts of disturbance on big game from the construction of the new line. Raptors may be nesting in the area. A timing limitation from February through July 31 will cover the nesting time frames for most species. A raptor clearance survey may be conducted if construction is desired in that time frame, in place of a timing restriction. A timing limitation from May 1- June 30 will be implemented to protect nesting migratory birds if construction activities will impact and nesting migratory birds. If no vegetation will be removed the timing restriction for migratory birds will not apply. A clearance survey for nesting migratory birds can be conducted if vegetation

<b>Determination</b>	<b>Resource</b>	<b>Rationale for Determination*</b>
		removal is required during that time frame, in place of a timing restriction. These mitigation measures are discussed in the Fish and Wildlife Clearance Report, included in Appendix B.
NP	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No wetlands or riparian areas on BLM land will be impacted by the Proposed Action. Impacts created by the connected action are permitted under Nationwide Permit 12, as discussed in Section 3.1.20.

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions

NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required

PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA

NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section D of the DNA form. The Rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

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**APPENDIX E: PHOTO DOCUMENTATION**

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**Select Photos from May 29, 2014 Site Visit**  
Photos taken by Amanda Kuenzi - SME Field Biologist



Photo 1 was taken near the western terminus of the project area facing west. This photo shows piñon-juniper woodland within the project area.



Photo 2 was taken at pole 29.2, facing west. The access route will tie into the powerline alignment at this location. This photo shows piñon-juniper woodland within the project area.

**Select Photos from May 29, 2014 Site Visit**  
Photos taken by Amanda Kuenzi - SME Field Biologist



Photo 3 was taken from pole 26.1 facing west. This photo shows piñon-juniper woodland habitat with a strong shrub component within the project area.



Photo 4 was taken from pole 24.2 facing east. This photo shows mixed grassland, sagebrush shrubland, and piñon-juniper woodland habitat within the project area.

**Select Photos from May 29, 2014 Site Visit**  
Photos taken by Amanda Kuenzi - SME Field Biologist



Photo 5 was taken at pole 23 facing west. This photo shows grassland habitat within the project area.



Photo 6 was taken at pole 23 facing east. This photo shows wetland habitat within the project area.