

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Letter 1: Loretta Moffatt Rossi

P.O. Box 532
 Cedarville, Ca. 96104
 June 1, 2001

RECEIVED
 NAIL ROOM
 2001 JUN -6 PM 1:27
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

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To: Mary Caggett, Team Leader
 Re: Falcon to Lander 345KV Transmission Project

This letter concerns private land in Crescent Valley. The legal description is: N/W 1/4 of the N/W 1/4 of Sec. 19, T 31N, Range 48E.

1-1 [With all of my heart, I encourage you to omit Crescent Valley as an alternative route for the above Project.

1-2 [Those horrible transmission lines ruin property and the value of same.

1-1
 Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

- 2 - Rossi

1-2
(cont.)

I am a poor woman who has been trying for years to reap the rewards I'm entitled to receive. Currently, a large company is cheating me out of the geothermal royalty I am entitled to receive.

Your Project proposed would make matters worse for me.

1-3

I strongly urge you to prevent this project to cross any portion of my 40 acres (a whole Township) of land, for which I have such high hopes.

1-2

Chapter 3.15, Social and Economic Values, of the EIS analyzes the project's potential effects on property values of private land owners on pages 3.15-10 and 3.15-11.

1-3

Comment noted. The BLM's preferred alternative, the Pine Valley (a) route, would not cross Ms. Rossi's property.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

-3- Kesse

Cordially,

*Loretta Meffatt Kessi
456 Hayes St.
Cedarville, Ca. 96104*

COMMENT LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
 U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, SACRAMENTO
 CORPS OF ENGINEERS
 1325 J STREET
 SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814-2922

REPLY TO
 ATTENTION OF

2001 JUN 25 PM 2:18
 2001 JUN 18

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Regulatory Branch (200125063)(FEC)

Bureau of Land Management
 ATTN: Kenneth Bailey
 Battle Mountain Field Office
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Dear Mr. Bailey:

I am responding to your request for comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Sierra Pacific Power Company's (SPPC) Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project prepared by your office, (1790/1600 N-63162).

The Corps of Engineers jurisdiction within the project area is under the authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the discharge of dredged or fill material into, and excavation within, waters of the United States. Waters of the United States include, but are not limited to, the following: perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, ponds, as well as wetlands in marshes, wet meadows, and seeps. Based on the DEIS, SPPC's Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project area supports waters of the United States, including perennial and intermittent drainages, and wetlands. The Corps considers an ephemeral channel a jurisdictional water if the channel can show evidence that it supports enough flow to consistently maintain a bed and bank channel and are a part of the surface water tributary system.

While we have been unable to provide your agency a detailed review, we offer the following comments:

- 2-1 [1. The DEIS does not contain enough information for us to determine the jurisdictional status of all drainages shown within the project area. Project features that would occur from development within the study area that result in the discharge of fill material into waters of the United States will require Department of the Army authorization prior to initiating work.
- 2-2 [2. It is likely that the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project can qualify for Nationwide Permit 12 for Utility Line Activities, provided the project can meet the conditions of this permit. A copy is enclosed.

RESPONSES

Letter 2: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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2-1

Discussion of requirements for compliance with the Clean Water Act related to potential alteration of or discharges into waters of the U.S. is provided on page 3.3-1 of the EIS under Regulatory Framework, as well as on pages 3.4-2, -3, and -9. Prior to construction, Sierra Pacific Power Company (SPPC) would be required to delineate jurisdictional wetlands and other waters of the United States and coordinate with USACE to obtain proper permit authorization. This would be included as a requirement in the BLM right-of-way grant. Detailed avoidance and mitigation measures would be provided in a Construction, Operation and Maintenance (COM) Plan that would be prepared for the Falcon to Gonder project and approved by BLM.

2-2

Comment noted. SPPC has begun coordinating with USACE to confirm that this would be the appropriate permit to comply with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This is included in the list of permits provided on page 1-17 of the EIS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

2

If you have any questions, please write to Shelly Carter at our Nevada Field Office, C. Clifton Young Federal Building, 300 Booth Street, Room 2103, Reno, Nevada 89509, telephone (775) 784-5304, FAX (775) 784-5306. We appreciate the opportunity to be included in your review process.

Sincerely,

Nancy Kang
Chief, Nevada Regulatory Office

Enclosure

COMMENT LETTER



Truckee Donner Public Utility District

RECEIVED
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2001 JUL 30 PM 2:29

July 27, 2001

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Directors
Joseph R. Aguera
J. Ron Hemig
James A. Maass
Patricia S. Sutton
Neilson Van Gundy
General Manager
Peter L. Holzmeister

Mary Craggett, Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89520-1420

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RE: Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project, N-63162

Dear Ms. Craggett,

3-1

This letter is written to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project. Truckee Donner Public Utility District (TDPUD) supports the Project and we are pleased to provide specific comments as to the critical and strategic importance of this project for the benefit of the customers of TDPUD and other energy users in the western United States.

3-2

Truckee Donner Public Utility District is located in Northeastern California and serves 10,534 electric customers. TDPUD purchases electric energy from various generation sources in the West. This energy is transported across transmission lines and delivered to electric substations near Truckee, California. Sierra Pacific Power Company's electric transmission system at present is highly constrained and has insufficient transmission import capacity to serve the needs of all customers within their electric transmission control area.

3-3

TDPUD requested transmission import from Sierra Pacific Power Company, and due to the prior transmission rights had been unable to secure firm import rights until 1997. The construction of the Alturas 345kV Transmission Project completed in December of 1997 allowed sufficient firm energy import to meet the majority of TDPUD's transmission needs. However, the transmission constraints continue to persist relative to the points of receipt on Sierra's system. The continued growth in Northern Nevada, Northeastern California and the region will further strain the transmission system over time and absent a significant increment of transmission capacity the region will be hampered in obtaining reliable and competitive long term energy supplies.

TDPUD has provided electric service to the community for over 70 years and dramatic changes in the industry has required TDPUD to secure competitive energy supplies for the last 5 years. Absent the ability to access generation sources in a variety of Western regions, the energy supply in the region is limited. The electric industry can best

P. O. Box 309 – Truckee, CA 96160 – Phone 530-587-3896 – www.tdpud.org

RESPONSES

Letter 3: Truckee Donner Public Utility District

3-1

Comment noted.

3-2

Comment noted.

3-3

Comment noted. Please refer to Chapter 1 of the EIS, which discusses the purpose and need for the project.

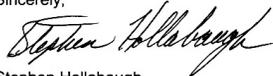
COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

- 3-4 [maximize the use of existing facilities to reduce costs. The Western United States has a variety of generation resources and the energy demand varies both seasonally and regional temperatures. Electric transmission lines provide the ability to use the energy where it is needed and improve the overall efficiency of the energy industry.
- 3-5 [The ability to export power from Northern Nevada to other markets is important as well. When demand is not high in the area but is high in neighboring regions, the generation located in Sierra Pacific's transmission control area can be made available. This provides energy to other areas and provides revenue and reduces cost to the customers. Reciprocally generation in other states can provide energy supply to Northern Nevada and California reducing overall cost to utilities in neighboring states.
- 3-6 [The Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project is a good transmission solution. The existing 345kV Falcon Substation located east of Carlin Nevada can be utilized to tie to Gonder Substation near Ely, Nevada, which has two existing 230kV transmission lines connected to Utah. The new Project will provide a significant overall improvement to the Western transmission grid. The seasonal demand differences between the Great Basin and the Northwest and the diversity of generation sources improves the overall energy picture in the region.
- 3-7 [TDPUD has been active in the regional energy market and operations for many years and believes the Project benefits are of critical importance to the region. Environmental impacts should and can be mitigated, and by utilizing the existing utility infrastructure presently in place, the Project obviates other impacts that will be required absent improved transmission.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and support the completion of this Project.

Sincerely,



Stephen Hollabaugh
 Assistant General Manager
 Truckee Donner Public Utility District

Cc: Doug Hunter – UAMPS
 John S. Berdow – Sierra Pacific
 Connie Westadt – Sierra Pacific
 Tom Parker – Energy Source
 Margaret McGoldrick – Spiegel McDiarmid

P. O. Box 309 – Truckee, CA 96160 – Phone 530-587-3896 – www.tdpud.org

- 3-4
 Comment noted. Please refer to Chapter 1 of the EIS, which discusses the purpose and need for the project.
- 3-5
 Comment noted. Please refer to Chapter 1 of the EIS, which discusses the purpose and need for the project.
- 3-6
 Comment noted. Please refer to Chapter 1 of the EIS, which discusses the purpose and need for the project.
- 3-7
 Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

Newmont Mining Corporation

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2001 AUG -1 AM 10: 37
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

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Mary Craggett, Project Manager
United States Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, Nevada
89820

July 31, 2001

Dear Ms. Craggett,

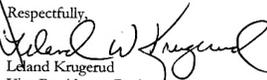
4-1 [The employees and management of Newmont Mining Corporation express their collective support for the Falcon-Gonder 345 kV Transmission Project, as proposed by Sierra Pacific Power Company in the May 2001 Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan Amendments.

4-2 [As demands for power and power generation grow throughout the West, we encourage creative and effective solutions to meet our region's present and future power needs. We believe that the expansion of power importing capabilities will sustain the region's economy and provides greater potential for stable growth in the years to come. SPPCo's 1998-2017 Electric Resource Plan states that increased capacity is needed to serve our region as demand in adjacent areas and limited generation opportunities make increased importation capacity essential. In fact, the company estimates that existing infrastructure and delivery capacity could fail as soon as 2003.

4-3 [Any addition to northeast Nevada's power supply options is welcome and will benefit large and small consumers alike. Besides increasing electrical power supply to the local market, connecting the Falcon sub-station in Boulder Valley to the Gonder sub-station opens new opportunities for possible importation of power from larger southern markets, including Palo Verde and others.

4-4 [As the largest private employer in the region, we recommend approval of the proposed Falcon-Gonder Transmission Project. The completion of this project will directly impact our ability to remain a vital part of the regional economy and our local communities.

Respectfully,


Leland Krugerud
Vice President - Business Affairs
North American Operations

Cc: Sierra Pacific Power Co.

LK/las

RESPONSES

Letter 4: Newmont Mining Corporation

4-1
Comment noted.

4-2
Comment noted. Please refer to Chapter 1 of the EIS, which discusses the purpose and need for the project.

4-3
Comment noted.

4-4
Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

R. MICHAEL TURNIPSEED, P.E.
 Director
 Department of Conservation
 and Natural Resources

PAMELA B. WILCOX
 Administrator

KENNY C. GUINN
 Governor



STATE OF NEVADA
 DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Division of State Lands

State Land Office
 State Land Use Planning Agency
 Address Reply to
 Division of State Lands
 333 W. Nye Lane, Room 118
 Carson City, Nevada 89706-0857
 Phone (775) 687-4363
 Fax (775) 687-3783

August 8, 2001

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heather Elliott, State Clearinghouse
 FROM: Mike Del Grosso, Deputy Administrator
 SUBJECT: Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project DEIS and RMP
 Amendments (SAI# E2001-163- Due 8-10-01)

This agency has reviewed subject DEIS and offer the following:

The State of Nevada Department of Prisons has a maximum security prison located on a site in Sections 35 and 36, T.18 N., R. 62 E. and Section 31, T.18 N., R. 63 E. The prison is in Smith Valley, southerly of Bothwick Road, approximately 4 miles northwest of Hercules Gap. It is difficult to determine from the maps included in the DEIS how close the powerline will be to the site occupied by the prison, or if the powerline will actually extend over a portion of the prison "buffer" area.

The Division of State Lands, and likely the Department of Prisons, will need a map showing the actual location of the powerline in the vicinity of the prison to determine if the powerline could have an impact on the prison (all alternatives utilize this segment). In addition, the Department of Prisons may wish to be notified of any construction activity or survey work that will occur in proximity to the prison site for security purposes.

5-1

(09) 1151

RESPONSES

Letter 5: Nevada Division of State Lands

5-1

BLM has provided a map to Deputy Administrator Mike Del Grosso of the Division of State Lands showing the proximity of the proposed transmission line in relation to the prison. In response to this comment letter, the following text has been added to the EIS on page 3.13-17 under Table 3.13-7:

“As indicated in Table 3.13-7, the Nevada Division of State Lands holds a BLM land use authorization near Segment J for the operation of the State of Nevada Department of Prisons’ maximum security prison, which is located approximately four miles northwest of Hercules Gap. The Segment J portion of the transmission line would be approximately 6,000 feet from the prison fence and approximately 900 feet from the prison property at its closest point. Construction and operation of the transmission line would not significantly impact land uses at the prison. However, for security purposes, the State Department of Prisons has asked to be notified in advance of transmission line construction or survey activity near the prison.

Impact Land Use-2: Security Concerns about Construction and Surveying Activities near Prison

To address security concerns related to project construction and survey activities near the State’s maximum security prison north of Segment J, the following mitigation measure would be required to address this concern.

Mitigation Measure Land Use-2

SPPC would be required to notify the State of Nevada Department of Prisons in writing prior to conducting project construction or maintenance activities within 1-1/2 miles of the prison in Smith Valley. If surveying is required prior to construction or maintenance, notification would occur for this associated activity.

COMMENT LETTER

PETER G. MORROS, Director
 ALLEN BIAGGI, Administrator
 (775) 687-4670
 TDD 687-4678
 Administration
 Water Pollution Control
 Facsimile 687-5856
 Mining Regulation and Reclamation
 Facsimile 684-5256

STATE OF NEVADA
 KENNY C. GUINN
 Governor



Waste Management
 Corrective Actions
 Federal Facilities
 Air Quality
 Water Quality Planning
 Facsimile 687-6396

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
 DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

333 W. Nye Lane, Room 138
 Carson City, Nevada 89706-0851

June 5, 2001

CLEARINGHOUSE COMMENTS

NDEP # 2001-133
 SAI NV # E2001-163

TITLE: BLM - EA/RMP for Falcon to Gondor 345kV Powerline

The Division of Environmental Protection has reviewed the aforementioned State Clearinghouse item and has the following comments:

- 6-1 [The project applicant will require an air quality surface disturbance permit for each disturbance of 5 or more acres from the Bureau of Air Quality. Pursuant to NAC 445B.365, an ongoing program to best practical methods must be used to control the dust from any surface disturbance (be it roads, construction etc). The project applicant will also be required to secure a water pollution control temporary rolling stock permit from the Bureau of Water Pollution Control.
- 6-2 [Dewatering may also be required for construction, access roads and staging areas. A stormwater permit (NPDES) may also be needed for this project.
- 6-3 [
- 6-4 [

David R. Cowperthwaite
 David R. Cowperthwaite
 Clearinghouse Coordinator
 Division of Environmental Protection

RESPONSES

Letter 6: Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

6-1
 SPPC would obtain required air quality surface area disturbance permit(s) prior to construction as indicated on page 1-18 of the EIS (under section 1.5 Permits). Please also refer to the Air Quality Regulatory Framework section on page 3.12-1.

6-2
 In addition to the mitigation measures stated in the EIS on pages 3.12-8 and 3.12-9, SPPC would include a dust control plan with best management practices in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan (COM Plan), which would be prepared for the project. The dust control plan also would be submitted to the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection by SPPC as part of its air quality permit application.

6-3
 SPPC would obtain a temporary rolling stock permit prior to construction.

6-4
 Mitigation measures associated with dewatering are discussed in the EIS in Section 3.2 (on page 3.2-12) and Section 3.3 (on page 3.3-16). Dewatering activities also would be discussed in the COM Plan, as part of the stream crossing, springs, and wetland protection plan and the soil conservation and erosion/dust control plan. The stormwater permit (NPDES) would be obtained by SPPC prior to construction.

COMMENT LETTER



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Reston, Virginia 20192

RECEIVED
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2001 AUG 20 AM 11:53
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

In Reply Refer To:
Mail Stop 423

AUG 17 2001

MEMORANDUM

To: Mary Craggett, BLM Battle Mountain Field Office
Battle Mountain, Nevada

From: James F. Devine *James F. Devine*
Senior Advisor for Science Applications

Subject: Review of Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has reviewed the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and offers the following comments.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Page 3.4-17, Chapter 3: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, 3.4 Vegetation, Impacts Common to all Route Alternatives, Impact Vegetation – 5: Impacts to Woodland Species with Commercial Value, Mitigation Measure vegetation-5, bullet 2:

The Draft EIS states “[f]ollowing construction, pinyon and juniper trees would be seeded...to restore woodland species to pre-construction tree densities...” The Draft EIS also mentions that the pinyon-juniper woodlands are a significant roosting component in the habitat of the ferruginous hawk, a species given special-status (p. 3.7-13).

No indication, however, is given about how the seeding mitigation measure will be undertaken. No mention was made of the pinyon and juniper species to be seeded, although native species *Pinus monophylla* and *Juniperus monosperma* or *J. occidentalis*, respectively, might be most appropriate for the project location. Each of these species has its own seed germination requirements, not the least of which is adequate soil moisture availability. Perhaps it would be cost effective to consider planting saplings of these species, and ensuring adequate moisture for growth.

7-1

RESPONSES

Letter 7: U.S. Geological Survey

7-1

SPPC would spread seeds to encourage growth of native brush and grasses under the transmission line. Specific details for revegetation and reseeded of pinyon-juniper woodlands in appropriate areas would be provided in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan (COM Plan). The COM plan would outline the seeding and planting program, including seed mixes and planting densities by plant community to be restored and would be approved by the BLM. SPPC's approach to revegetation would emphasize conservation and enhancement of native vegetation, supplemental seeding and control of invasive weeds and erosion. SPPC does not propose to transplant trees or plant container stock.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

2.

Page 3.4-19 and 3.4-20, Chapter 3: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, 3.4 Vegetation, Wetlands and Riparian Communities, Impact Vegetation 7: Possible Short-Term Disturbance of Other Waters of the United States and Mitigation Measure Vegetation 7:

The Draft EIS states that nearly all drainages in areas of the proposed project location are ephemeral and do not support "...woody riparian vegetation, sensitive species or critical habitat." but that disturbed exposed slopes will be stabilized to encourage pre-construction vegetation. The report mentions use in these areas of "...nonvegetative material that would bind the soil initially and break down within a few years." The Draft EIS, however, does not indicate what that nonvegetative material might be, although it goes on to say "If more aggressive erosion control treatments are needed...., geotextile mats, excelsior blankets, or other soil stabilization products could be used."

7-2

One effective means of amending soils for the purpose of re-establishing vegetation is to sow the disturbed area with a legume, such as vetch (for example, *Vicia americana*) or clover (for example, *Trifolium pratense*). Although it is expected that both of these species will be short-lived because of the arid/semiarid environmental conditions, both plants have fibrous, soil-stabilizing, root systems, and both legumes have root nodules that contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this Draft EIS.

Copy to: Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

7-2

The COM Plan that would be prepared for the project would include a stream crossing and wetland protection plan, reclamation and habitat restoration plan. These plans would contain specific information regarding the restoration of streambanks with or without associated wetlands after construction.

BLM prefers revegetating with native indigenous plant species whenever possible. However, sometimes nonnative species must be used because faster growing nonnatives are needed to prevent potential noxious weed invasion.

The use of non-native, nonpersistent plants or plant material (e.g., crested wheatgrass, forage kochia, biodegradable wood or straw matting) are options that may be used for the temporary stabilization of erosive stream banks. The use of legumes would be considered. However, the actual method of erosion control applied in the field would be chosen on a case-by-case basis from a list of pre-approved methods on site by a qualified compliance inspector and BLM field monitor in cooperation with the construction contractor.

COMMENT LETTER



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

NEVADA FISH AND WILDLIFE OFFICE
 1340 FINANCIAL BOULEVARD, SUITE 234
 RENO, NEVADA 89502-7147

August 20, 2001
 File No. BLM 4-5

Memorandum

To: Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Battle Mountain Field Office,
 Battle Mountain, Nevada (Attn: M. Craggett)

From: Field Supervisor, Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office, Reno, Nevada

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement-Falcon to Gondor 345 kV Transmission
 Project, Eureka, Elko, Lander, and White Pine Counties, Nevada

We have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Falcon to Gondor 345 kV Transmission Project. This DEIS analyzes the environmental impacts associated with five route alternatives, as well as the No Action alternative, for a proposal to construct a new transmission line that would extend approximately 165 to 185 miles between the Falcon substation located west of Dunphy, Nevada and the Gondor substation located north of Ely, Nevada by the Sierra Pacific Power Company. The line would be supported by 725 to 820 tubular steel H-frame structures and angle towers that would vary in height above ground from 75 to 130 feet. Expansion of existing and construction of additional facilities is also proposed at both substations. Sierra Pacific Power Company has applied for a right-of-way grant from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to construct, operate, and maintain the project on Federal public lands. This document also analyzes the environmental impacts of amendments to appropriate BLM Resource Management Plans (RMP) that may be necessary as a part of the proposed action. Project construction is scheduled to begin in May 2002 and be completed by June 2003.

The following comments and recommendations are provided for your consideration.

RESPONSES

Letter 8: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

CHAPTER 2. DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Detailed Analysis

8-1

Highway 305 Planning Corridor, Page 2-30. It is stated that this alternative was eliminated from further analysis due to wetlands located along this corridor that were apparently unknown when first proposed in the 1980's. We believe further explanation is needed for its elimination as a reasonable alternative because it was proposed as a planning corridor along State Route 305, a currently disturbed area. Without providing the amount of wetlands (and possibly other sensitive resources) that could be impacted along this planning corridor it is impossible to compare with the alternatives proposed which will also impact wetlands in addition to other sensitive resources. We question the appropriateness of its elimination. This comment would also apply to page 5-8 under section 5.4.6 Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat and page 5-17 under section 5.5 Conclusion.

CHAPTER 3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.3. Hydrology and Water Resources

8-2

Segment F, Page 3.3-21. The headwaters of Henderson Creek, a tributary to the Humboldt River, occur within a potential metapopulation for Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT), and as such, the area may be necessary to recover LCT. The Humboldt Distinct Population Segment (DPS) team has been formed to facilitate the restoration and recovery of LCT populations in this area. The DPS will be evaluating areas within this basin which could support LCT. Although a reproducing population of LCT is not currently present in the project area, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended, completed projects should not preclude future recovery and survival of this species. We recommend that you review your project for all direct and indirect impacts that it may have on riparian and aquatic habitats as they related to LCT, and that you consult with the Service accordingly under Section 7 of the Act.

8-3

Mitigation Measure Water-5c, Page 3.3-16. We are concerned about impacts to springs. Impacts from various projects to springsnails are becoming increasingly a concern to the Service. This mitigation measure indicates that if loss of supply would result in economic hardship or loss to the owner, an alternative water supply would need to be provided. We recommend that if any spring supply is reduced, especially where springsnails are found, that mitigation occur. Water replaced at springs should be of equal quality, including major and minor constituents and should be evaluated prior to discharge. We have become aware of studies showing that the ionic constituents of water can affect invertebrate composition of a water body. In particular, the ratio of calcium ions to bicarbonate ions can have a significant impact on species composition.

8-1

The Highway 305 planning corridor is so called because it more or less parallels State Route 305, although in some places it is as much as 5 or 6 miles away from the highway. The Southwestern 50 or so miles of the planning corridor runs along the line between Ranges 43 and 44 east (see Figure ES-2). The wetlands mentioned in the EIS are south of the "Narrows" in the vicinity of Iowa, Boone, and Bernd Creeks.

Since it was first delineated as a planning corridor in the 1980s, BLM has received no right-of-way grant applications for utilities in this corridor. For these reasons, BLM determined that it would not be an appropriate utility corridor and is proposing that it be deleted from BLM's Resource Management Plan utility corridor maps, as explained in Chapter 5, Resource Management Plan Amendments. The discussion of the Highway 305 planning corridor on page 2-30 has been modified for clarification.

8-2

Henderson Creek was not analyzed for the recovery of Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) because of the creek's discontinuous flows and numerous diversions and check dams located throughout the creek's course from the Roberts Mountains to its confluence with Pine Creek.

Errata - The following text has been added to page 3.7-11 of the EIS after the paragraph on Special-Status Fish - Lahontan Cutthroat Trout:

"Route alternatives do cross historic habitat for metapopulations of the Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plans for Threatened Species require analysis for the restoration and recovery of species in areas where they currently do not exist, but may sustain a viable population. Henderson Creek is a tributary to the Humboldt River via Pine Creek and is therefore considered historic habitat for the LCT (Coffin and Cowan 1995). It is also considered a potential creek for the recovery of the LCT (personal communication

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

with M. Haworth, Biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, September 17, 2001).

Two segments of the route alternatives cross Henderson Creek. Segment F crosses the creek first near its headwaters (Township 23N, Range 51E, Section 26), then again downstream of Alpha Ranch, just west of private land. The upper reach of Henderson Creek is approximately one foot in width and has flowing water, approximately one inch deep. The bottom of the creek has small gravel and supports a narrow band of riparian vegetation (i.e., *Juncus balticus* and *Carex* spp.).

Where Segment F again crosses Henderson Creek further downstream, and depending on the time of year, little to no flow exists in the creek, even after the creek acquires water from Vinini and Frazier creeks. It may be that Alpha Ranch or some other ranch diverts these flows for irrigation. Two channels exist at this crossing near Alpha Ranch; one is clearly an irrigation ditch, the other apparently the main channel of Henderson Creek. Segment B crosses Henderson Creek further downstream of the Segment F crossings. Conditions found at this crossing, which is the confluence of Henderson and Pete Hansen Creeks in Garden Valley, is flowing water with narrow bands of willows with other riparian vegetation."

Acquiring water rights and extensive restoration efforts potentially could create a system that would support a viable population of LCT in the future.

Errata - The following text has been added on page 3.7-36 of the EIS.

"Impact Special-Status Species- 12: Long-term Impacts to Recovery Efforts for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout

Construction of this project could potentially affect future recovery efforts for the LCT in the Henderson Creek, if they are initiated.

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8-2 (cont.)

Long-term impacts, specifically filling of the channel and alteration of the bed materials, could potentially occur if roads are constructed and transmission line towers placed within the floodplains of Henderson Creek and its tributaries. Additionally, if Henderson Creek is restored in the future, water quality could be occasionally damaged by sediment and turbidity during SPPC's annual line inspections as the ATVs could cross watercourses and contribute sediments and degrade creek bank stability. Increased public access also could contribute to bank instability and sedimentation. While these impacts are not expected to significantly affect the recovery efforts for the LCT, SPPC would implement the following mitigation measure to minimize impacts.

Mitigation Special-Status Species-12:

Towers would be installed outside of creek channels, outside of the 100-year flood plain, or placed in such a manner as not to affect potential creek restoration efforts [i.e., outside and above (elevationally) relict channels]. Implementing Mitigation Measure Wildlife-4, centerline travel route reclamation, would preclude unauthorized vehicle use along the right-of-way where access roads and Henderson Creek are in close proximity. All vehicular crossing of Henderson Creek for annual line inspections and any needed maintenance would be by bridge or other authorized crossings. Implementation of these mitigation measures will ensure that the project would not adversely affect the LCT.

8-3

Errata - The following text has added after the paragraph on Invertebrates on page 3.6-8 of the EIS:

"The majority of the springs and creeks along the five route alternatives were surveyed for all species, including springsnails (*Pyrgulopsis* spp.).

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None were noted during the field surveys (personal communication with S. Fox, August 30, 2001). However, smaller springs located outside the 500-foot wide study area corridor were not surveyed for springsnails. Impacts to springs could potentially occur during blasting or grading activities. Blasting could affect springs located up to 1,000 feet from the blast site by affecting the flow of the springs, as explained on page 3.3-16 of the EIS, under Impact Water-5: Potential Damage to Springs and Wells."

Errata - To further address potential impacts to springs and endemic snails, the following text has been added after Impact Wildlife-9 on page 3.6-17 of the EIS:

"Impact Wildlife-11: Impacts to Endemic Springsnails

Impacts to endemic springsnails could occur as a result of direct impacts to springs. Flows of springs could be affected by blasting or grading activities. With implementation of the following mitigation measure, in addition to Mitigation Measures Water-5a through 5c (described on page 3.3-16 of the EIS), the impact would be less-than-significant.

Mitigation Measure Wildlife-11

Pre-construction surveys for endemic springsnails shall be conducted at springs within 1,000 feet of blasting sites and in areas where physical impacts to springs might occur (e.g., from access road improvements, vehicle traffic). Where endemic snails may occur, alternative blasting techniques would be used. Tower footing excavations located 500 to 1,000 feet away from a spring would require multiple small blasts sufficient to excavate the tower footings. Tower footing excavations within 500 feet of a spring would require multiple small blasts in areas where this technique can be demonstrated to be safe to a hydrogeologist or the BLM Field Monitor. If multiple small blasts cannot be demonstrated to be safe and may affect a spring within 500 feet of a tower footing excavation, non-blasting excavation techniques

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RESPONSES

3.4. Vegetation

8-4 [Mitigation Measure Vegetation-6c. Page 3.4-19. Preservation of riparian and wetlands habitats alone will not satisfy mitigation requirements for these communities. A replacement ratio of 1:1 may not be adequate due to project construction and associated temporal losses. The Service encourages avoidance to the greatest extent practicable. Unavoidable losses should be mitigated on site and in-kind, preferably.

3.6. Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

8-5 [Invertebrates. Page 3.6-8. A narrative on potential impacts to springsnails should be provided, if applicable. The discussion should include which affected springs contain springsnails, whether the snails are endemic to any given spring, and how impacts could be avoided or mitigated.

8-6 [Impact Wildlife-5: Potential Bird Electrocutions and Collisions. Page 3.6-14. The potential for these impacts need to be addressed specifically with regards to the bald eagle. As reiterated later, this project should be reviewed for direct and indirect impacts to listed species and consultation with the Service should occur accordingly under Section 7 of the Act.

8-7 [Impact Wildlife-6: Impacts to Migratory and Resident Birds. Page 3.6-15. We recommend removing the word "perceived" from the last sentence of this section. Destruction of eggs or young of species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act would be a violation.

8-8 [Impact Wildlife-7: Increased Predation from Wildlife. Page 3.6-16. We suggest adding "sage grouse" in the fifth sentence after "waterfowl" as use of towers as artificial perches by raptors is a serious concern for these birds as well. We suggest indicating mitigation measures for sage grouse will be discussed more fully under Special Status Species-Plants and Wildlife.

8-9 [Impact Wildlife-8: Impacts to Wildlife from Water Resources. Page 3.6-16. As mentioned above, the Service is concerned with potential impacts to springsnails. This concern needs to be addressed and mitigation provided if necessary.

3.7. Special Status Species-Plants and Wildlife

8-10 [Federal Endangered Species Act. Page 3.7-1. In light of potential short and long term impacts to bald eagle and Lahontan cutthroat trout as a result of this project as discussed later, we encourage reconsideration of your no effect determination.

8-11 [Table 3.7-1: Potential Special-Status Plant Species in the Study Corridor. Page 3.7-4. We recommend that the legend for this table be modified. Under USFWS Categories for Listing under the ESA, we recommend changing "C1" to "C" and deleting the word "downlisted". SC can continue to be defined as Species of Concern, but remove the phrase "formerly Category 2" as this list does not consist only of species that were once category 2 candidates.

would be used (i.e., rock hammers). Soil disturbance within 100 feet of a spring containing endemic snails would be prohibited. All construction activities would be kept from impacting these springs, including vehicular, foot or any other physical activity that may harm the integrity of these springs. Thus, with these mitigations, springs would be protected; replacement water would not be an issue. Replacement water quality would be addressed in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan (COM Plan)."

8-4

A delineation of wetlands and other waters of the United States and a field survey of plant communities, including riparian habitats would be conducted prior to construction. This information would be used for the siting of transmission towers, designing site-specific access road improvements and other ground disturbing activities. Due to the sparseness and spottiness of riparian vegetation in the project area, most stands of willow and rose riparian vegetation could likely easily be avoided by construction activities. Impacts to wetlands are expected to be minimal as well.

A detailed flagging and fencing plan aimed at the protection of sensitive resources would be developed as part of the COM plan and would be implemented prior to construction. Environmental field inspectors would further ensure that fences and flagging are maintained and that no construction activity occurs within fenced and flagged areas. The COM plan would contain detailed information regarding the restoration of wetland and riparian habitats, including enhancement of habitat in undisturbed portions of the corridor.

The 1:1 replacement ratio of wetlands lost is consistent with the requirements of a Nationwide permit 12, which would be obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to project implementation, but

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RESPONSES

the final ratio to be implemented would be consistent with the requirements of the USACE permit. Unavoidable losses would be mitigated on-site and in-kind as appropriate and feasible.

8-5

Please see response to Comment 8-3.

8-6

Errata - The following text has been added after the first paragraph under Bald Eagles on page 3.7-26 of the EIS:

“Low densities of bald eagles winter in and migrate through northern Nevada. Potential roost sites are located within cottonwood stands growing mainly on ranches in northern Nevada, although according to NDOW no notable concentrations of eagles occur close to the proposed project. Additionally, communal roosts are more commonly located in higher elevation limber pine (personal communication with Peter Bradley, NDOW non-game biologist, October 2, 2001). Segment E (of the Buck Mountain route alternative) has potential roosting sites approximately four miles south of where the route crosses Garcia Flat in the northernmost portion of Diamond Valley. Where Segment E crosses into the northern end of Newark Valley, ranches located 3.5 to 4 miles south of the route alignment may provide roosts. The majority of hunting opportunities in both valleys along Segment E lie further south of these potential roosts, although eagles may scavenge and hunt black-tailed hare anywhere they occur.

Segment H (of the Crescent Valley (b) and Pine Valley (b) route alternatives) parallels the western edge of southern third of Diamond Valley. Potential roosts are located over 8 miles north with suitable foraging opportunities approximately 7 miles north. The southern quarter of Diamond Valley has greater densities of ranches and people, which may deter the eagles from roosting to some degree. However, the southern part of the valley would provide plenty of opportunities for scavenging roadkill. Additionally, bald eagles occasionally have been noted in Dunphy and Beowawe in the winter.

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As stated in Section 3.6, Impact Wildlife-5: Potential Bird Electrocutions and Collisions (page 3.6-15), the likelihood of electrocution to eagles is low, as the average wing-span of both golden and bald eagles generally do not exceed 10 feet and the distance between conductors is 22 feet. In terms of the threat of electrocution at the two substations, SPPC has had no reports of avian electrocution at substations for stations over 100 kV (personal communication with John Berdrow, project manager, SPPC, 2001). This finding is supported by a Cornell University study where six utility companies indicated 99% of animal caused faults occurred on low voltage substations (Enck and Brown 1989). High voltage substations (i.e., 230 and 345 kV) require greater distances between insulators and other electrical components than do smaller voltage substations. For example, the distance vertically from insulators and steel support structures vary from just under 7 feet to nearly 9 feet. The horizontal distances between phases are well over 15 feet. The likelihood of larger birds getting inside the substation is also very remote due to the complexity of the support structures, wires and insulators of the stations.

Collisions with transmission lines can occur; however, diurnal raptors are less prone to such collisions. For further discussion on this, please refer to page 3.6-15. Although bald eagles may fly near or over the transmission line while migrating and hunting, the alignments are not in close proximity to roost sites. In areas where the transmission line would cross concentrations of waterfowl or shore birds (i.e., Humboldt River), flight-diverters would be placed as stated under Mitigation Measure Wildlife-5.

Adverse impacts to bald eagles, direct or indirect, are not anticipated as a result of the proposed project.”

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RESPONSES

8-7

Errata - On page 3.6-16 of the EIS, under Impact Wildlife-6: Impacts to Migratory and Resident Birds, the words "may be perceived as" have been changed to "would be" in the last sentence of this section.

“Impact Wildlife-6: Impacts to Migratory and Resident Birds

Project construction activities may affect nesting raptors and passerines. Impacts to ferruginous hawk, golden eagles, and burrowing owls are discussed in Section 3.7, Special-Status Species. Impacts to nesting red-tailed hawks, Cooper’s hawks, prairie falcons, American kestrels, and great-horned owls would depend on the nest location relative to the transmission line, phase of their breeding period, and duration of the disturbance during construction. Impacts to breeding raptors are not anticipated based on field surveys. One exception is along the K route (see Impact Wildlife-10: Impact to Nesting Raptors). Breeding passerines could be adversely affected by project construction activities and result in nest abandonment, loss of territory, and loss of productivity for that breeding season. The MBTA provides legal protection for any migratory bird or part, nest, or egg of such bird listed in wildlife protection treaties between the United States and Great Britain (on behalf of Canada), Mexico, Japan, and the former USSR. Although loss of an active passerine nest site would significantly affect the specific breeding pair affected by the project, it would not significantly affect the local avian population. However, destruction of eggs or young ~~may be perceived as~~ would be a violation of the MBTA; therefore, the following mitigation measure is provided.”

8-8

Errata - On page 3.6-17 of the EIS, under Impact Wildlife-7: Increased Predation from Wildlife, in the sixth sentence the words “sage grouse” are added after “waterfowl”. Also, the sentence is followed by: “Impacts associated with sage grouse are discussed further in Section 3.7, Special Status-Species.”

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“Habitats previously used only to hunt occasionally could become routine hunting areas because of the increased number of available perches (Ryser 1985). Ravens could also use these structures as perches or nesting locations. In areas with concentrations of shore-birds, ~~or~~ waterfowl, ~~or~~ sage grouse, the potential impact from increased predation is considered an adverse impact (personal communication with K. Wilkinson, BLM Elko Field Office, February 22, 2001). Impacts associated with sage grouse are discussed further in Section 3.7, Special Status-Species. Because the species that may inhabit these areas are considered important by local BLM biologists, mitigation measures are recommended.”

8-9

See response to Comments 8-5 and 8-6.

8-10

Errata - On page 3.7-1 of the EIS, the last sentence of the paragraph on the Federal Endangered Species Act is deleted. Please also see response to Comment 8-2.

“Federal Endangered Species Act

Pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, the USFWS has authority over projects that may affect the continued existence of a species federally listed as Threatened or Endangered. If a development may affect a federally listed species, federal consultation under Section 7 of ESA is required. Under ESA, the definition of “take” includes to kill, harm, or harass any federally listed species.

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RESPONSES

The USFWS has interpreted the definition of harm to include significant habitat modification. ~~As the Falcon to Gonder project would not affect Endangered, Threatened, or Candidate species, no Section 7 consultation is required.~~"

BLM will consult with the USFWS to ensure that any potential impacts to Endangered, Threatened or Candidate species are avoided or mitigated. However, none are expected.

8-11

In changing the table to comply with the USFWS request to use species status coding and language that is more appropriate for USFWS (as opposed to the Nevada Natural Heritage Program species status database of 1999), the comment would err in terms of the one particular plant species. In Table 3.7-1, on page 3.7-4 of the EIS, changing "C1" to "C" and striking "Downlisted" to read "Candidate" would imply that Monte Neva paintbrush is a Candidate species. As of August 2001, this plant had no status with the USFWS (Morefield 2001).

Errata - In Table 3.7-1 on page 3.7-4 of the EIS, under USFWS Categories, "C1" was changed to "-" (no listing).

Also in the legend, "C1 Downlisted Candidate" was deleted as were the words "(formerly Category 2)".

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- 8-12 [Table 3.7-3: Special-Status Wildlife Known or Potentially Occurring Within the Study Corridor. Page 3.7-9 and 10. We recommend modification of this table in two areas. First, it is stated that burrowing owls were observed along the study corridor. We recommend deleting the word "potentially" from the phrase "potentially suitable habitat present". Since birds were seen, the habitat is suitable.
- 8-13 [In addition, while SC can continue to be defined as Species of Concern, we suggest removing the phrase "Formerly Category 2" as this list does not consist only of species that were once category 2 candidates.
- 8-14 [Special-Status-Fish. Page 3.7-11. While our letter dated April 6, 1999, indicated occupied LCT habitat occurred west of the preferred alternative, BLM also needs to consider potential habitat for LCT recovery. As mentioned above, Henderson Creek could be considered potential recovery habitat for the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout and as such the project should be reviewed for all direct and indirect impacts that it may have on riparian and aquatic habitats as they related to LCT, and that you should consult with the Service accordingly under Section 7 of the Act.
- 8-15 [Special-Status Invertebrates. Mattoni's Blue Butterfly. Page 3.7-21. It has come to our attention during a telephone conversation with Tetra Tech EMI on July 10, 2001, that the host plant, *Eriogonum microthecum*, for the Mattoni's blue butterfly was located along the study corridor. We are concerned about the status of several subspecies of butterflies in the state of Nevada, including the Mattoni's blue butterfly. We recommend avoiding impacts to the host plant to the greatest extent practicable. While transplanting of the host plant could be attempted, it is not known whether the effort would be successful.
- 8-16 [Impacts Common to Route Alternatives. Page 3.7-22. Depending on review of the project for impacts to potential habitat for the LCT, this species may need to be removed from this paragraph.
- 8-17 [Bald Eagles: Impact Special-Status Species-6: Potential Impact to Bald Eagles. Page 3.7-25 and Mitigation Measure Special-Status Species-8c. Page 3.7-39. The document states that the study corridor crosses traditional wintering areas and mapped habitat areas, but it is not anticipated that wintering bald eagles would be impacted and mitigation is not required. While the construction and maintenance periods are temporary disturbances, the long-term impacts of a transmission line through these areas also needs to be addressed. Because of the size of the transmission line is large, electrocution may not be a serious concern, however, collisions with these lines can and do occur and where birds concentrate (nest sites, roost sites, river crossings) can represent a threat. These are potential impacts mentioned in the document under the general Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat section on page 3.6-14-15.
- 8-18 [In addition, while the 2-mile wide study corridor may not provide roosting sites, perches, or foraging habitat, it may not be adequate in determining whether the line will impact a species which can travel long distances daily. On page 3.7-11, it is stated that potential roost sites were presumed to be located near cottonwood stands in Diamond and Newark Valleys or

8-12

Errata - In Table 3.7-3 on page 3.7-9 of the EIS, under the "Potential for Occurrence" column in the cell for Burrowing owl, the word "Potentially" has been deleted from the second sentence and in the legend the words "(formerly Category 2)" have been deleted.

8-13

See response to Comment 8-12.

8-14

See response to Comment 8-2.

8-15

Errata - The following text has been added to page 3.7-33 of the EIS:

“Special-Status Invertebrates (Mattoni's Blue Butterfly): The host plant for the larval stage of the Mattoni's Blue Butterfly is buckwheat (*Eriogonum microthecum* var. *laxiflorum*), which is a widely distributed plant species. Buckwheat occurs sporadically in the project area.

Impact Special-Status Species-11: Impact to Host Plant for Mattoni's Blue Butterfly

Direct and indirect impacts to this species of butterfly could result from construction-related impacts to the host buckwheat plant where these populations occur. Because of the plant's widespread distribution, the impacts to these plants would be adverse but not significant. Implementing the following mitigation measure in conjunction with Mitigation Measure Special-Status Species-1 would help to minimize the impact further.”

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8-15 (cont.)

Mitigation Measure Special-Status Species-11

To the extent practical, this buckwheat species should be protected from disturbance during construction where construction traffic can safely avoid them without impacting other sensitive resources (i.e., cultural resources or riparian areas). As outlined in Mitigation Measure Special-Status Species-1, qualified biologists would locate populations and mark avoidance zones prior to construction.”

8-16

Errata - On page 3.7-23 of the EIS, in the fourth line of the third paragraph the words "Lahontan cutthroat trout" have been deleted.

“The remainder of this section describes impacts to special-status wildlife that could be associated with any of the route alternatives. The following eight special-status species would not be impacted from the development of the project because of the absence of suitable habitat in the study corridor: mountain plover, least bittern, white-faced ibis, black tern, ~~Lahontan cutthroat trout~~, spotted frog, Grey’s silverspot butterfly, and California floater. In addition, no significant impacts are expected to the seven special-status bats that might occur in the study corridor because the proposed transmission line would not be located near known roosting sites (personal communication with Bradley, NDOW, April 11, 2000).”

8-17

See response to Comment 8-6.

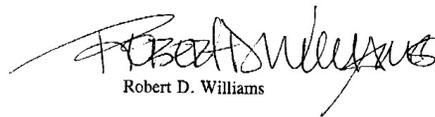
COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

8-18 [within the pinyon-juniper woodlands located away from the study corridor. It is not stated, however, how far away these sites are from the study corridor. As a result, we are concerned with potential impacts to bald eagles and request that you review your project in regards to all direct and indirect impacts that it may have on bald eagles and their habitats and that you consult with the Service accordingly under Section 7 of the Act.

8-19 [Sage Grouse: Mitigation Measure Special Status Species-7d (Monitoring), Page 3.7-29. This section indicates monitoring will occur for at least 10 years to determine if the visual impact of a transmission line will cause abandonment by sage grouse of nearby leks. While monitoring assists in determining if abandonment occurs, it does nothing to mitigate for this loss if it were to occur. Measures to mitigate this loss should be indicated.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on this DEIS. In addition to providing comments on the final environmental documents, we may comment on any notice issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a section 404 of the Clean Water Act permit. If you have questions or need clarification on our comments, please contact Marcy Haworth or Bridget Nielsen at (775) 861-6300.



Robert D. Williams

cc:
 Administrator, Nevada Division of Wildlife, Reno, Nevada
 Administrator, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Carson City, Nevada
 State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Reno, Nevada
 Chief, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nevada Field Office, Reno, Nevada
 Chief, Office of Federal Activities, Environmental Protection Agency, (CMD-2), San Francisco, California

TOTAL P. 06

8-18
 See response to Comment 8-6.

8-19
 The BLM has made the decision to mitigate impacts to active sage grouse leks by requiring that SPPC install anti-perching devices on the transmission line towers that would cross sage grouse habitat and be within 2 miles of an active sage grouse lek. See Mitigation Measure Special-Status 7b (Perch Deterrents) on page 3.7-29 for more detail. In addition, the following text has been added to clarify the monitoring requirement.

Errata - On page 3.7-30 of the EIS, Mitigation Measure Special-Status Species - 7d (Monitoring) has been changed to read:

“To address the potential visual impact of the transmission line on sage grouse, SPPC would fund implementation of a study that would monitor selected leks and sage grouse habitat along the transmission line route to determine the effectiveness of anti-perch devices and to determine if transmission towers that have perch deterrents contribute to a negative effect on sage grouse in terms of habitat use and population stability. Such study would, at a minimum, monitor lek attendance and sage grouse movements and survival, and may also study the effects of the transmission line on raptor and raven movements. In essence, the study would seek to determine if the presence of towers with effective anti-perching devices causes lek decline or abandonment merely because of the visual intimidation of the towers. For this study, it is recommended that an institution such as University of Nevada be involved in the research design and participation. Funding from SPPC would be equal to \$450,000 and would be available to initiate and fund

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the study for the first years of research or as long as the funding is available. Additional funding sources may also be incorporated to expand or extend the study should the need be warranted.

Should a research-based approach to monitoring be infeasible, SPPC would fund a simplified study, which would monitor lek attendance at potentially affected leks along the transmission line using standard protocols. This lek attendance would then be compared to a selected set of existing NDOW “trend” leks. This type of study can help determine whether residual visual impacts of a transmission line remain after raptor and raven perching is mitigated. (This assumes that anti-perching measures are effective.)

This study would involve counting the number of sage grouse at leks. This data collection effort could be coordinated with other BLM and NDOW efforts. Monitoring would continue for a minimum of 10 years. Monitoring could extend beyond 10 years until consistent data reveals conclusions. If extended monitoring does not reveal conclusions, monitoring should not exceed 12 years.

The data collected would be prepared in a yearly report by SPPC and findings presented to the BLM and NDOW to include in their own monitoring database. The trend leks, agency coordination, monitoring protocols, and other details will be defined in the COM Plan.

If monitoring indicates that lek abandonment has occurred due to the visual impact or presence of the transmission line, SPPC would negotiate with BLM to provide off-site mitigation to improve and enhance sage grouse habitat. This off-site mitigation would be proportionate to the impacts associated with the affected active leks along the perch-deterred sections of the transmission line.”

COMMENT LETTER



COMMITTEE FOR IDAHO'S
HIGH DESERT

P.O. BOX 2863 BOISE, IDAHO 83701
208-429-1679

August 22, 2001

Mary Craggett
Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89820-2332

Re: Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project, NV 063-EIS00-27 1790/1600 N-63162 2800

Dear Ms. Craggett,

- 9-1 [The Committee for Idaho's High Desert (CIHD) would like to comment upon the right-of-way request made by Sierra Pacific Power Company (SPPC). First, you need to analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this proposal more thoroughly
- 9-2 [**WE QUESTION THE NEED FOR THIS ACTION**
This DEIS does not adequately justify the need for this powerline. First, there is not presently a need for this powerline, and SPPC has not shown enough proof that they have a rapidly growing customer base. It is not sufficient to simply state that the area is growing. It is also insufficient to use the reason that the area *might* want to export electricity in the future.
- 9-3 [**NEW UTILITY CORRIDORS AND CONSTRUCTION**
We are very concerned with the fact that nearly half of the utility corridors to be used are new corridors. We fear that the construction of this powerline will facilitate the construction of a train to carry nuclear waste; this is mentioned as a Native American concern on page 3.19-11. We also are concerned that this powerline might facilitate the construction of a possible gas power plant and pipeline in Elko by Coastal Corporation, and the Cortez Joint Venture Pediment Mine Project (4-8). We are strongly against new mining or gas power plant activity in this area.
- 9-4 []
- 9-5 [**NATIVE VEGETATION**
How will the BLM ensure that the contractor is not overly liberal in their definition of the trees that need to be cut? Will the BLM mark the trees that need to be cut? On page 3.4-19, the DEIS mentions restoration of other, already damaged wetlands if currently intact wetlands are destroyed in the construction process. What sort of restoration would be required for the damaged wetlands? On page 3.4-19, the DEIS refers to a "non-vegetative" material that would be used to stabilize the banks of streams. What material would be used? The final document needs to fully answer these questions.
- 9-6 []
- 9-7 []



RESPONSES

Letter 9: Committee for Idaho's High Desert

9-1

Comment noted.

9-2

The purpose and need for the proposed transmission line are discussed in Chapter 1 of the EIS. As required by the Nevada Public Utilities Commission, every three years SPPC submits an "Electric Resource Plan" showing forecasts of future demand for electricity in its service area and the utility's plans for meeting this demand and ensuring a continuous reliable supply of electricity for its customers. Electricity demand and load forecasts from SPPC's Electric Resource Plan are shown on page 1-7 of the EIS. The Electric Resource Plan, in its entirety, is available for review at the Nevada Public Utilities Commission.

9-3

The Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository Draft EIS (published by the Department of Energy in August 1999) analyzes numerous alternative railroad alignments that generally follow a different direction than the Falcon to Gonder project (i.e., heading southwest while the Falcon to Gonder transmission line would travel in a southeast direction). This is explained on page 2-31 of the Falcon to Gonder EIS.

The Yucca Mountain Draft EIS, on page 4-9, states that one of the alternative railroad alignments (the Carlin potential rail corridor) analyzed by the U.S. Department of Energy would be in the Falcon to Gonder project area, and would intersect Segment B of the Falcon to Gonder project near the town of Crescent Valley. The Falcon to Gonder project preferred alternative Pine Valley (a) route does not include Segment B.

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9-4

While both of these projects could benefit from the proposed transmission line, the Falcon to Gonder project was not conceived of or designed to serve either project mentioned in the comment letter. The purpose and need for the proposed transmission line are discussed in Chapter 1 of the EIS.

9-5

SPPC would be required to pay BLM for all woodland products lost due to construction and maintenance and would be responsible for habitat restoration in disturbed areas. It is in SPPC's interest to keep project costs down by minimizing the number of trees paid for and to minimize the acreage of woodland that needs to be restored. BLM will monitor compliance in the field during construction to ensure the minimum amount of damage to the native vegetation. Individual, or groups of trees will be marked prior to construction. Trees that are heavily damaged or removed will be tallied by species and height prior to or during construction. The data collected will be provided to the BLM forester for determination of compensation.

9-6

Protection of wetlands and other sensitive resources during construction is a high priority of the BLM and a Stream Crossing and Wetland Protection Plan would be developed by SPPC for inclusion in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan (COM Plan) for this project.

Restoration protocols for impacts to wetlands would also be included in a Reclamation and Habitat Restoration Plan, which would be part of the COM Plan. It would include protocols for avoidance and minimization of impacts, cutting of willows and woody vegetation instead of removal, topsoil salvage, storage and replacement, recontouring and regrading, and willow planting. These protocols can be applied to wetlands impacted during project implementation as well as to enhance previously degraded wetlands in the corridor if such compensatory mitigation is deemed necessary by the regulatory agencies during the wetland

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RESPONSES

permitting process for the project. The choice of restoration methods would be determined if and when enhancement to degraded wetlands is required. The methods would be focused on correcting problems which cause the wetlands to be degraded. Depending on the specific problems, these may include restoration of native plants, restoration of wetland hydrology, invasive weed removal, and other measures.

9-7

Materials used to stabilize streambanks may include erosion control blankets or matting made of jute, straw or other biodegradable materials, or, in extreme cases, the placement of natural rock riprap pending resource agency approval.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

- 9-8 [INVASIVE/NON-NATIVE SPECIES
Why didn't the DEIS include cheatgrass, tumbleweed, and halogeton in the noxious/invasive weed survey? These weeds are well-established, but that does not give the BLM license to ignore the threat from them. Why not require the SPPC to manually dig out all of the weed-infested areas? On page 3.5-10, it states, "where appropriate, native vegetation would be reestablished." When and where would it *not* be appropriate to reestablish native vegetation? If native vegetation is not replanted, what would be replanted? The final EIS needs to answer all of the above questions.
- 9-9 [
- 9-10 [
- 9-11 [WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
What is the tolerance of big game for powerline disturbance? If you do not know this information, how can you accurately predict the effect that this powerline will have on wildlife? Is a buffer of only 100 feet enough for raptors (3.6-16)? The final document needs to answer these questions.
- 9-12 [
- 9-13 [SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES
On page 3.7-29, the DEIS states that if historic leks become active, or new leks are discovered, funds from the mitigation account would be used to install perch deterrents. If these funds are not available, "other SPPC funds may be available to install perch deterrents on a case-by-case basis." These funds should be *required* to be available for the duration of the powerline's existence. It should be part of the yearly maintenance. Page 3.7-31 details the employee training requirements. What sort of penalty will be enforced if everyone is not properly trained, or the sensitive species are not protected?
- 9-14 [
- 9-15 [Why does the BLM not know whether the 230 kV line can be retrofitted with perch deterrents (3.7-35)? This is a key piece of information that should have been analyzed in this document. Obviously whether or not this line can be retrofitted with perch deterrents has a huge impact upon sensitive species sage grouse. What evidence does the BLM have that the sage grouse in this area are non-migratory? According to *A Framework to Assist in Making Sensitive Species Habitat Assessments for BLM-administered Public Lands in Idaho - Sage Grouse*, "Connelly et al. recommends intensive habitat management for an area 2 miles around leks for non-migratory populations and 11 miles for migratory populations" (8). Granted, this is a document for Idaho, but the information regarding sage grouse is still applicable. As before, the final EIS needs to answer the above questions.
- 9-16 [
- 9-17 [LIVESTOCK
Would the BLM reduce the AUMs for the affected allotments, shift the AUMs elsewhere, or leave the same number of AUMs on smaller allotments? This information needs to be included in the final document.
- 9-18 [NOISE
Has the BLM analyzed the affect of noise upon sensitive species? Without this vital piece of information, how can the BLM ensure that they are not adversely affecting sensitive species? Has the BLM analyzed the noises that are inaudible to humans yet audible to wildlife? What affect will these noises have upon birds and wildlife? What

9-8

Cheatgrass and halogeton are common throughout the region and tumbleweed (*Salsola*) is common in disturbed areas. Project mitigation measures for listed noxious and invasive nonnative weeds detailed in Section 3.5, such as the use of cleaning stations and pre- and post-construction treatments, are also expected to be effective in preventing the further spread of other common invasive weeds in the corridor.

More detailed protocols for minimizing the spread of noxious and invasive nonnative weeds, including cheatgrass, into uninfested areas would be included in the COM Plan. Given the extent of weed infestations throughout the Great Basin and the scale of the project, "manually digging out all weed infested areas" is not a feasible construction method. Infested areas will be avoided, or if unavoidable, will be treated by mechanical and/or herbicide methods known to be effective against specific target species.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

9-9

That sentence on page 3.5-10 refers to weed cleaning stations only. As weed cleaning stations are likely to be located in previously disturbed, unvegetated or even paved areas, the reestablishment of vegetation following construction may not always be appropriate in these locations. The term “wash stations” has been changed to “cleaning stations” to reflect the fact that high-pressure air or water may be used to clean vehicles and equipment in the field.

Errata - The sentence on page 3.5-10 after (g) has been modified to read as follows:

‘~~Wash~~ Cleaning stations would be periodically monitored, invasive weeds would be treated, and if needed, native vegetation would be re-established following . . .’

9-10

Although BLM prefers to reseed disturbed areas with native plants, in some areas it may be preferable to reseed with faster growing but noninvasive nonnative plants to prevent noxious weed infestation. In addition, sometimes native seeds are limited in their availability due to fires, weather or other reasons. Areas of native vegetation disturbed during construction would be revegetated according to specific protocols in the Reclamation and Habitat Restoration Plan, which would be developed as part of the COM plan and approved by BLM. Please also see responses to Comments 9-9, 9-29, and 9-30.

9-11

The literature search conducted was very broad and included journals such as Wildlife Society’s Bulletin, the Journal of Wildlife Management, university and agency research and publications, and utility based

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

research sources such as Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), as well as interviews with local agency wildlife managers. Published studies apparently have only been conducted on livestock and humans. Currently there is no known study available on the "tolerance" of big game for powerline disturbance. However, big game do commonly migrate or browse under transmission lines. Short-term impacts and mitigation measures are discussed in Section 3.6 of the EIS under Impact Wildlife-1, Impact Wildlife-2, Impact Wildlife-3, and Impact Wildlife-4 (pages 3.6-12 through 3.6-15). The best available data were used to assess impacts to wildlife.

9-12

The recommendation of a 100 foot buffer is intended for passerines and upland gamebirds (i.e., mourning dove and California quail) and was given on the suggestion of agency wildlife biologists including U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Raptors are treated differently and do have larger buffers. These would be outlined in the COM Plan. Potential impacts and mitigation measures tailored specifically to raptors are discussed on pages 3.7-22, 3.7-23, 3.7-24, 3.7-25, 3.7-31, 3.7-32 and 3.6-19 of the EIS.

9-13

SPPC would be required to install perch deterrents on transmission line towers that would cross through sage grouse habitat. A mitigation fund would be set up to pay for the Nevada Division of Wildlife or an academic institution to conduct long-term monitoring at active leks along the transmission line. The results will be discussed with the BLM and SPPC, and, if needed, proportionate off-site mitigation (i.e., sage grouse habitat improvements) would be provided for by SPPC. During annual line inspections for maintenance needs, SPPC inspectors will confirm that the perch deterrents are still in place and repairs will be made as needed. See also response to Comment 8-19.

9-14

The requirement that the construction contractor provide workers with environmental compliance training would be included in the contract

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

with SPPC. During construction, BLM would monitor compliance with EIS mitigation measures and, if needed, could issue a non-compliance notice or stop task order.

9-15

The 230kV line has been in place for over 30 years. It is constructed with wooden members and in a tower design that precludes the installation of effective anti-perching devices. The towers have many cross-members attached at shallow angles that could provide spots for perching or nesting by avian species.

Currently the products available for retrofitting distribution and transmission lines with wood members are plastic spikes. Years of monitoring these “perch deterrents” indicate that they generally fail at preventing perching and often provide more nesting opportunities for corvids by securing twigs and sticks between the spikes, which creates a stable nesting platform (personal communication with John Berdrow, SPPC project manager 2001). These devices, if placed on the 230kV line could actually provide more nesting opportunities for corvids. The design for the proposed project transmission towers is significantly different, as it has a vertical steel plate that would be placed on the towers prior to construction and line activation. This same design feature would not be able to be used on the 230kV line. See also responses to comments 8-19 and 9-13.

9-16

The BLM has not stated that the study area’s populations of sage grouse are resident or migratory. The main documents that BLM uses to define the requirements and provide guidance on the management of sage grouse and their habitats are the Nevada BLM’s Management Guidelines (2000) and guidelines published by the Wildlife Society (Wildlife Society Bulletin 2000, Sage Grouse Management 28(4):976-985).

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

BLM biologists agree that the 2-mile core area surrounding a lek is critical habitat. The guidance documents used by BLM also recommend that habitat beyond the core breeding area of two miles be managed to maintain and support sage grouse seasonal activity. For this project, perch deterrents would be required on transmission towers within sage grouse seasonal (spring, summer and winter) habitat beyond the core 2-mile radius. This mitigation would likely encompass dozens of miles of the project.

9-17

Short-term and long-term reductions in forage would occur within generally large AUM allotments, where the loss of a relatively small amount of forage for cattle dispersed along the linear right-of-way would not significantly affect range health. The numbers on page 3.8-8 of the EIS are totals for all allotments located along a given segment. As stated on this same page, the largest AUM loss to one allotment, Roberts Mountain (167,470 acres), would be 4 AUMs. The BLM would not require removal of these 4 AUM's.

9-18

The literature search conducted was very broad and included journals such as Wildlife Society's Bulletin, the Journal of Wildlife Management, publications from the Ornithological Union and American Field Ornithologist's Union, university and agency research and publications, and utility-based research sources such as the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), as well as interviews with local agency wildlife managers. Again, published studies apparently have only been conducted on livestock and humans. Only one report conducted on avian species was found. This report studied the reproductive success of cavity nesting birds breeding under high-voltage powerlines (Doherty 1998). This study was conducted specifically because little had been done to assess possible effects of electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) on the biology of free-ranging animals living within such fields. The findings of this research were that tree swallows (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) had a

COMMENT LETTER

- 9-19 [affect will ground-borne vibrations have upon animals, particularly those that nest upon the ground, such as sage grouse? What affect will ground-borne vibrations have upon the animals that burrow? If the BLM does not have this information, you cannot make an informed decision. The final document needs to answer the above questions.
- 9-20 [AIR QUALITY
On page 3.12-8, the DEIS refers to "restor[ing] roads to as good or better condition." What exactly does this mean? We do not want "improved" roads if this means that they are graded and paved. What "non-toxic" soil-binder would be used to control dust?
- 9-21 [These questions need to be answered in the final EIS.
- 9-22 [RECREATION/WILDERNESS
On page 3.14-13, the DEIS states that "improved access roads may have a slightly beneficial effect by providing increased opportunities for dispersed recreational 4WD or general sight-seeing." Increased access to this area is not necessarily beneficial. What effect would the increased access have upon wildlife and birds? This increased access would also have a detrimental effect upon primitive recreation opportunities. Please answer these questions in the final EIS.
- 9-23 [
- 9-24 [ECONOMIC
The DEIS does not include the negative economic effects from the necessity of increased law enforcement.
- 9-25 [CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES
On page 3.16-21, it states that the powerline will avoid NHRP-digible sites "where feasible." Cultural sites should be avoided at all costs. On page 3.17-5, it makes a similar statement that paleontological resources will be avoided "where feasible." Avoiding these sites should be a top priority. The project should not be allowed to continue if it cannot avoid paleontological and cultural sites.
- 9-26 [BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
The DEIS refers to several BMPs, including BMPs that preserve existing hydrology, prevent soil erosion, only allow a minimum of disturbance to riparian and wetland areas, and reclamation BMPs. The final EIS should include an appendix that contains all of the BMPs referenced.
- 9-27 [RECLAMATION PLAN
CIHD wants the bare minimum of improved roads to result from this project. It is a top priority to leave as few roads as possible in the area. On page E-3, you refer to using non-native seeds in areas that are "highly susceptible to infestation." How do you define highly susceptible to infestation? The final document should include standards of susceptibility. Would the areas seeded to non-native seeds be rehabilitated to native vegetation? What do greenstrips entail (E-5)? On page E-6, it states that "disturbed areas to be seeded following construction would be determined by a qualified reclamation ecologist and appropriate resource specialist" (E-6). Why would you not seed all of the disturbed areas? Locally collected native seeds should be used in all disturbed areas.
- 9-28 [
- 9-29 [
- 9-30 [

RESPONSES

lower nestling success rate than other birds (house wren *Troglodytes aedon*) that nested in the study boxes placed under the line. The report suggested that habitat under high voltage lines may be suboptimal for tree swallows, but no conclusions were made as to why. Perhaps this bird that catches insects "on-the-wing" had fewer flying insects within it's foraging territory surrounding the line. The wrens generally glean insects from shrubs. Cavity nesters would not generally nest beneath a line as the trees that provide suitable nesting holes would not be found under a powerline. Other studies concerning vibrations and wildlife were not discovered during the literature searches and wildlife professionals interviewed for this project were unaware of any such studies.

Short-term disturbance from noise is addressed under both general wildlife impacts and special-status species in Sections 3.6 and 3.7.

9-19

See response to Comment 9-18.

9-20

SPPC would not construct any new paved roads. Some existing dirt access roads would require improvements to enable the transport of large vehicles and equipment to the tower installation sites. Improvements, such as widening a turn, installing a culvert to protect a drainage, or grading to provide a stable surface, would be made only where needed. After construction, SPPC would restore existing access roads to at least as good as their pre-construction condition. Unless otherwise directed by the BLM or landowner, improvements (e.g., culverts) would remain. In certain environmentally sensitive areas, BLM would require SPPC to reclaim the road in such a way that it discourages undesirable access. This is explained further on pages 3.4-16, 3.6-20, 3.7-31 and 3.7-32.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

9-21

Although use of water and gravel are preferred, use of non-toxic soil binders is an alternative to watering that may be used by construction contractors where needed to control dust. Examples of non-toxic soil binders/stabilizers include gravel mulches, vegetable oil, gypsum binder, and noxious weed-free erosion control seed mixes.

9-22

Impacts on wildlife and birds are discussed on pages 3.6-14 and 3.6-15 of the EIS. Impact Wildlife-3 discusses loss and displacement of wildlife. Impact Wildlife-4 discusses indirect impacts on wildlife from increased human presence and access, and Mitigation Measure Wildlife-4 provides measures to minimize these impacts.

9-23

The EIS discusses impacts to recreation activities, including hiking and camping (primitive recreation), on pages 3.14-12 through 3.14-19. Impacts to primitive recreation are not anticipated to be significant, as there are numerous existing access roads in the area and many existing opportunities for off-road vehicle use. Furthermore, after construction, the centerline travel route will be reclaimed in such a way as to discourage its use by off-road recreational vehicles. See also the response to Comment 9-20 above, as well as page 2-20 of the EIS under Post-Construction Reclamation of Access Roads and Appendix E of the EIS, Reclamation Plan.

9-24

This project is not expected to directly result in an increased need for law enforcement, as it would not directly result in increased population.

9-25

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) allows for mitigation in the form of data recovery for sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion d,

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

which may be affected by federal undertakings. Data recovery is planned for a number of sites to be affected by construction of the Falcon to Gonder project. The number of sites, the details of their treatment, and the planned treatment for sites eligible under the other three criteria will be detailed in an Historic Properties Treatment Plan, which will be reviewed and approved by appropriate agencies prior to construction. The plan will also identify those sites that will be avoided and details of a monitoring plan.

The statement in question is specific to those situations where a significant paleontological resource might be encountered during construction-related excavations, and it is determined that it is not possible to avoid further damage to that resource.

This conclusion would only be reached after discussions between a qualified paleontologist, the BLM, and SPPC construction personnel. Additional disturbance to the resource would be authorized by the BLM only after agreements to mitigate the effects of further damage through means such as collection, analysis, and permanent curation of the find.

A similar process would be followed in the event that significant archaeological sites are discovered during construction, and avoidance (the preferred outcome) is determined to be infeasible by the BLM. In both situations, appropriate treatment methods would be implemented to reduce the loss of resource values to a less-than-significant level. Environmental compliance training for construction personnel and monitoring of construction activities by qualified paleontologists and archaeologists will be implemented to further minimize the potential for inadvertent disturbance to these resources.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

9-26

The BMPs would be compiled in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan (COM Plan) for the Falcon to Gonder project, which would be prepared by SPPC prior to construction and approved by the BLM.

9-27

SPPC would minimize new road construction by maximizing the use of existing access roads. Some existing dirt access roads would require improvements to allow transport of large construction equipment to the tower sites. Temporary spur roads would be used to gain access to the tower sites from existing parallel roads. As stated in Mitigation Measure Vegetation-4, SPPC would reclaim spur roads after construction and create barriers where needed to discourage new entry into the right-of-way and protect sensitive areas from disturbance. SPPC would consult with BLM and private property owners to determine the preferred reclamation methods in sensitive areas. More information is provided on page 2-20 and the Reclamation Plan in Appendix E of the EIS.

9-28

As stated in the Reclamation Plan, areas defined as "highly susceptible to cheatgrass infestation" are areas that recently burned, are located near dense cheatgrass infestations, or are on soil types that are often dominated by cheatgrass.

9-29

Re-vegetating with competitive, non-native, non-invasive plants (i.e., crested wheatgrass) serves two purposes. In areas that are highly susceptible to cheatgrass, the crested wheatgrass or other non-natives are intended to prevent the cheatgrass from taking over following surface disturbances. The success criteria are related to the goal of restoring the native plant community in the area over time. In areas already heavily infested with cheatgrass, planting non-native, non-invasive competitors is a measure intended to reduce the spread of fire and greater cheatgrass infestation as part of greenstripping.

COMMENT LETTER

- 9-31 [Cost is not a good enough reason not to do this. On page E-9, it states that SPPC would not be responsible for "weeds found beyond the right-of-way." Would SPPC be responsible for ensuring that the weeds do not spread beyond the ROW? On page E-11, it states that the reference sites for reclamation would be the site prior to construction of the powerline, or "representative areas which have the same target plant community adjacent to the affected area." What are the exact areas that would be used as a baseline measurement? SPPC should be required to survey the whole area before construction of the powerline, and use *that* as a baseline. How would spur roads be reclaimed? The final EIS should answer all of the above questions.
- 9-32 [
- 9-33 [

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Katherine Hausrath
Wildlands Assistant
Committee for Idaho's High Desert
PO Box 2863
Boise, ID 83701
208.429.1679
kmhausrath@juno.com

These comments were faxed to the Battle Mountain Field Office – 775.635.4034 and a hard copy was mailed August 22, 2001.

RESPONSES

Greenstripping entails the planting of perennial native shrubs and grasses to act as a fire break. The process is used in areas of extensive cheatgrass infestation to suppress fire and protect resources from future wildfires and more extensive cheatgrass infestations.

9-30

SPPC would reseed all areas disturbed by construction as directed by BLM and in accordance with the agency's preferred seed mixes, reclamation methods, etc. Locally collected native seed would be used to the extent feasible and available. However, due to the extensive wildfires throughout Nevada in recent years and during the summer of 2001, local native seed sources may be limited and seeds from other regions with similar vegetation may need to be used. In addition, seed sources may include desirable nonnative noninvasive species of high range value to native deer, antelope and other wildlife populations to assist in the ultimate re-establishment of the native plant community and to amend the limited amount of native forage available to wildlife. Seed mixes would be developed in cooperation with BLM and Nevada Division of Wildlife vegetation ecologists and range conservationists.

9-31

SPPC would be responsible for meeting the weed abatement criteria set for the project; these criteria include the spread of weeds beyond the right-of-way if the spread is caused by project activities; SPPC would not, however, be responsible for pre-existing weed infestations or weeds introduced by other non project-related activities.

9-32

Pre-construction vegetation surveys would be conducted along the preferred route alternative corridor. Habitat types would be mapped and characterized, and a comprehensive species list by habitat type

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

compiled for the project area. To monitor revegetation success, restored sites would be compared to selected “reference sites.” Reference sites would be located in nearby areas that were undisturbed by project activities and that are representative of the plant species composition and cover for plant communities disturbed by the project. Detailed data on these paired sites would be collected annually during revegetation monitoring.

9-33

Temporary spur roads would be reclaimed by recontouring to approximate pre-construction grades, distributing rocks and boulders where appropriate (i.e., where similar conditions exist in adjacent areas and where they would not interfere with project operation and maintenance activities); they will be graded and roughened as necessary, and seeded with seed mixes approved by BLM and according to protocols that would be described in the COM Plan to return them to conditions similar to the surrounding plant communities. For more information please see Appendix E, Reclamation Plan, in the EIS. The temporary spur roads and centerline travel route would be authorized by BLM under a Temporary Use Permit and/or the Right-of-Way Grant.

COMMENT LETTER

John A. Chachas, Commissioner
Johnnie W. (Jack) Norcross, Commissioner
David E. Provost, Commissioner
Kevin S. Kirkeby, Commissioner
Cheryl A. Noriega, Commissioner
Dennis M. Bath, Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board

White Pine County
Board of County Commissioners

Courthouse Annex
953 Campton St.
Ely, Nevada 89301
(775) 289-8841
(775) 289-8842

August 20, 2001

RECEIVED
MAY 10 11:11 AM
2001 AUG 23 AM 11:43
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Mary Craggett, Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management, Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Street
Battle Mountain, NV 89820-1420

Dear Ms. Craggett:

The White Pine County Commission appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Draft EIS for the Falcon-Gonder 345 kV Transmission Line for Sierra Pacific Power. The County has had an opportunity to review the full report and executive summary.

The White Pine County Commission is pleased to support the request by Sierra Pacific Power for a right of way grant to construct a transmission line to the Gonder Sub-Station north of Ely. The transmission line will meet the needs of Sierra Pacific Power and its customers, it will benefit the local economy during construction as well as increased property tax revenues, and we do not feel the impacts of construction or the line itself will have any significantly negative effects on the County's environment. In addition, White Pine County is currently working with major power generation firms interested in the possibility of siting a coal fired power plant in our area. The Falcon-Gonder Line will help to strengthen the transmission system and capacity in the area and it will benefit our efforts to locate a power plant in White Pine County and strengthen our economic base.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Noriega,
Chairman

RESPONSES

Letter 10: White Pine County Board of Commissioners

10-1

Comment noted. The coal fired power plant has been added to Chapter 4, Cumulative Impacts, as a potential future project on page 4-8. However, it did not change any findings of significance in terms of cumulative impacts.

10-1

COMMENT LETTER

July 10, 2001

Robert V. Abbey
Nevada State Director
Bureau of Land Management

Dear Mr. Abbey;

On behalf of myself and my family I am writing this letter to address our concerns regarding the Draft Falcon to Gonder 345 kV Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan Amendments.

- 11-1 [I have heard from reliable resources that the development of this EIS was fraught with mismanagement and misinterpretation of significant requirements as mandated under NEPA of 1969 which provides guidelines for the preparation of EIS. Resource specialists were branded by management as obstructionists because they were opposing the elimination of a number of viable alternative routes that could have been analyzed but were not. Why bring people on board to give them educated opinions then ignore what they have brought to the table? The centerline of the preferred alternative comes across the Whistler Mountains near Eureka, Nevada and just off deeded ground across from my home. I have had different contractors crawling all over this area and have noticed that this alternative had already been staked whereas none of the other alternative routes have been. Also completed are biological, soil, cultural, and field surveys. To my knowledge none of the other proposed alternatives have had any of this work started as discussed in the DEIS. This is in direct violation of the guidelines as mandated under NEPA.
- 11-2 [
- 11-3 [
- 11-4 [I currently have strewn along a road where I travel daily green tape on both sides of the road tied to sagebrush, gates and stakes. The road I travel to pump water is well traveled by these crews and is in bad shape because of the extra use. In all these months of people crawling all over I have had a helicopter land in my meadows unannounced and without permission. Never once have I even so much as had a phone call from anyone to say when or why they would be invading my home. Some of your private contractors did come by to look at cultural and wildlife aspects and let me know they were here and why. However, when the draft came out I was outraged that two separate eagle nests which are within the two mile range of the preferred alternate were not noted or mentioned at all in the DEIS. Why? The people that came to do the research are the people who told me where one of these nests were located!
- 11-5 [
- 11-6 [
- 11-7 [This ranch does not have electricity other than a simple generator. I have one power line that is behind the house but not within my vision. Now we are looking at putting this power line across my meadows just off deeded property still without the chance of our place being provided the benefits of electricity. Yet I have to be forced to look at and be exposed to the offensive lines which will benefit no one in our area.
- 11-8 [This proposed alternate route will devastate the value of our property as a whole. Our ranch has historical value which will visually be affected by the proposed route.
- 11-9 [

Sincerely,
Kelly Risi Hoekenga
KELLY RISI HOEKENGA

RECEIVED
MAIL ROOM
2001 AUG 23 AM 11:49
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

RESPONSES

Letter 11: Kelly Risi Hoekenga

11-1
Comment noted.

11-2
In addition to the descriptions of the five final route alternatives that were analyzed in the EIS, Chapter 2.0 of the EIS also contains a discussion of other alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis for various reasons, as required by NEPA. This EIS has been developed over a three year period with input from an Interdisciplinary Team of resource specialists and NEPA specialists from the BLM's Battle Mountain, Elko, and Ely Field Offices, BLM State Office, as well as from two cooperating agencies: the Nevada Division of Wildlife and State Historic Preservation Office. Numerous workshops were held over the three years to consider the variety of viewpoints shared by the Interdisciplinary Team members, encourage meaningful discussions, and facilitate collaborative decision-making.

11-3
All five of the route alternatives analyzed in the EIS were staked and subject to baseline field surveys for environmental and cultural resources. This information was used to compare the routes and to identify the environmentally preferred alternative. The methodology is discussed in Section 3.20 of the EIS and more background information is provided in Appendix C of the EIS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

11-4

On page 2-20, the EIS states that after construction, SPPC would restore existing access roads that require improvements to a condition as good or better than they were in before construction. More detailed information on reclamation of access roads would be provided in the COM Plan. SPPC would also discuss preferred access road reclamation techniques for specific areas with BLM and landowners. Please also refer to the response to Comment 9-20.

11-5

SPPC's right-of-way agent, field crews and surveyors made efforts to secure approvals and provide advance notice to property owners before surveys were conducted on private property. During construction, SPPC would continue to make good faith efforts to provide property owners and nearby residents with advance notice of construction activities in their area. BLM would instruct SPPC to add Kelly Risi Hoekenga to their list of people to be notified of construction activities.

11-6

Comment noted. Wildlife specialists from EDAW's field survey team do not recall meeting or having this conversation with the commentor. It is possible that the field crews referred to by the commentor were associated with another project, such as the fiberoptic cable that is being installed along Highway 50. Suitable nesting areas for golden eagles were surveyed during the baseline field surveys conducted for the Falcon to Gonder project EIS and would be surveyed again just prior to construction. SPPC would avoid any construction activities within a 0.5-mile radius from any occupied golden eagle nest during the nesting season, from February 15 through July 15, as stated in Mitigation Measure Special-Status Species 4 on page 3.7-25 of the EIS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

11-7

Comment noted. Visual impacts are discussed in Section 3.9 of the EIS.

11-8

Chapter 3.15 Social and Economic Values of the EIS analyzes the project's potential effects on property values of private land owners on pages 3.15-10 and 3.15-11.

11-9

Impacts to unevaluated historic ranches, including the Hay Ranch on Segment G, are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EIS on pages 3.16-26 and 3.16-27, and Mitigation Measure Cultural-8 would reduce impacts to ranches along the preferred alternative route determined to be historically significant.

COMMENT LETTER

RECEIVED
MAIL ROOM
2001 AUG 21 AM 12: 02
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

14719 Laguna Seca Dr.
Apple Valley, CA 92307

August 14, 2001

Mary Craggett
Project Manager
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

Re: Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project

Dear Ms. Craggett,

- 12-1 [Our property that may be effected by the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project is located in Crescent Valley. We already have two transmission lines on our property and adamantly do not wish to have any more transmission lines placed on or near our property.
- 12-2 [My husband and I have reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan Amendments for the project. It is our opinion that the Sierra Pacific Power Company should use the existing Designated Utility Corridor east of Elko to connect the transmission lines running from Dumphy to Wells to the transmission lines running from Gonder Station to ALT 93.
- 12-3 [Using this existing corridor should have less environmental consequences. Please consider this route for the project.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Leyrer

RESPONSES

Letter 12: Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Leyrer

12-1
Comment noted.

12-2
Comment noted.

12-3
A discussion of other alternatives that were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis, including the SWIP Corridor referred to in this letter, is included in Chapter 2.0 of the EIS on pages 2-31 and 2-37.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Letter 13: Robert C. Herrera and Clarisse Herrera

August 20, 2001

RECEIVED
MAIL ROOM
2001 AUG 21 AM 11:40
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Mary Craggett
BLM Team Leader
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

RE: Falcon to Gonder Project

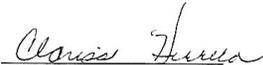
Dear Ms. Craggett:

- 13-1 [We are writing this letter to object to the Falcon to Gonder transmission line being constructed so close to our property on Collingwood Lane in Eureka County.
- 13-2 [If the proposed route is followed, this line will be constructed within ¼ mile from our house and property. We already have a power line within ½ mile from our home, and to put yet another transmission line so close is, to say the least, excessive. We believe that the noise will be very disturbing and that it will be an eye sore if located so close to our home.
- 13-3 [We left Reno eight years ago to escape noise pollution and to enjoy the scenic beauty of Eureka County. The Falcon-Gonder line will certainly put an end to any enjoyment of the scenery. There appears to be other areas to construct this line that will have less impact on private property.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,


Robert C. Herrera


Clarisse Herrera

13-1

Comment noted.

13-2

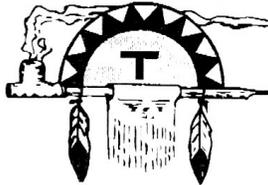
Noise impacts and mitigation measures are discussed in Section 3.11 and visual impacts and mitigation measures are discussed in Section 3.9 of the EIS.

13-3

See response to Comment 13-2. Impacts to private property also are discussed in Sections 3.13 Land Use and Access and Section 3.15, Social and Economic Values.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES



TE-MOAK TRIBE OF WESTERN SHOSHONE

525 Sunset Street • Elko, Nevada 89801
 (775) 738-9251
 FAX - (775) 738-2345

August 22, 2001

Mary Craggett, Bureau of Land Management
 Battle Mtn. Field Office
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mtn., NV 89820

Dear Ms. Craggett,

This letter is in response to the Draft EIS regarding the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project.

14-1 The alternative routes designated for this project lie directly within the Western Shoshone Aboriginal Boundary. This boundary defines the area that the Western Shoshone regard to be their homeland. Western Shoshone people have lived in this area for thousands of years. Along the chosen route, BLM and Sierra Pacific will most likely find burial sites, cultural sites, pine trees, juniper trees, cedar trees, springs, and various small and large game, **all of which are important resources to the Western Shoshone people, then and now.** It is *imperative* that there be a Western Shoshone person monitoring the project's development.

14-2 Burial sites and cultural sites are highly significant to our people, the disturbance of sites of this nature by non-Indians are humiliating and disrespectful. If sites are found, the nearest Native American Tribe should be notified *immediately*, and as a concerned party we also ask that the Te-Moak Tribe in Elko, Nevada be contacted. In accordance with the Federal Regulations, the Western Shoshone *must* be the *first* people to observe and make the decision regarding any burial sites and cultural sites that are found.

14-3 The Goshute Tribe, the Ely Shoshone Tribe, the Duckwater Tribe, the Yomba Tribe, Western Shoshone individuals that do not live on reservations, and the Te-Moak Tribe *all* have an association with the land along these routes. In some way, Western Shoshone culture will be affected by the disturbance that Sierra Pacific Power Company will be creating.

14-4 The Western Shoshone people understand that the Falcon to Gonder Project will provide additional transmission services to a large portion of Nevada and northeastern California. However, we have reservations about the way Sierra Pacific and the BLM will handle the findings of traditional and cultural properties. If you have any questions, please call me at (775) 738-8145.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer L. Bell, Environmental Coordinator
 Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone

Letter 14: Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone

14-1

Cultural surveys have been completed for all of the analyzed alternatives. Western Shoshone observers accompanied archaeological survey crews during these surveys. Western Shoshone monitors will be required during project activities in or near areas identified as Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs).

14-2

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requires notification of the nearest Native American Tribe when burials are discovered. Western Shoshone Tribal Councils will be notified if other cultural sites are discovered during project activities when impacts to these sites cannot be avoided.

14-3

Comment noted.

14-4

Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Letter 15: Western Shoshone Defense Project



WESTERN SHOSHONE DEFENSE PROJECT

P.O. Box 211308, Crescent Valley, Nevada 89821
 phone: 775-468-0230, fax: 775-468-0237, email: wsdp@igc.org

August 22nd, 2001

Mary Craggett, BLM Team Leader
 Battle Mountain BLM
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Re: Comments on the Falcon to Gondor 345kV Transmission Project DEIS

Dear Ms. Craggett,

15-1 We would like to provide the following comments regarding the Draft EIS for the Falcon-Gondor Transmission Line project. The Western Shoshone Defense Project was created in 1991 by the Western Shoshone National Council to assist in efforts to protect Western Shoshone rights and homelands for present and future generations based upon cultural and spiritual traditions. The proposed transmission line is located entirely within Western Shoshone territory as recognized by the United States within the Treaty of Peace and Friendship entered into with the Western Shoshone Nation in 1863. This transmission line represents a significant development within our territory, and unfortunately this has not been adequately discussed in the DEIS.

15-2 **Lack of benefits to Western Shoshone communities**
 The Treaty of Peace and Friendship negotiated at Ruby Valley, represents an agreement by the Western Shoshone to share their land with the white people for specific limited purposes, which include the construction of a railroad, telegraph line, unimpeded travels and economic activities such as ranching and mining. Oral history passed on through the elders tells us that the Shoshone were promised to be paid for anything taken from their territory, this was to be a form of rent for the use of our lands. However the United States has chosen to disregard the Treaty and has pursued a racially discriminatory policy of denying Western Shoshone citizens their property rights and use and access rights to their traditional homelands. This has been justified by the proceedings of the Indian Claims Commission and subsequent Court cases which used the ICC proceedings to declare all of our rights to our lands have been lost. Thus we find ourselves strangers in our own land, most of our communities remain dependent on Federal funding and live on completely inadequate trust lands. This is an unacceptable situation. We want to take care of ourselves and carry on our unique culture and way of life. We cannot do this without access to land and resources. Instead we are told we can have a one time cash payment of \$26,000,000 for all of our lands and rights.

15-3 The Falcon to Gondor Project perpetuates this situation. The DEIS explains that the BLM will be paid for the use of the land, it states that compensation will be given to individual property owners, and property taxes will be paid to the counties for the value of line improvements. The DEIS estimates a tax income for the State of Nevada between 35-37 million dollars over a forty year period. Yet the Western Shoshone receive nothing, because somebody "found" that our rights were extinguished. It appears that the only those who have the legal ability to impact or delay this project are receiving monetary benefits from it. Because you tell us we are powerless and have no rights, there is no apparent need to provide the Western Shoshone people with any compensation.

15-4 **Lack of Alternatives and Problematic Public Process**
 After reviewing the DEIS, one is left with the impression that the important decisions have already been made. As it reads, the Public Utilities Commission has already made a determination that this project is in the public interest. This determination was made without consideration for the environmental /cultural impacts and without consideration of U.S. responsibilities to the Western Shoshone under the Treaty and the supposed trust relationship that exists. There seems to be no integration of the various permitting processes and between the various regulatory bodies involved.

The Western Shoshone Defense Project is an affiliate of the Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development 1

15-1
 Comment noted. See 3.19 for discussion of Native American Concerns.

15-2
 Comment noted.

15-3
 Comment noted.

15-4
 BLM is not empowered by law to address Treaty issues. A claim for the land was brought before the United Indian Claims Commission in 1979, which awarded \$26 million to the Western Shoshone in exchange for extinguishing all tribal claims. During the past two decades several courts, including the Supreme Court, have upheld that decision.

After reviewing a wide range of transmission options identified by Sierra Pacific Power Company during its Electric Resource Planning process, the State of Nevada Public Utilities Commission (PUC) selected the Falcon to Gonder 345 kV transmission line in 1999 as the best option for addressing projected system capacity deficiencies that could result in blackouts or other service limitations as early as the year 2003. The PUC reconfirmed this in an Interim Order issued on November 13, 2001.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

15-4 (cont.)

To identify potential routes for the line to link the Falcon and Gonder substations, the utility worked with an Interdisciplinary Team of agency representatives from BLM's Battle Mountain, Elko and Ely Field Offices, as well as from the Nevada Division of Wildlife and State Historic Preservation Office, which served as cooperating agencies.

In 1999, BLM initiated formal consultation on the project with 14 separate tribal governments or inter-tribal organizations. Meetings with BLM's Tribal Relations Coordinator, Dr. Roberta McGonagle, and interviews with a consulting ethnographer followed to identify Native American concerns for consideration in the planning process and environmental analysis. Information about the project and protocol for data collection during cultural resource field surveys were presented to the Ely Tribal Council and the Yomba Tribal Council for input and discussion. Consultation and meetings with tribal representatives on this project are ongoing.

15-5

In addition to the regulatory agency coordination discussed in the response to Comment 15-4 above, BLM solicited input from federal, state and local permitting agencies through the NEPA scoping process, as well as during the Draft EIS review period. Permits that may be required by other agencies are listed on page 1-17 of the EIS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

- 15-6 The project lacks alternatives, there is essentially only one alternative with slight variations of where exactly it will cross central Nevada. The No Action alternative as stated seems non-viable, given the fact that choosing it will require emergency planning. There is insufficient information to know if any of the other alternatives were truly possible. The hurried nature of this project suggests that other alternatives might have existed if proper planning had been done earlier. A true evaluation of alternatives available would require an in-depth understanding of power markets in the west, and electrical transmission engineering, knowledge we do not have. Like most projects evaluated by the BLM, the project proponent provides most of the information and evaluation, leaving the public and tribes with little to no independent analysis.
- 15-7
- 15-8
- 15-9 BLM Resource Management Plans are outdated and developed without consideration for the Treaty or the supposed trust relationship with the Western Shoshone. What is the point of identifying utility corridors in any plan, if a company can ignore those corridors and develop proposals which maximize their economic gain? These corridors are essentially meaningless. There has been no discussion on a local or national level about the on-the-ground implications of electrical deregulation. In order for a "free market" in electricity to exist there needs to be an enormous increase in transmission lines across America. We do not want to see our lands covered by a web of powerlines. We want to see more local production of electricity to meet local needs, using renewable technologies such as wind and solar. Nevada is a perfect place to start this, however the construction of more powerlines increases reliance on a power system that has been destructive to man and nature.
- 15-10
- 15-11 **Insufficient Mitigation for Sage Grouse**
There is not a sufficient guarantee that sage grouse will be protected from this development. The sage hen remains a very important bird to us from a cultural and spiritual perspective. We have shared this land with the sage hen for thousands of years and we want it to stay that way. We would like to see a firm commitment on the part of Sierra Pacific and the BLM to avoid all active leks by a 2-mile radius by rerouting lines if necessary. There is no data to suggest how effective perch deterrents are and no plan to address areas where predation from the lines is a problem. Monitoring is not mitigation, there needs to be contingency plans. There also appears to be no firm commitment monetarily to address these potential problems, especially if the initial mitigation money runs out. These issues must be addressed before this project is permitted and allowed to move forward, especially as the sage grouse may be listed as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act.
- 15-12 **Inadequate Analysis of Environmental Justice and Cultural Impact Issues**
Your discussion of environmental justice is purely academic and does not address the spirit of environmental justice. The hunting and consumption of sage hen is a fundamental part of our culture and history. We have a unique relationship and understanding of these birds. Thus impacts to the sage hen have a direct and disproportionate impact on traditional Western Shoshone people. By reducing or eliminating the sage hen, you are preventing us from continuing our traditional cultural practices. And culture like language will die when it is not practiced. When our culture dies, we cease to exist. And the genocide you have started becomes complete. We do not use these words lightly.
You have limited your discussion of Native American communities to Federally recognized tribes. We are not aware that any part of the executive order on environmental justice mandates this. This suggests that the only Native communities that exist are those the Federal government chooses to recognize. We are not Western Shoshone because the federal government says we are, we are Western Shoshone because that is who the Creator has made us, and we continue to try and live by the laws and traditions that have been passed down to us. Crescent Valley has a Western Shoshone community and it is as real as the communities in Battle Mountain and Elko, South Fork etc. It consists of my extended family, the Damn Band of the Western Shoshone Nation. We have occupied this area since before the arrival of white settlers. By ignoring us, you seek to render us invisible, unimportant. But we are here, and intend to remain here for thousands of years into the future.
We don't want to see this powerline pass through our lands. We especially do not want it to pass through the Cortez canyon area. Mt Tenabo is a very significant place to us, culturally and spiritually. We still gather foods and medicines here and use the pinyon and juniper trees. Construction of these lines through that area would significantly impact the use of this area by our family and other Western Shoshone who have connections to this place. We also believe it will impact the remaining sage grouse in the Grass Valley and Pine Valley areas.
- 15-13
- 15-14

15-6

Please refer to responses to Comments 15-4 and 15-8 for discussion about how the route alternatives were developed.

15-7

The no action alternative would result in continuation of BLM's current management practices in the project study area and denial of the action. Denial of Sierra Pacific Power Company's right-of-way grant application would avoid environmental impacts associated with this project in this region. However, environmental impacts could still occur elsewhere if other projects are proposed by the Nevada Public Utilities Commission to compensate for projected deficiencies in Sierra Pacific's transmission system and ensure a reliable supply of electricity for its customers in northern Nevada. Other projects could include another transmission line or a new power plant. If no other projects are brought on line by the summer of 2003, Sierra Pacific customers could experience blackouts or other service limitations. That is why Sierra Pacific Power Company would need to begin emergency planning with the Nevada Public Utilities Commission. For more discussion of the no action alternative, please refer to pages 3.20-10 through 3.20-14.

15-8

BLM began environmental analyses for this project in 1999 and considered a number of alternatives before narrowing it down to the final five routes that were analyzed in detail in the EIS. Alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis are discussed in Chapter 2 of the EIS on pages 2-30 through 2-34. In addition, Sierra Pacific Power Company considered an extensive range of transmission options during its Electric Resource Planning process, as explained on pages 2-34 through 2-38.

15-9

Discussion of BLM's utility corridor designations and planning process is provided in the Executive Summary and Chapter 5 of the EIS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

15-10

Comment noted.

15-11

Please refer to the response to Comment 8-19.

15-12

There will be no disproportionate environmental impacts to any Native American community; therefore, there are no Environmental Justice issues to analyze. Please refer to the response to Comment 8-19 regarding sage grouse.

15-13

Native Americans not affiliated with Federally recognized tribes are reflected in census data presented in Table 3.18-1. Data on Native American issues (EIS Section 3.19) were collected from Native American representatives whether or not they were affiliated with a recognized tribe.

15-14

Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Need for Western Shoshone Involvement in Cultural Resource Decisions.

One of the big issues concerning us is the alienation and theft of our history by the archaeological work done for various projects such as these transmission lines. Our stories and history are written across the landscape, yet every time a big project comes, archaeological firms are hired and our history, artifacts, and remains are removed. It is here where Sierra Pacific can make a break from the past and work to include the Western Shoshone in decisions effecting cultural resources.

15-15

First, we would recommend a qualified Western Shoshone monitor be on site during construction of the powerlines. More importantly however is the participation of the Western Shoshone in the development of any mitigation plans for cultural resources impacted by the project. Any agreements between the State Historic Preservation Office and the BLM must also include representatives from Western Shoshone communities. For too long the Western Shoshone have been excluded from the gathering and interpretation of our history. By including representatives from concerned Tribal governments, organizations and communities in these cultural resource decisions, you have made significant progress in relations with the Western Shoshone.

15-16

We would also recommend monetary support for the Shoshone documentation/interpretation of Shoshone sites impacted by the powerlines. Significant sites exist near the Humboldt River, which could possibly also be tied to interpretation plans of the planned Emigrant Trail Center. We want to make clear however that any moneys donated to this historical interpretation should be earmarked for the Shoshone to tell their own story, rather than outside experts. Details of how this mitigation would be accomplished need to be worked out, yet it could provide Sierra Pacific with an opportunity to support Western Shoshone efforts at cultural preservation and cross-cultural understanding. We would like to be a part of this effort, but it cannot happen without the support from other Western Shoshone communities.

We hope you will take these considerations to heart and make a decision reagrding this project that fully respects and recognizes the Teraty based relationship the U.S. has with the Western Shoshone. Yu have great responsibility on your shoulders and we hope you will exercise it in a fashion that benefits both our peoples.

Sincerely,



for Carrie Dann

Citizen, Western Shoshone Nation
 Member, Western Shoshone National Council
 Executive Director, Western Shoshone Defense Project

15-15

See response to comment 14-1.

15-16

There is a Western Shoshone representative on the Interpretive Plan Committee for the California National Trails Interpretive Center. Comment noted about possible donations to the California National Trails Interpretive Center for interpretation of Western Shoshone history.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Letter 16: Utah Associated Municipal Power System



2825 E. Cottonwood Parkway
 Suite 200
 Salt Lake City, Utah 84121-7077
 Phone: 201-505-3938
 Tel. Fico: 820-872-5951
 Fax: 801-531-2687

August 22, 2001

SENT VIA FAX AND U.S. MAIL

Ms. Mary Craggett, Team Leader
 Bureau of Land Management
 Battle Mountain Field Office
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mountain, NV 89520-1420

RE: Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project, N-63162

Dear Ms. Craggett:

16-1

Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS) is pleased to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project. UAMPS supports the construction of the Project. UAMPS is a political subdivision of the State of Utah that provides comprehensive wholesale electric energy service, on a non-profit basis, to community owned power systems throughout the Intermountain West. UAMPS serves 45 members located in Nevada, Utah, Arizona, California, Idaho and New Mexico. The ability to provide service to our members is critically dependent on regional transmission systems.

16-2

The electric transmission grid for the Western United States has many points of congestion that limit the transport of power from one region to another particularly on peak periods. The Northern Nevada electric control area is highly constrained for the import of energy into the control area and is limited in the export of energy out of the control area. The ability to transport energy from one region to another is highly desirable to minimize costs and insure reliability.

16-3

There are seasonal electric demand differences between the Northwest and Southwest and limited transmission to fully access the generation resources. Regional temperature ranges and changes greatly affect the electric demands in the West and the construction of additional transmission facilities will assist the effective utilization of regional generation resources.

The Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project will provide a significant improvement to the existing transmission grid. The Project will provide alternative transmission paths to transport

16-1

Comment noted.

16-2

Comment noted.

16-3

Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Ms. Mary Craggett, Team Leader
 August 22, 2001
 Page 2

16-4

energy from the Northwest or Southwest through and to energy users in the Great Basin. The existing 345kV Falcon Substation located west of Carlin Nevada is presently connected to the 345kV Valmy Substation at the Valmy 650 megawatt generating station. The construction a new 345kV transmission line to Gonder Substation, near Ely, Nevada, provides a strong tie to two 230kV transmission lines connected to Utah. With the recently built Reno-Alturas 345kV transmission line, this completes a Northwest to Southwest connection to more effectively utilize regional generation and transmission resources.

16-4

Comment noted.

16-5

UAMPS has been an active participant in the regional energy market and operations for 20 years. UAMPS strongly believes the Falcon to Gonder 345kV project will provide substantial improvements to the ability to provide reliable and efficient energy supply in the region.

16-5

Comment noted.

Sincerely,



Douglas O. Hunter
 General Manager

/jpm

COMMENT LETTER

Goods From The Woods
 14125 Hwy C.
 Licking Mo.
 573-674-4567
 www.pinenut.com
 penny@pinenut.com

August 21, 2001

Mary Craggett
 Bureau of Land Management Battle Mountain Field Office
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mountain, Nv.
 Faxed 775-635-4035

NV 89820-2332Re: Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project, NV 063-EIS00-27 1790/1600 N-63162 2800

Dear Ms. Craggett,

17-1 [I would like to offer the following comment upon the right-of-way request made by Sierra Pacific Power Company . BLM must review the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this proposal more completely.

NEED

17-2 [The need for this powerline is not adequately justified. First, there is not presently a need for this powerline, and where is the rapidly growing customer base. It is not sufficient to simply state that the area is growing. It is also insufficient to use the reason that the area might want to export electricity in the future. I am concerned that the real purpose for this action may not be disclosed. Is this in fact, a powerline to facilitate the construction of a vehicle to carry nuclear waste; this is mentioned as a Native American concern on page 3.19-11.

17-3 [Could the project's intent be to facilitate the construction of a possible gas power plant and pipeline in Elko by Coastal Corporation, and the Cortez Joint Venture Pediment Mine Project (4-8) The BLM must fully research and disclose the long range plans for this proposed utility action.

NATIVE VEGETATION

17-4 [How will the BLM ensure that the contractor is not overly liberal in their definition of the trees that need to be cut? Will the BLM mark the trees that need to be cut? Of special interest to me, is mature pinyon pine. The species p.monophylla does not reach maturity until it is between 75 and 100 years of age. Mature trees produce good seed stock, and more pinenuts for both commercial harvest and forest health. Mule Deer, rabbits, mice and birds, all feed from the pinyon. Mature trees are critical to the health of this environment.

17-5 [In Alaska, the spruce beetle infestation was a direct result of the slash which had been left on the ground after creating the utility corridors. We must be sure that the trees and vegetation, which are felled in this proposed process are handled adequately.

RESPONSES

Letter 17: Goods From the Woods

17-1
 Comment noted.

17-2
 Please see response to Comment 9-2 and 9-3.

17-3
 Please see response to Comment 9-4.

17-4
 Please see response to Comment 9-5.

17-5
 BLM recognizes the importance of mature trees and would require SPPC to minimize loss of mature pinyon pines and provide compensation for all woodland products lost due to project construction and maintenance. The abundance of pine trees in the general area, however, is expected to provide sufficient food for wildlife during and after project construction.

17-6
 In accordance with Mitigation Measure Vegetation-5, SPPC or its contractor would retain the woodland products and compensate BLM for them. Tree clearing procedures will be determined through consultation with the BLM based on site conditions, i.e., accessibility, terrain, and environmental constraints. During clearing operations, trees will be placed at the edge of the construction corridor. During reclamation activities, cleared trees may be used for erosion control, such as mulch, chipping, lop and scatter, slope breakers, etc.; creating wildlife habitat; or as off-road vehicle deterrents. Placement in cleared areas would be

COMMENT LETTER

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17-7 [Page 3.4-19, the DEIS mentions restoration of other, already damaged wetlands if currently intact wetlands are destroyed in the construction process. What sort of restoration would be required for the damaged wetlands?

17-8 [Page 3.4-19, the DEIS refers to a "non-vegetative" material that would be used to stabilize the banks of streams. What is this?

INVASIVE/NON-NATIVE SPECIES

17-9 [Where is the analysis of cheatgrass, tumbleweed, and halogeton in the noxious/invasive weed survey? Cheatgrass in particular has become a well documented fire starter on public lands. The BLM cannot ignore this threat. As long as you have a contractor why not require them to manually dig out all of the weed-infested areas? Perhaps, require construction in cheat grass areas during the time seeds are not present. Place this as a condition upon the action. Alternatively, place stringent requirements to lessen the likelihood cheat grass will be spread. For example: Wash tires, vehicles, clothing, daily during times of seed proliferation.

Page 3.5-10

17-10 ["where appropriate, native vegetation would be reestablished."
 What is the criteria? What is the plan? If native vegetation is not replanted, what would be replanted?

WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

17-11 [What is the tolerance of big game for powerline disturbance? If you do not know this information, how can you accurately predict the effect that this powerline will have on wildlife? Is a buffer of only 100 feet enough for raptors (3.6-16)? Once again, could we consider breaking the project into seasonal construction phases, based on the bio- region, so as to minimize the impact?

17-12 [

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

17-13 [Page 3.7-29, the DEIS states if historic leks become active, or new leks are discovered, funds from the mitigation account would be used to install perch deterrents. If these funds are not available, "other SPPC funds may be available to install perch deterrents on a case-by-case basis." These funds should be required to be available for the duration of the powerline's existence. It should be part of the yearly maintenance. What sort of monitoring is involved with this?

17-14 [Page 3.7-31 details the employee training requirements. What sort of penalty will be enforced if everyone is not properly trained, or the sensitive species are not protected? Why does the BLM not know whether the 230 kV line can be retrofitted with perch deterrents (3.7-35)? This is a key

17-15 [piece of information that should have been analyzed in this document. Obviously whether or not this line can be retrofitted with perch deterrents has a huge impact upon sensitive species sage grouse.

RESPONSES

approved by the BLM. Trees that cannot remain in cleared areas may be cut and left to be collected as firewood in areas approved by the BLM or removed from the site. Activities associated with tree clearing may not interfere with reclamation activities, e.g., chipped material would not be spread in a manner that would inhibit revegetation. Specific methods and the type and amount of vegetation to be spread would be provided in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan. BLM would consider best management practices that could help avoid such infestations.

17-7

Please see response to Comment 9-6.

17-8

Please see response to Comment 9-7.

17-9

Please refer to the response to comment 9-8 regarding cheatgrass and the potential for "manual digging". Cheatgrass is already present or abundant throughout most of the project area. The seeds would come in from adjacent undisturbed areas, regardless of whether or not the seed setting period is avoided. Measures would be implemented to lessen the likelihood of cheatgrass seed being spread as a result of this project. These measures include cleaning stations, as suggested by the commentor.

17-10

Please see response to Comment 9-9.

17-11

Please see response to Comment 9-11.

7-12

Please see comment under 9-11 and 9-12. Construction windows are defined for wildlife and special-status species. Periods of closure for construction may be found under mitigation measures for each species requiring such actions.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Goods From The Woods
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17-16 [What evidence does the BLM have that the sage grouse in this area are non-migratory? ^Δ Framework to Assist in Making Sensitive Species Habitat Assessments for BLM-administered Public Lands in Idaho must be reviewed and adopted for this jurisdiction.

17-17 [LIVESTOCK
 What happens with the AUM's?

17-18 [NOISE
 Has the BLM analyzed the affect of noise upon sensitive species? Without this vital piece of information, how can the BLM ensure that they are not adversely affecting sensitive species? Has the BLM analyzed the noises that are inaudible to humans yet audible to wildlife? What affect will these noises have upon birds and wildlife? What affect will ground-borne vibrations have upon animals, particularly those that nest upon the ground, such as sage grouse? What affect will ground-borne vibrations have upon the animals that burrow? If the BLM does not have this information, you cannot make an informed decision.

17-19 [

17-20 [ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS
 I do not believe the BLM has fully examined the effect of this upon wild life and vegetation. Especially birds.

17-21 [AIR QUALITY
 Page 3.12-8, the DEIS refers to "restore[ing] roads to as good or better condition." I dont wish to see graded and paved roads into the desert. Do you plan on using a "non-toxic" soil-binder to control dust?

17-22 [RECREATION/WILDERNESS
 Page3.14-13,
 the DEIS states that "improved access roads may have a slightly beneficial effect by providing increased opportunities for dispersed recreational 4WD or general sight-seeing." I do not see this as a benefit. How does this effect wildlife and birds? This increased access would also have a detrimental effect upon primitive recreation opportunities.

17-23 [ECONOMIC
 With expanded access to remote are, communities must anticipate greater fire supression expenses, search and rescue, road maintenance (once you build it, you must maintain it!)

17-24 [CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES
 Page 3.16-21, it states that the powerline will avoid NHRP-eligible sites "where feasible." Cultural sites should be avoided at all costs. What monitoring is in place?

17-13
 Please see response to Comment 9-13.

17-14
 Please see response to Comment 9-14.

17-15
 Please see response to Comment 9-15.

17-16
 Please see response to Comment 9-16.

17-17
 Please see response to Comment 9-17.

17-18
 Please see response to Comment 9-18.

17-19
 Please see response to Comment 9-18.

17-20
 Chapter 3.10 of the EIS analyzes potential EMF and electrical effects from transmission lines and states that normally operating high voltage lines are not known to produce adverse effects in livestock or wildlife. The transmission line would be designed to comply with the National Electric Safety Code. Please also refer to page 3.8-8, Livestock and Crops for the discussion on this. Please also refer to the response to Comment 9-18.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

17-21

Please see responses to Comments 9-20 and 9-21.

17-22

Please see responses to Comments 9-22 and 9-23

17-23

If the cause of fire is determined to be the result of the project, Sierra Pacific Power Company (SPPC) would provide compensation for project-related fire suppression expenses, and if appropriate search and rescue. As the project would not involve construction of new paved or permanent dirt access roads, road maintenance would not be required. Existing access roads used for construction of the project would be restored to a condition as good or better than they were before construction. SPPC would consult with BLM and private property owners to determine their preferences and requirements for road reclamation in certain sensitive areas. Please also see the responses to comments 9-20 and 9-27.

17-24

Please see response to Comment 9-25.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Goods From The Woods
 14125 Hwy C.
 Licking Mo.
 573-674-4567
 www.pinenut.com
 penny@pinenut.com

17-25 [On page 3.17-5, it makes a similar statement that paleontological resources will be avoided "where feasible." The project should not be allowed to continue if it cannot avoid paleontological and cultural sites.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

17-26 [I would like a copy of all applicable BMPs, including, but not limited to, BMPs that preserve existing hydrology, prevent soil erosion, only allow a minimum of disturbance to riparian and wetland areas, and reclamation BMPs.

RECLAMATION PLAN

17-27 [A primary priority must be to leave as few roads as possible in the area.

17-28 [Page E-3, non-native seeds in areas that are "highly susceptible to infestation." Please define highly susceptible to infestation. Would the areas seeded to non-native seeds be rehabilitated to native vegetation?

17-29 [Explain more about greenstrips (E-5).

17-30 [Page E-6, it states that "disturbed areas to be seeded following construction would be determined by a qualified reclamation ecologist and appropriate resource specialist" (E-6). Why would you not seed all of the disturbed areas? Locally collected native seeds should be used in all disturbed areas.

17-31 [Page E-9, it states that utility would not be responsible for "weeds found beyond the right-of-way." I do not agree. Let this be a condition for the easement.

17-32 [On page E-11, it states that the reference sites for reclamation would be the site prior to construction of the powerline, or "representative areas which have the same target plant community adjacent to the affected area."

17-33 [Where is the baseline measurement? The utility should be required to survey the whole area before construction of the powerline, and use that as a baseline. How are spur roads to be reclaimed?

I wish to see all this issues reviewed in the EIS. Thank you,

Sincerely,

17-25

Please see response to Comment 9-25.

17-26

BMPs are contained throughout the EIS in the various mitigation measures as well as in the project description in Chapter 2. Please also see response to Comment 9-26.

17-27

Please see response to Comment 9-27.

17-28

Please see responses to Comments 9-28 and 9-29.

17-29

Please see response to Comment 9-29.

17-30

Please see response to Comment 9-30.

17-31

Please see response to Comment 9-31.

17-32

Please see responses to Comments 9-32 and 9-33.

17-33

Please see responses to Comments 9-33 and 11-3.

COMMENT LETTER



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
 MAIL ROOM REGION IX
 75 Hawthorne Street
 San Francisco, CA 94105-3901
 2001 AUG 27 PH 2:45
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

	ACT	INF	INT	DATE
DM				
ADM				
P&EC	✓			8-23-01
SS				
RR				
NR	✓			
FIRE				
TFS				
FILE/LIBRARY/TOSS (CIRCLE ONE)				

RESPONSES

Letter 18: United States Environmental Protection Agency

August 21, 2001

Mary Craggett
 Bureau of Land Management
 Battle Mountain Field Office
 50 Bastian Road
 Battle Mountain, NV 89820-1420

Dear Ms. Craggett:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the **Falcon to Gonder 345 kV Transmission Project, White Pine, Elko, Eureka, and Lander counties, Nevada**. Our review and comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementation Regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508, and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

Sierra Pacific Power Company (SPPC) has applied for a right-of-way (ROW) grant from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to construct, operate, and maintain a new 345kV transmission line in north central Nevada. The DEIS evaluates alternatives for constructing a new transmission line that would extend approximately 165 to 185 miles between the Falcon and Gonder substations. The transmission line would be supported by 725 to 820 tubular steel H-frame structures and angle towers that would vary in height from 75 to 130 feet. The project also includes expansion and installation of additional facilities at the existing Falcon and Gonder substations. The DEIS also analyzes the impacts of amending the Shoshone-Eureka, Elko, and Egan Resource Management Plans. Five route alternatives and the No Action alternative are evaluated in this DEIS.

We have rated this DEIS as EC-2 -- Environmental Concerns-Insufficient Information (see enclosed "Summary of Rating Definitions and Follow-Up Action"). Our concerns primarily regard the measures that would be used to minimize and mitigate project impacts to water quality. We recommend that additional information be included in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) regarding Clean Water Act Section 404 compliance, water quality mitigation measures, and polychlorinated biphenyls. Our specific comments are enclosed.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

2

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. If you have any questions, please call me at (415) 744-1584 or Jeanne Geselbracht at (415) 744-1576. Please send a copy of the FEIS to this office (mailcode CMD-2) at the same time it is filed with our Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,



Lisa Hanf, Manager
Federal Activities Office

Enclosures

003369

cc: Allen Biaggi, NDEP
Nancy Kang, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Reno

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Falcon to Gonder 345 kV Transmission Project DEIS
 EPA Comments - August, 2001

Clean Water Act Section 404

18-1

The DEIS discusses the need for a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit for the proposed project. It appears that an individual 404 permit, rather than a nationwide permit, may be appropriate for this project based on the number of watercourse crossings involved in each route alternative (DEIS, Table 3.3-3). If an individual permit is required, EPA will review the project for compliance with Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Materials (40 CFR 230), promulgated pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act ("404(b)(1) Guidelines"). Pursuant to 40 CFR 230, any permitted discharge into waters of the U.S. must be the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) available to achieve the project purpose. Although a jurisdictional delineation has not been conducted for the project yet, it appears that the proposed alternative [Pine Valley(a)] would cross 271 watercourses, more watercourses than any other alternative. It is possible that an analysis in accordance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines would find that the proposed alternative is not the LEDPA. The FEIS should include an evaluation of the project alternatives in this context in order to demonstrate the project's compliance with the 404(b)(1) Guidelines.

18-2

The DEIS discusses general measures that would be taken to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to riparian or wetland vegetation. It is unclear whether a commitment is being made to take these same measures for *all* waters of the U.S. once they are delineated. The FEIS and Record of Decision (ROD) should indicate a commitment to these measures for all waters of the U.S. If, under the proposed project, dredged or fill material would be discharged into waters of the U.S., the ROD should include the mitigation plan and commitments by BLM and SPPC to implement the plan and conduct compliance and effectiveness monitoring.

18-3

The mitigation plan should specifically discuss how potential impacts would be minimized and mitigated. This discussion should include: (a) acreage and habitat type of waters of the U.S. that would be created or restored; (b) water sources to maintain the mitigation area; (c) the revegetation plans including the numbers and age of each species to be planted; (d) maintenance and monitoring plans, including performance standards to determine mitigation success; (e) the size and location of mitigation zones; (f) the parties that would be ultimately responsible for the plan's success; and (g) contingency plans that would be enacted if the original plan fails. Compensatory mitigation should be implemented in advance of the impacts to avoid habitat losses due to the lag time between the occurrence of the impact and successful mitigation.

Other Water Quality Issues

According to the DEIS (p. 3.3-14), SPPC would prepare a stream crossing plan (SCP) and ensure compliance of the construction contractor with it. The SCP would address measures

18-1

Delineation of waters of the United States for the preferred route alternative would be conducted and the findings compiled for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for review in conjunction with the permit application. Guidance from the USACE chief in the Reno office would be obtained on the methods to delineate jurisdictional features. Impacts to jurisdictional wetlands and other waters of the United States would be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Well and spring protection plan as well as a stream crossings, springs and wetland protection plan would be prepared as part of the COM Plan for the proposed project. These plans would include wetlands and drainages in jurisdictional basins as well as those not under USACE jurisdiction.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the project appears to qualify for a Nationwide 12 permit. If during the permitting process it would be determined by the USACE that an individual permit would be needed, SPPC would work with the USACE to obtain such a permit and comply with permit requirements.

18-2

The methods that would be outlined in the stream crossings, springs and wetlands protection plan (part of the COM Plan) would be aimed at the protection of all drainages in the project corridor, including those under USACE jurisdiction, those under Nevada Department of Environmental Protection jurisdiction and those considered non-jurisdictional. Most drainages that would be crossed by the project are intermittent or ephemeral and carry water only for brief periods in the rainy season or after seasonal storm events. Most of the drainages would be crossed in their dry states and environmental compliance monitors would ensure that measures outlined in the COM Plan would be followed.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

18-3

Some of the information requested by the commentor, such as performance standard and monitoring requirements as well as methods used for revegetation would be included in the COM Plan. However, other specific information requested, such as acreage and habitat types of waters to be restored, water sources for specific areas, and number and age of species to be planted cannot be determined adequately, until the delineation has been conducted and verified by the USACE and the verified map has been overlaid with the final project design. This would take place during the permitting process for the project. Final wetland mitigation acreages by habitat type as well as potential compensatory mitigation requirements would be determined in cooperation with the USACE and annual monitoring reports would be submitted to the USACE in compliance with all requirements related to the 404 permit.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Falcon to Gonder 345 kV Transmission Project DEIS
 EPA Comments - August, 2001

- 18-4 [to protect water quality, flow conditions, and associated cultural and biological resources in the area of potential impact. The SCP, identifying and describing the specific best management practices and monitoring measures, should be included in the FEIS. It should also be noted that, when a 404 permit is issued, measures required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would be incorporated into this plan.
- 18-5 [Mitigation Measure Water-4 indicates that SPPC would repair any erosion created runoff from project facilities. The FEIS should clarify that this requirement would be applicable over the lifetime of the ROW grant, not just during the construction phase.
- 18-6 [Mitigation Measures Water-5a and 5b indicate that the construction contractor would avoid soil disturbing activities within 100 feet of any spring or well without implementation of proper best management practices (BMPs). The FEIS should identify and describe these BMPs.
- 18-7 [Mitigation Measure Water-7a indicates that in some areas construction using helicopters may be the least environmentally damaging approach to limit access road clearing. The FEIS should identify who would determine where and when helicopters should be used in place of conventional construction methods, and the criteria that would be used to make these determinations. Would the construction contractor or SPPC, both of whom have financial interests in the project, be making these decisions?
- Toxic Substances**
- 18-8 [The FEIS should discuss whether the proposed project would involve the disturbance and/or removal of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) which may be in active use or in storage. It is unclear whether PCBs are currently in use in transformers or electrical equipment, or whether PCBs may be in storage in areas subject to project-related work. If so, the FEIS should provide a discussion regarding their location, volume, and how they would be handled and/or disposed.

- 18-4
 The stream crossing plan would be prepared as part of the COM Plan and would include measures required by the USACE as part of the 404 permit as well as State permit requirements.
- 18-5
 Following construction and reclamation, SPPC would return within one year to confirm that erosion control features and BMPs are functioning and make repairs where needed. This would be addressed in the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan.
- 18-6
 BMPs aimed at the protection of well and springs would be included in the well and spring protection plan, which would be developed as part of the COM plan.
- 18-7
 SPPC would determine where and when helicopters would be used by consulting with the construction contractor, once that contractor is hired. Criteria that would be used to make the determination as to where helicopter construction is necessary could include: accessibility of terrain, steepness of slopes, worker safety considerations, availability of helicopters, avoidance of sensitive resources, costs, schedule, and other considerations. SPPC and the construction contractor also would consult with the BLM Environmental Compliance Manager. While use of helicopters for tower transport and installation activities would reduce disturbance, some ground-based equipment still would be needed for excavations, tower installation and wire tensioning. Helicopter construction would also create additional disturbance at the required fly yards, or staging areas, one located approximately every 10 miles along the construction corridor in helicopter construction areas.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

18-8

According to Sierra Pacific Power Company, the Falcon and Gonder substations have been tested and do not contain, use or store PCBs. The Falcon to Gonder project would use food grade mineral oil as the cooling agent for transformers at substations and on transmission line towers (personal communication with Shauna Adams, SPPC, September 18, 2001).

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Letter 19: John and Nancy Minoletti

BLM Battle Mountain Office
 ATTN: Mary Craggett
 50 Bastian Rd.
 Battle Mountain, NV 89820

To Mary Craggett:

19-1

Our farm is in the proposed path of the new Sierra Pacific Power line. The line is going to run right through the middle of our farm if it is approved by BLM. Though the plan has been in the making for some time, we were never contacted by Sierra Pacific Power line and we have recently found that the route through our farm is the favored route.

19-2

This will be very unfortunate for us since a power line through the middle of our fields will make it impossible for us to irrigate with our wheel line and the value of our property will diminish. Our most serious concern is the hazard to our health; that a power line carrying that much electricity will be passing only 300 feet from our home.

19-3

19-4

We are hoping that when you decide which route the Power Company will take, you will take our livelihood and health into consideration and choose an alternative route. If the line is to come through our property, at least you can have them go another 600 feet along our fence lines instead. That would be at least 900 feet from our house and would not ruin our fields.

19-5

19-6

We would appreciate it if you could keep us updated on the latest decisions about where the power line will go and anything else that pertains to our farm and family.

Thank you,



John and Nancy Minoletti

19-1

Sierra Pacific Power Company contacted the Minoletti's in May 2001 and met with them at their house on June 20, 2001, to discuss the project, potential impacts to their property, and possible mitigation measures. The preferred route alternative would run through the bottom third of the Minoletti's approximate 80 acre parcel.

19-2

Sierra Pacific Power Company has discussed with the Minoletti's strategies for routing the transmission line around their property and keeping tower structures out of their fields by spanning across irrigated areas. Sierra Pacific Power Company has determined that it is possible to span across their fields by placing tower structures just inside or outside their fences. Only a small area around the structures that would be placed just inside their fence lines would impact their fields (personal communication with John Berdrow, SPPC, September 13, 2001).

19-3

The Minoletti's would be compensated for the value of the right-of-way and any damages caused by the location of the proposed transmission line on their property. Compensation is provided through the right-of-way acquisition process completed with private land owners (see Section 3.13 of the EIS). Potential impacts to property values are also discussed in Section 3.15 of the EIS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

19-4

The proposed transmission line would be approximately 350 feet from their existing residence. The north edge of the 160-foot wide right-of-way would be approximately 270 feet away from their existing residence. The power line would comply with all federal and state guidelines for electric and magnetic fields (EMF) exposure at the edge of the right-of-way. Potential health hazards associated with electric lines are discussed in Chapter 3.10 Public Health and Safety of the EIS.

19-5

Alternative routes were evaluated in the Draft EIS, and the preferred route alternative would cross the Minoletti's property. As discussed with the Minoletti's on June 20, 2001, SPPC is evaluating a short relocation around their property, and will discuss options for avoiding their property when all of the design and property information is available.

19-6

Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Letter 20: City of Fallon

CITY OF FALLON

MICHAEL F. MACKEDON
City Attorney

JOHN R.S. MCCORMICK
Asst. City Attorney

STEVEN D. KING
Asst. City Attorney



August 21, 2001

RECEIVED
MAIL ROOM
2001 AUG 23 11:47 AM
P.O. Box 1203
Fallon, NV 89407-1203
(775) 425-2106
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

VIA FACSIMILE
775-635-4034
and U.S. MAIL

Mary Craggett, Team Leader
U. S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, Nevada 89520-1420

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Falcon to Gonder 345kV
Transmission Project, N-63162

Dear Ms. Craggett:

This letter is written to provide the City of Fallon's comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") for the Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project. The City supports the Project because of the critical and strategic importance of this Project which will benefit residents, not only of the City of Fallon and the State of Nevada but for other energy purchasers in the western United States.

The City of Fallon is located in Churchill County in west central Nevada with an area population of approximately 25,000 residents. The City owns and operates a municipal electric utility system serving its 8,300 residents as well as several hundred commercial customers. The City has provided electric service to its residents for over 80 years and since last year has purchased electric energy from various sources of generation in the Intermountain West. This energy is transported across Sierra Pacific Power Company's ("Sierra's") transmission lines and delivered to electric substations in Fallon. Sierra's transmission system is presently highly constrained and cannot provide sufficient import capacity to serve the needs of all customers within its electric transmission control area.

Although the City requested transmission import from Sierra in 1999, due to transmission restraints and other network customer's prior rights Sierra was unable to confirm firm import rights for the City until recently. The addition of capacitors in June of this year provided additional import capacity to satisfy the City's request. Despite this, the continuing growth in Northern Nevada and the region will further

20-1

Comment noted. Please see Chapter 1 of the EIS for a discussion of the purpose and need for the Falcon to Gonder project and the BLM Resource Management Plan Amendments.

20-1

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

20-1

strain the transmission system over time and without a significant increment of transmission capacity, the region will continue to be hampered in obtaining reliable and competitive long term energy supplies.

Moreover the western United States has a variety of generation resources with energy demands that vary both seasonally and by temperatures by geographic locations. Absent the ability to access generation sources throughout the west, the energy supply is highly limited and not price competitive. Transmission lines provide the ability to use the energy where and when it is needed and improve the overall efficiency of the energy infrastructure.

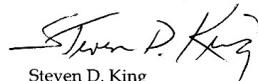
The ability to export power from Northern Nevada to other markets is also important, when demand is not high in Sierra's control area but is high in neighboring states, generation located in Northern Nevada can be made available. This flexibility provides needed energy for people in other areas and provides revenue to the customers in Northern Nevada. Reciprocally generation in other states provide supply to residents in Northern Nevada and reduces overall cost to utilities in neighboring states. The seasonal demand differences between the Great Basin and the Northwest and the diversity of generation sources improves the overall energy picture in the region which enhances the continued availability of safe and reliable electricity to millions of residents throughout the western United States.

The Falcon to Gonder 345kV Transmission Project is an effective transmission solution to the above mentioned transmission issues. The existing 345kV Falcon Substation located east of Carlin Nevada can be utilized to tie to the two 230kV lines presently at Gonder Substation and provide a significant overall improvement to the western United State's transmission grid. The Project will enhance the transmission capacities of Sierra and its customers including the City's electric utility and thus improve the reliability of electric energy to people throughout the State of Nevada. Thus the Project directly benefits and improve the "human environment" which the National Environmental Policy Act requires this DEIS to analyze.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and support this necessary and environmentally beneficial Project.

Sincerely,

CITY OF FALLON



Steven D. King
Assistant City Attorney

cc: Sierra Pacific Power Company

COMMENT LETTER

July 2, 2001
 RECEIVED
 MAIL ROOM

2001 JUL 19 AM 11:07
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

Minutes Of
 Eureka County Planning Commission
 July 2, 2001

	ACT	INF	INT	DATE
DM		✓	✓	AMB
ADM				
P&EC	✓			
SE				
RR				
NR				
FIRE				
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FILE/ LIBRARY/TOSS (CIRCLE ONE)				

Called to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Present: Rex Collingwood – Chairman; Maxine Rebaleati – Vice-Chair; Cecil Wright – Secretary/Treasurer; Hollon Moll, Ellen Rand and Ron Rankin – Members; Billy Addleman – Independent Contractor for the District Attorney. Absent: Philip Brown, and Ken Washburn – Members; Ted Beutel – District Attorney; and Lisa Hoehne – Recording Secretary.

Minutes of June 15, 2001

After reviewing motion was made by Cecil Wright to approve of the minutes. Maxine Rebaleati seconded the motion. The Chairman called for further discussion. There being no further discussion, motion was adopted (6-0).

Correspondence

None.

Sierra Pacific Power Line

Ron Rankin stated his opposition against the placement of the power line, because it runs along his property line. He has contacted Sierra Pacific to request them to move the line away from his property and has not had been successful. Sierra Pacific nor BLM has notified him of the public meetings, even though he has written to BLM requesting to be notified and also to receive the draft EIS.

Maxine Rebaleati will contact Nancy Minoletti to inquire if she would like to attend the next meeting to discuss the power line.

Title 16

Resolution Number 2 – The Board reviewed the resolution. A concern was stated that the improvements should be made from the development to the nearest county road. The words “right of way” in the resolution should be changed to “right of ways.”

Another concern was the resolution specifications for improvements are too close to county road specifications. The Chairman explained the reasons for the drafted specifications in the resolution.

The resolution will go back to the District Attorney to make changes in regards to the access to BLM accesses. Also the words “not to exceed 1, containing a percentage of clay” will be removed. This will be on the next agenda for approval.

Next Items for Agenda – The Chairman will work with the Secretary on the agenda. The District Attorney suggests doing two resolutions at a time.

RESPONSES

Letter 21: Minutes of Eureka County Planning Commission

21-1

Comment noted. BLM responded to Mr. Rankin’s request by sending him the Draft EIS and adding him to the project mailing list.

21-1

COMMENT LETTER

KENNY C. GUINN
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

JOHN P. COMEAUX
Director

RECEIVED
MAIL ROOM

2001 AUG 17 AM 11:29

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

209 E. Musser Street, Room 200
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4298
Fax (775) 684-0260
(775) 684-0209

	ACT	INF	INT	DATE
DM				
ADM				
P&EC	✓			8/17/01
SS				
RR				
NR				
FIRE	✓			8/17/01
TFS				
FILE/LIBRARY/TOSS (CIRCLE ONE)				

August 14, 2001

Ms. Mary Craggett, BLM Team Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Battle Mountain Field Office
50 Bastian Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

Re: SAI NV #E2001-163

Project: Falcon to Gondor 345kV Transmission Project DEIS and RMP
Amendments

Dear Ms. Craggett:

Enclosed is an additional comment from the Nevada Office of Historic Preservation that was received after our previous letter to you. Please incorporate this comment into your decision making process. If you have any questions, please contact me at (775) 684-0209.

Sincerely,

Heather K. Elliott
Nevada State Clearinghouse/SPOC

Enclosure

RESPONSES

Letter 22: Nevada State Clearinghouse

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

NEVADA STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Department of Administration
 Budget and Planning Division
 209 East Musser Street., Room 200
 Carson City, Nevada 89701-4298
 (775) 684-0209
 Fax (775) 684-0260

RECEIVED

MAY 29 2001

State Historic
 Preservation Office

DATE: May 25, 2001

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Governor's Office
Agency for Nuclear Projects
Agriculture
Business & Industry
Energy
Minerals
Economic Development
Tourism
Fire Marshal
Human Resources
Aging Services
Health Division
Indian Commission
Colorado River Commission | Legislative Counsel Bureau
Information Technology
Emp. Training & Rehab Research Div.
PUC
Transportation
UNR Bureau of Mines
UNR Library
UNLV Library
Historic Preservation
Emergency Management
Office of the Attorney General
Washington Office
Nevada Assoc. of Counties
Nevada League of Cities | Conservation-Natural Resources
Director's Office
State Lands
Environmental Protection
Forestry
Wildlife
Region 1
Region 2
Region 3
Conservation Districts
State Parks
Water Resources
Natural Heritage
Wild Horse Commission |
|---|--|---|

Nevada SAI # E2001-163
 Project: Falcon to Gonor 345kV Transmission Project DEIS and RMP Amendments



CLEARINGHOUSE NOTES:

Enclosed, for your review and comment, is a copy of the above mentioned project. Please evaluate it with respect to its effect on your plans and programs; the importance of its contribution to state and/or local areawide goals and objectives; and its accord with any applicable laws, orders or regulations with which you are familiar.

Please submit your comments no later than August 10, 2001. Use the space below for short comments. If significant comments are provided, please use the agency letterhead and include the Nevada SAI number and comment due date for our reference. Questions? Heather Elliott, 684-0209.

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEW AGENCY:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No comment on this project | <input type="checkbox"/> Conference desired (See below) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proposal supported as written | <input type="checkbox"/> Conditional support (See below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional information below | <input type="checkbox"/> Disapproval (Explain below) |

AGENCY COMMENTS:

RECEIVED
 AUG 14 2001
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Rebecca Palmer
 Signature

Historic Preservation 8/9/01
 Agency Date

22-1
 Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER



KENNY C. GUINN
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE
1100 Valley Road
Reno, Nevada 89512
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE

RECEIVED
MAIL ROOM
2001 SEP -6 PM 1:23

R. MICHAEL TURNIPSEED, P.E.
Director
Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources
TERRY R. CRAWFORTH
Administrator

September 4, 2001

Ken Bailey
Battle Mountain BLM
50 Bastain Road
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

Dear Ken,

As I indicated to you today we do have several comments concerning the Draft EIS for the Falcon to Gondor transmission line. We are in agreement with a statement made in the cumulative impacts section of this document (Page 4-13, last paragraph), "It is preferable to locate the new utility corridor in areas with existing power lines, habitat disturbances, paved roads, and human activity rather than in areas that are more remote" or to "cluster habitat disturbance as opposed to the proliferation of utility lines and other projects randomly across public lands". This is why we believe Alternative E, the Buck Mountain Route, should no longer be considered a viable route alternative. The ferruginous hawk resource along Route E is extremely significant and sensitive and any suggestions for mitigation of impacts to nests and foraging habitat (3.7-30-9 & 3.7-38-8c) from construction and/or improved road access will not result in mitigation to the resource, especially if nest trees were removed. From a nongame standpoint, Pine Valley Route A is probably the lesser of the evils.

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DM				
ADM				
PL&EC				9/10
SS				
RR				
NR	✓			9/10
FIRE				
TFS				
FILE/LIBRARY/TOSS (CIRCLE ONE)				

- 23-1 The remainder of comments are tied to the text:
 - 1) 3.6-2 There are numerous misspellings on this page. The woodrat discussion is inaccurate. Desert woodrats do in fact use rocky areas a significant percentage of the time in Nevada.
- 23-2 2) 3.6-3 There are an additional 12-14 species of bats that use the area.
- 23-3 3) 3.6-7 The short-horned lizard is not known from this portion of Nevada. We would be very interested in the location and details of the sight record(s) for this species.
- 23-4 4) 3.6-8 Several species listed on the common wildlife table are better characterized as rare.
- 23-5 5) 3.6-15 A reference to the ferruginous hawk discussion should be made here.
- 23-6 6) 3.6-20 Table 3.6-5 makes no note of impacts to raptors on the Buck Mountain Route. This is a large oversight.
- 23-7 7) 3.6-20 The residual impact section suggests that habitat fragmentation is not a problem

(01) 5386

RESPONSES

Letter 23: Division of Wildlife

23-1

Errata - The misspellings on page 3.6-2 have been corrected in this Final EIS. In addition, on Page 3.6-2, the fourth sentence in the first paragraph under "Mammals" has been changed as follows:

"The desert woodrat is more likely to often nests on the ground in the old burrow of a ground squirrel or kangaroo rat, but is also known to use rocky areas a significant portion of the time in Nevada."

23-2

Errata - In response to this comment, the following sentence has been added at the end of the fourth paragraph on page 3.6-3 of the EIS:

"According to NDOW resource staff, there are 12-14 other species of bats that also use the area (personal communication with S. Foree, biologist, September 4, 2001). Some of those bats are "special-status species," which are discussed in Section 3.7."

23-3

Errata - In response to this comment, the following sentence has been added at the end of the paragraph on Reptiles on page 3.6-7 of the EIS:

"The desert short-horned lizard (*P. douglassi*) was outside of its mapped range. Further information about the sighting is provided in the baseline Wildlife Survey report (Summit Envirosolutions 2000)."

23-4

The purpose of Table 3.6-1 is to identify animal species that are commonly associated with and help to define certain habitat types in the study area. The species that are listed in this table were seen during the 1999 Baseline Wildlife Surveys.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

23-4 (cont.)

While it is acknowledged that numbers of some of the species listed in Table 3.6-1 may be declining locally or regionally or becoming less common in the landscape for a variety of reasons, they currently have no legal status. The problem with using the word “rare” to describe some of these species in this table is that it can be misinterpreted as a legal definition (e.g., as it is under California law). Special-status species (i.e., those that have legal status and protection by state and federal government agencies) are not included in this Table 3.6-1, but are discussed in Section 3.7 Special-status Species.

Errata - To clarify, the title of Table 3.6-1 has been changed to Wildlife Species Observed and a reference to the baseline wildlife survey report (Source: Summit Envirosolutions 2000) has been added at the bottom of the table.

23-5

Special-status species, including ferruginous hawks, are discussed in Section 3.7 of the EIS. This is explained on page 3.6-16 of the EIS in the second sentence of the fifth paragraph titled Impact Wildlife-6: Impacts to Migratory and Resident Birds.

23-6

Potential impacts to raptors on the Buck Mountain Route (i.e., bald and golden eagles) are not included in Table 3.6-5 because this table summarizes impacts to common wildlife species (not special-status species). Potential impacts to bald and golden eagles (which are special-status species) are discussed in Section 3.7.

23-7

Errata - The following text has been added to page 3.6-22 under Residual Impacts to further clarify the discussion:

“Nevada is unique with the landforms that define the Basin and Range in which high elevation mountains and lower valley floors harbor

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

23-8

in this portion of Nevada because the study area has no "large tracts of quality or rare habitats". Quite to the contrary, Nevada's wildlife habitats are more vulnerable to habitat fragmentation precisely because they are, by their very nature, already fragmented and rare. Further fragmentation could result in loss of species and/or populations.
8) 3.7-11 Bald eagles also winter in Elko County and Lander County.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS. If questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,



Steve Foree
Supervising Habitat Biologist
1375 Mountain City Highway
Elko, NV 89801

PB/SF:sf

23-7 (cont.)

isolated "island" populations of various species. This physiographic configuration is indeed natural habitat fragmentation. However, the term habitat fragmentation is often utilized in terms of human intrusions where unnatural edges are created. The Great Basin is unique as a whole; however, in terms of uniqueness of habitat, the majority of the habitat in the project area is not rare within the Great Basin."

Issues related to habitat fragmentation and preservation of high quality habitat were incorporated into the methodology for selecting the environmentally preferred alternative. These included consideration of areas that are relatively undisturbed and free of noxious weeds, areas without existing transmission lines, and areas with high quality habitat. This is demonstrated in the result that although Buck Mountain is the shortest of the five alternatives and thus would disturb the fewest acres of habitat, it was not selected as the environmentally preferred alternative. This is because it has the least amount of existing noxious weed infestations (i.e., it is relatively untouched and remote), the fewest miles where the new line would run parallel to an existing transmission line, and has among the highest numbers of sensitive sage grouse leks, and ferruginous hawk nests, pygmy rabbits, golden eagle nests, burrowing owls, reflecting high quality habitat. For more information on the methodology, please see Section 3.20 of the EIS. For more information on habitat fragmentation, please see pages 3.6-22 and 4-13.

23-8

Please see the response to comment 8-6 of the USFWS.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Oral Public Hearing Comments: 6/19/01

PROCEEDINGS

MR. ARMUTH: My name is Chuck Armuth. I'm an engineer representing John H. and Harriet Uhalde who own property in Section 19, Township 29 North, Range 48 East and DBM in Lander County. They also have an interest in Section 24, Township 29 North, Range 47 East, MDB and M within Section 24. Mr. Uhalde has a millworks which consists of a mill building and several ponds.

Mr. Uhalde's concern is if Route B is chosen for the final alignment, it will jeopardize his operation in Section 24. Therefore, we would like to, at this time, go on record in favor of the Pine Valley route, which would be completely removed from Mr. Uhalde's property.

MRS. TOMERA: Hi, my name is Patty Tomera and I live in Pine Valley. I own most of the land that the Alternate D suggestion, Pine Valley route they have, the preferred route. We would like to oppose this very much because it's approximately seven to eight miles of private land that they will be coming through and I feel this is for the public, so they should stay on public land.

I just feel that it would be a hindrance to our options. It would destroy our view. And we have totally blocked private land. And thus, we feel if they do put a line in, there's always a road to maintain the line, it seems like, and thus, the public will feel they would have

775-777-2096

P1-1

P2-1

P2-2

P2-3

P1-1
Comment noted.

P2-1
Comment noted.

P2-2
Comment noted. Section 3.9 of the EIS contains a discussion of visual resources, impacts and mitigation measures.

P2-3
Please see response to Comments 9-20, 9-27 and 9-33. Reclamation of the centerline travel route is also discussed in Chapter 2 and Appendix E of the EIS. Sierra Pacific Power Company would consult with property owners, such as the Tomeras, regarding their preferences for access road reclamation techniques to prevent unauthorized access and discourage disturbance to sensitive areas.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

P2-4

1 an access to our private land.
 2 We have quite a few chukars, sage hens and deer
 3 and we're very proud of these. We let very few people on
 4 our private land to hunt. We feel this is kind of a
 5 sanctuary. The only place they have to survive nowadays, it
 6 seems like, with as many people and as many roads that's out
 7 there nowadays. We just really protest it.

P2-4

Comment noted. The EIS discusses wildlife species, impacts and mitigation measures in Section 3.6, Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat, Section 3.7, Special Status Species - Animal and Plant, and Section 3.8, Range Resources - Livestock Grazing and Wild Horses.

P3-1

8 MR. MEAL: Okay. Yeah, my name is Tom Meal. I
 9 own the Bruffey Ranch up in Pine Valley. And this power
 10 line is going to come either within five miles or two miles
 11 of my house and I'm just dead set against it, naturally.

P3-1

Comment noted.

12 Our valley is basically untouched. But it looks
 13 like no matter what the impact is, the power company is
 14 going to put this line in and there's nothing we can do
 15 about it.

P3-2

Comment noted.

P3-2

16 Now, if the alternative route which was -- if the
 17 preferred route is taken, I guess that's the worst of all
 18 things, you know? I mean, not the worst. It's the best of
 19 a bad lot.

P3-3

Comment noted.

P3-3

20 If this E Route is taken, which is the cheapest
 21 route, it will be right behind my house within two miles.
 22 And really it will just totally mess me up, so -- so, you
 23 know, since I realize that no matter what the impact is,
 24 they're going to go ahead with it.

25 Hopefully, they'll use their preferred BLM route,

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 3

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

P3-4

1 but I don't know. I don't know what the odds are. There's
 2 a good chance they'll use the preferred route, which is this
 3 one, and I'll have the least impact then -- I mean, least
 4 impact.

P3-5

5 But basically, I'm just against it. That's about
 6 all I got to say. They're for it and I'm against it and
 7 they're going to win because I'm nobody and they're a power
 8 company, but it's a shame.

9 (WHEREUPON, the public comments concluded.)
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P3-4
 Comment noted.

P3-5
 Comment noted.

COMMENT LETTER

RESPONSES

Oral Public Hearing Comments: 6/20/01

P4-1

1 EUREKA, NEVADA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2001, 7:00 P.M.

2 -o0o-

3
4 [RAMONA STINE: My comment is that I, me and my
5 husband, would prefer that you take the G segment as
6 opposed to the H segment as alternative routes. That's
7 it.

8 (No further comments were given to the court
9 reporter.)

10 -o0o-

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Barbara J. Johnson, CCR No. 255, RPR (775) 623-6358

Page 2

P4-1
Comment noted.