Environmental Assessment

Easements to Rocky Mountain Power for the

Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project

Sections 3, 4, 9, 15, and 16 of Township 11 North, Range 36 East

Clark County, Idaho

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Research Service

October 2024

Prepared By:

USDA Agricultural Research Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Table of Contents

APPENDIX D. PROJECT INADVERTENT DISCOVERY PLAN

APPENDIX E. EJSCREEN

Acronyms

%	percent
4WD	four-wheel drive
ac.	acre
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
APE	area of potential effect
APLIC	Avian Power Line Interaction Committee
applicant	Rocky Mountain Power
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
BCC	Birds of Conservation Concern
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BMPs	best management practices
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act 1980
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
dBA	Decibels A
Dubois Circuit	existing overhead 7.2 kilovolt Dubois-11 distribution circuit power line
E	East
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EJ Indexes	Environmental Justice Indexes
EJScreen	Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
existing power line	approximately 2.36-mile portion of existing overhead 7.2 kilovolt Dubois-11 distribution circuit power line to be removed
FHCA	Fire High Consequence Area
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
ft.	feet
GHMA	General Habitat Management Area
GLO	General Land Office
HDD	horizontal directional drilling
HQ	Head Quarters
I-15	Interstate 15 or Veterans Memorial Highway
ICRIS	Idaho Cultural Resources Information System
IDFG	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
IDOT	Idaho Department of Transportation
IFWIS	Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System
IHMA	Important Habitat Management Area
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation

kV	kilovolt
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
N	North
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
new power line	new underground/overhead 7.2 kilovolt distribution circuit power line
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NHT	National Historic Trail
NOA	Notice of Availability
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
O&M	operations and maintenance
OHV	off-highway-vehicle
OHWM	Ordinary High Water Mark
PHMA	Priority Habitat Management Area
POD	Plan of Development
Project	Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project
Promising Practices	*Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews*
PWA	Pacific West Area
R	Range
RMP	Rocky Mountain Power
ROE	right-of-entry
SGCN	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
SGMA	Sage-grouse Management Area
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
sq.	square
T	Township
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
USC	United States Code
USCB	United States Census Bureau
USDA	United Stated Department of Agriculture
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Services
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USTs	Underground storage tanks
weeds	Invasive plant species and noxious weeds

List of Figures

List of Tables

1 Purpose and Need

1.1 Purpose of the Environmental Assessment

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate the effects associated with the Proposed Actions, described below, and comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 7 CFR 1b) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS, 7 CFR 520) implementing procedures.

The purpose of this EA is to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with ARS granting easements for construction to Rocky Mountain Power (RMP or applicant), a division of PacifiCorp, to allow RMP to complete the portion of the *Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project* (Project) that crosses federal lands administered by ARS. RMP provides power to the rural communities throughout Clark County, Idaho by its existing overhead 7.2 kilovolt (kV) Dubois-11 distribution circuit power line (hereafter referred to as Dubois Circuit) originating from the Dubois Substation south of Dubois, Idaho and ending at Huntley Canyon north of Spencer, Idaho. The Project would entail rebuilding a portion of the Dubois Circuit. The Project is located approximately 7.5 miles north of Dubois in Clark County, Idaho on both private and ARS-administered federal lands (**Figure 1**). RMP is requesting an easement from ARS to install a new underground/overhead 7.2 kV distribution circuit power line (hereafter referred to as new power line) within their existing 15-foot-wide easement in sections 15 and 16 of Township (T) 11 North (N), Range (R) 36 East (E) (ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022). In addition, RMP is requesting a temporary Right-of-Entry (ROE) for construction easement from ARS to decommission (remove) a portion of the existing Dubois Circuit (hereafter referred to as existing power line), which is adjacent to Old Highway 91 within Section 9 of T11N, R36 E[1] (**Figure 1**).

The NEPA requires that federal agencies consider the effects of a proposed action and any reasonable alternatives on the human environment. This EA evaluates the impacts of implementation of the Proposed Actions as compared to alternatives described in **Section 2**, below. The information presented in this document will serve as the basis for deciding whether implementing the Proposed Actions would result in a significant impact on the environment, requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or that no significant impacts would occur, which would therefore result in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

1.2 Background

According to RMP, the Dubois Circuit was built in the 1930s (J. Jorgensen, personal communication, August 8, 2024). Portions of the Dubois Circuit reside in an area identified by

[1] The ARS easement grant could not be found by ARS or RMP; therefore, a temporary ROE for construction easement is needed.

RMP as a Fire High Consequence Area (FHCA). To reduce the risk of RMP infrastructure causing wildfires or being affected by wildfires, RMP proposes decommissioning a portion of the existing power line within the FHCA and replacing it with a new power line. Service would be re-established across private and ARS-administered federal lands via the new power line.

RMP proposes to install the new power line within their existing 15-foot-wide easement on private lands and ARS-administered federal lands (ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022). The new power line would be mostly underground with a shorter section being overhead. The portion of the 15-foot-wide easement on ARS-administered federal lands crosses along the north section line of sections 15 and 16 of T11N, R36E and was granted to RMP by ARS in 2006, but was never developed. Once the new power line is installed, the easement would be reclaimed. RMP would conduct future operations and maintenance (O&M) activities on the new power line for the duration of the private and ARS easement grants.

After the new power line is installed and operational, RMP would remove a portion of the existing power line located in the FHCA, consisting of 73 poles (53 on private lands and 20 on ARS-administered federal lands) and associated hardware and conductor (wire). The portion of the 30-foot-wide easement on ARS-administered federal lands crosses Section 9 of T11N, R36E. Since no easement grant could be found by ARS or RMP for this easement, a temporary ROE for construction easement is needed. Once the poles are removed, the areas temporarily disturbed would be reclaimed (**Figure 1**).

The ARS is the USDA chief scientific in-house research agency. ARS delivers scientific solutions to national and global agricultural challenges, and provides scientific tools and innovative solutions for American farmers, producers, industry, and communities to support the nourishment and well-being of all people, to sustain the Nation's agroecosystems and natural resources, and to ensure economic competitiveness and excellence of the Nation's agriculture. ARS conducts a NEPA evaluation of research, facilities, and realty actions as part of their approval process.

A portion of the Project crosses the ARS United States Sheep Experiment Station, a USDA research location. The research mission is to develop integrated methods for increasing production efficiency of domestic sheep (*Ovis aries*) and to simultaneously improve the sustainability of rangeland ecosystems.

1.3 Purpose and Need

The ARS purpose and need for the Proposed Actions is to respond to RMP's request to: (1) obtain an easement to install a new power line within the existing 15-foot-wide easement on ARS-administered federal lands (ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022) and (2) obtain a temporary ROE for construction easement to remove 20 poles and associated hardware and conductor on ARS-administered federal lands.

1.4 Incomplete and Unavailable Information

The CEQ regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1502.21) require that an agency preparing a NEPA analysis indicate when information is incomplete or unavailable and explain the

relevance of the missing information to the analysis. Statements to that effect have been included in this EA, where appropriate.

1.5 Public Notice and Participation

Upon issuance of the final EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), these documents will be posted at the public facing USDA ARS NEPA website for a 30 day appeal period. The USDA ARS NEPA website is at https://www.ars.usda.gov/national-environmental-policy-act/.

2 Description of Alternatives

2.1 Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

Under this alternative, ARS would grant easements to RMP to (1) install a new power line within the existing 15-foot-wide easement on ARS-administered federal lands (ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022), reclaim the easement, and conduct O&M activities on the easement; and (2) remove 20 poles and associated hardware and conductor from the existing power line on ARS-administered federal lands and reclaim the areas temporarily disturbed. Details for each Proposed Action are below in **sections 2.1.1** through **2.1.10**. RMP would meet its goal to minimize wildfire risk in an area that was identified as occurring within a FHCA and would continue to provide a reliable source of energy to its agricultural customer's pump house and throughout Clark County. See the Project's Plan of Development (POD) for additional information (RMP 2024).

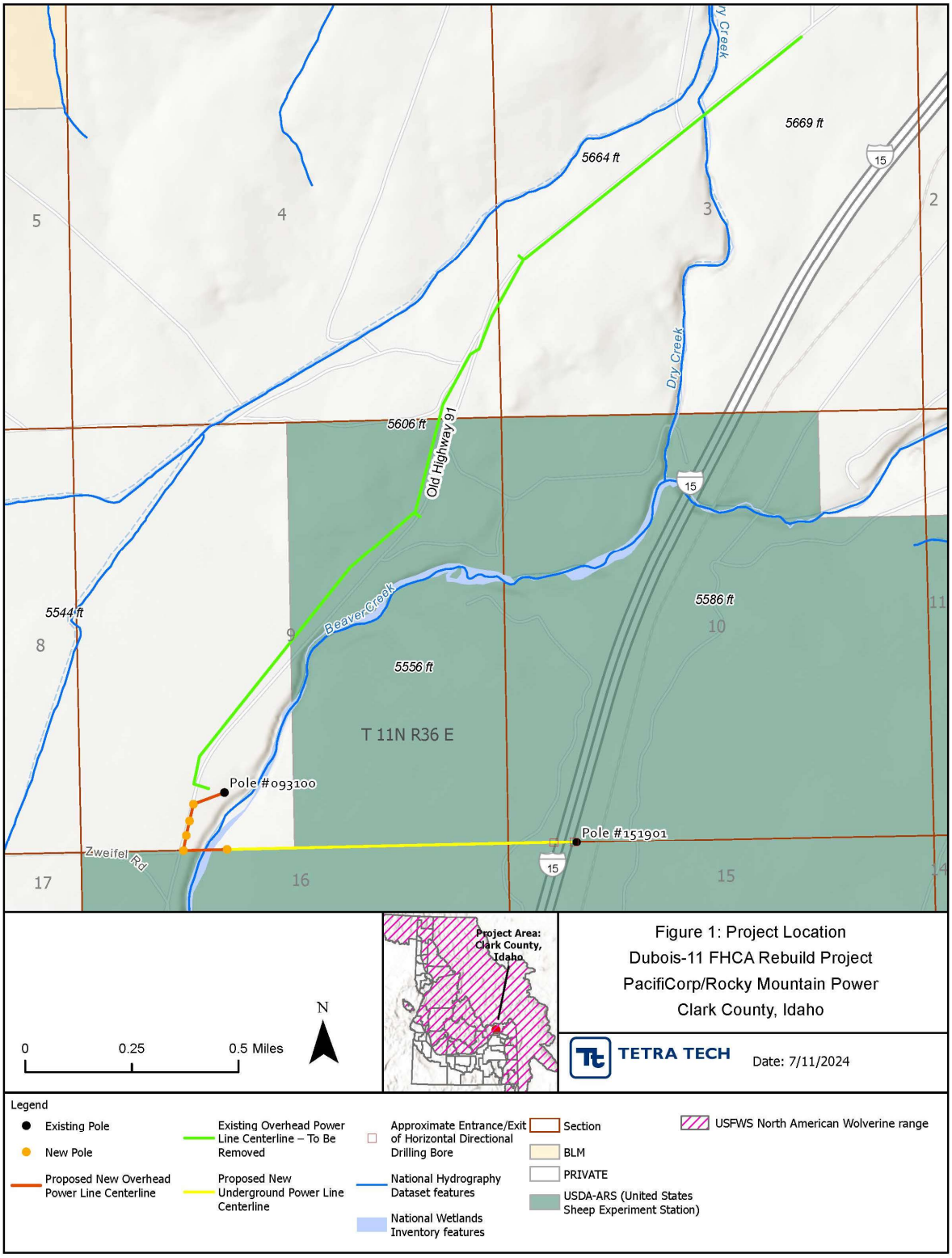
Project Location

As shown in **Figure 1**, below, the Project is to occur in:

New Power Line to be Installed: Sections 9, 15, and 16 of T11N, R36E

Existing Power Line to be Removed: Sections 3, 4, and 9 of T11N, R36E

Figure 1: Project Location



2.1.1 New Power Line to Be Installed

RMP is proposing to install a new approximately 0.92-mile-long power line from existing pole #151901 on the east side of Interstate-15 (I-15 or Veterans Memorial Highway) to existing pole #093100 on the east side of Old Highway 91 (see **Figure 1**). **Table 3** in **Section 2.1.6** provides the surface disturbance associated with the installation of the new power line. Future O&M activities on the new power line are discussed in **Section 2.1.10**.

Underground Portion of New Power Line

The underground portion of the new power line would be approximately 0.82 mile long. The existing portion of the Dubois Circuit running parallel to the east side of I-15 would be tapped at pole #151901 (**Figure 1)**. From pole #151901, the underground power line portion of the new power line would travel due west to the east edge of Beaver Creek. From existing pole #151901 west within the Idaho Department of Transportation (IDOT) I-15 easement, horizontal directional drilling (HDD) would be utilized to run the conduit (plastic piping to run electrical line through) underneath I-15. Operations to conduct the HDD boring would be contained within the IDOT I-15 easement. This includes the HDD bore entrance/exit points and machine operations necessary to conduct the work (see approximate HDD entrance/exit bore locations on **Figure 1**). RMP has a franchise agreement with IDOT and has acknowledgement from them to install this portion of the underground power line within the IDOT I-15 easement. For each HDD location, a 10 foot by 10 foot area would be needed. Vegetation within these areas would be removed. Excavated topsoil from each HDD bore would be conserved on site and separated from subsoil. Once the underground power line has been installed via HDD boring, the HDD entrance/exit bore excavations would be backfilled with the subsoil and the topsoil would be placed on top.

The remainder of the conduit would be installed via open trenching to the east side of Beaver Creek. An approximately 3,900-foot (0.74-mile) long, 2 foot wide by 3 foot deep trench would be excavated within the 15-foot-wide easement. The trench would be dug by a rock saw due to sub-surface igneous rock in the region. All spoils (e.g., soil, rock) would be placed adjacent to the trench, with the topsoil separated from the subsoil. The conduit would be laid within the trench and then backfilled with the subsoil and then topsoil placed on top.

Eleven vaults would also be placed underground along the underground portion for reliability and future troubleshooting. One vault would be installed at the start, one at the end, and 9 throughout. All of the vaults would be placed in the trench disturbance area.

Overhead Portion of New Power Line

The overhead portion of the new power line would be approximately 0.1 mile long. On ARS-administered federal lands, a new single wood pole would be installed at the western terminus of the underground power line on the east side of Beaver Creek and a second new single wood pole would be installed on the east side of Beaver Creek. Three additional new single wood poles would be installed on private lands on the east side of Old Highway 91 (see **Figure 1**). No temporary surface disturbance would occur to install each pole due to the installation methods used; however, each pole would have a new long-term surface disturbance of 1 foot

by 1 foot for the pole footprint. Each pole would be installed with a hammer drill and direct embedded (placed directly in the dirt, no foundations). Once the five new poles are installed, hardware would be installed on each pole and overhead, insulated, conductor (electric wire) would be installed between the poles to existing pole #093100. All pole excavations would be backfilled with subsoil and topsoil would be placed on top. No work would occur within the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of Beaver Creek. No pulling and tensioning area is needed to pull and tension the new conductor.

Life Span of New Power Line

The anticipated life span of the new power line on ARS-administered federal lands is 32 years, which is when the existing ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022 would expire (2056, as per the 50-year term in the grant which was granted in 2006). At that time, the continued feasibility of the new power line and the integrity of the two poles and associated hardware and conductor would be evaluated.

2.1.2 Existing Power Line To Be Removed

The existing power line (approximately 2.36 miles long) from the intersection of McCulloch Road at Old Highway 91 running south, along the west and east sides of Old Highway 91 would be removed once the new power line has been installed and is operational (**Figure 1**). This section of existing power line has a total of 73 single wooden poles supporting bare 7.2kV conductor. Fifty-three (53) poles are located on private lands and 20 poles are located on ARS-administered federal lands. RMP would remove the hardware and conductor and then dig approximately 6 inches around the surface of each pole, cut the pole 6 inches below grade, remove the pole, and then abandon the butt. The 6 inches above the butt would be filled with soil. The conductor would be spooled and recycled. Hardware consisting of insulators, bolts, crossarms and any other debris generated by the removal of the existing power line would be removed and cleaned. **Table 3** in **Section 2.1.6** provides the surface disturbance associated with the removal of the existing power line.

2.1.3 Access

No new roads would be required to install the new power line and to remove the existing power line. To install the new power line, the 15-foot-wide easement would be accessed from the east and west sides of I-15 and from the east side of Old Highway 91 where these roads intersect the easement. Overland travel (drive and crush) would occur within the existing 15-foot-wide easement. To remove the existing power line, the 30-foot-wide easement would be accessed directly from Old Highway 91 and other existing roads where these roads intersect the easement. Overland travel would occur within the existing 30-foot-wide easement to access each pole to be removed.

2.1.4 Reclamation and Weed Control

Areas temporarily disturbed within each easement and along edges of access roads during installation of the new power line and removal of the existing power line would be reclaimed. Invasive plant species and noxious weeds (hereafter referred to as weeds) control would also

be conducted. The reclamation and weed control would be conducted to IDOT, private landowners, and ARS requirements. The ARS reclamation and weed control requirements that would be applied to the ARS-administered federal lands within the Project Area are as follows:

ARS Reclamation Requirements

Upon completion of construction, excavations would be backfilled with the subsoil and then topsoil placed on top. Topsoil would be added where rocks have been removed to provide a suitable substrate for perennials. The ground would then be re-contoured to pre-construction conditions. A certified weed-free seed mix of thickspike wheatgrass (*Elymus lanceolatus*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), needle-and-thread grass (*Hesperostipa comata*), crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), and big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) would be applied to all areas disturbed on ARS-administered federal lands. All of these species are native, except for crested wheatgrass, and all are currently present on the ARS-administered federal lands within the Project Area. No seeding would be applied to the outer edges of the existing two-track roads; however, an herbicide would be applied (see below for details on ARS weed control requirements) as needed according to the level of disturbance and threat or presence of weeds (e.g., cheatgrass [*Bromus tectorum*], spotted knapweed [*Centaurea stoebe*]).

ARS Weed Control Requirements

A pre-emergent herbicide would be applied in the fall after work is complete along existing two-track roads to reduce weedy annuals (e.g., cheatgrass). Pre-emergent herbicides effective for weed grass annuals, such as cheatgrass, that would be used include imazapic (e.g., Plateau) and indaziflam (Rejuvra). Post-emergent herbicides effective against common roadside weed species, such as spotted knapweed and leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esul*a), that would be used are listed in **Table 1** per groundwater contamination restrictions listed in **Table 2**.

Table 1: Herbicides Used for Vegetation Management and Control of Weeds on ARS Properties

Herbicide/Herbicide Combinations	Treatment Types	ARS Properties Location	Frequency	Application Method
Clorpyralid	Roadside, fence line, and pasture weeds treatment	Head Quarters (HQ), Humphrey, Henniger	Annual; Once	Spot or Broadcast
Aminopyralid	Roadside, fence line, and pasture weeds treatment	HQ, Humphrey, Henniger	Annual; Once	Spot or Broadcast
2, 4 D amine	Roadside, fence line, and pasture weeds treatment	HQ, Humphrey, Henniger	Annual; Once	Spot or Broadcast
Bromacil plus Diuron	Feedlot surfaces	HQ	Annual	Spot or Broadcast

Table 1: Herbicides Used for Vegetation Management and Control of Weeds on ARS Properties				
Herbicide/Herbicide Combinations	**Treatment Types**	**ARS Properties Location**	**Frequency**	**Application Method**
Non-aquatic glyphosate	Roadside, fence line, and pasture weeds treatment	HQ	Annual; Once	Spot or Broadcast
Tebuthiuron	Selective shrub management	HQ	One time	Primarily Aerial, Spot, or Broadcast
Picloram	Pasture weeds management	HQ, Humphrey, Henniger	One time	Primarily Broadcast
Imazapic (e.g., Plateau)	Roadside and rangeland weeds treatment and vegetation restoration	HQ, Mud Lake, Humphrey, Henniger	Annual; Once	Spot or Broadcast
Indaziflam (Rejuvra)	Roadside and rangeland weeds treatment and vegetation restoration	HQ, Mud Lake, Humphrey, Henniger	Annual; Once	Spot or Broadcast

Table 2: List of Herbicides and Recommended Buffer Widths to Reduce Potential for Groundwater Contamination		
Herbicide	**Recommended Buffer Width**	**Comment**
2, 4 D amine	25 feet	Most formulations of 2,4-D do not bind tightly with soils and thus, have the potential to leach down into the soil column and to move off-site in surface or subsurface water flows.
Imazapyr	Up to edge	Low toxicity to fish and algae; Mobility pH dependent
Picloram	25 feet 164 feet	Known surface and groundwater contaminant; 25 foot buffer applies to surface water drainages; 164 foot buffer applies if herbicide applied near ARS United States Sheep Experiment Station groundwater wells
Bromacil	25 feet 164 feet	Known groundwater contaminant; 25 foot buffer applies to surface water drainages; 164 foot buffer applies if herbicide applied near ARS United States Sheep Experiment Station groundwater wells
Clopyralid	25 feet 164 feet	Considered moderately toxic to fish; 25 foot buffer applies to surface water drainages; 164 foot buffer applies if herbicide applied near ARS United States Sheep Experiment Station groundwater wells
Triclopyr amine	Up to edge	The water-soluble salt is degraded in the water column through photolysis and hydrolysis.

Table 2: List of Herbicides and Recommended Buffer Widths to Reduce Potential for Groundwater Contamination		
Herbicide	**Recommended Buffer Width**	**Comment**
Diuron	25 feet 164 feet	Known groundwater contaminant; Moderately toxic to fish and highly toxic to aquatic plants; 25 foot buffer applies to surface water drainages; 164 foot buffer applies if herbicide applied near ARS United States Sheep Experiment Station groundwater wells
Non-aquatic Glyphosate	100 feet	Relatively low toxicity to birds, mammals, and fish.
Aminopyralid	0 feet	Given its high mobility, and moderate persistence in soil, aminopyralid is likely to leach to groundwater irrespective of soil type; slightly non-toxic (or a low potential for adverse effects) to fish and aquatic organisms
Tebuthiuron	100 feet	A minimum buffer zone of 100 feet wide will be provided for aerial application.
Imazapic (e.g., Plateau)	A level, well-maintained vegetative buffer strip between areas to which this product is applied and surface water features such as ponds, streams, springs, and permeable sites will reduce the potential loading of this chemical from runoff water and sediment.	This chemical has properties and characteristics associated with chemicals detected in groundwater. This chemical may leach into groundwater if used in areas where soils are permeable, particularly where the water table is shallow. Relatively low toxicity to birds, mammals, and fish.
Indaziflam (e.g., Rejuvra)	A level, well-maintained vegetative buffer strip between areas to which this product is applied and surface water features such as ponds, streams, springs, and permeable sites will reduce the potential loading of this chemical from runoff water and sediment.	This chemical may leach into groundwater if used in areas where soils are permeable, particularly where the water table is shallow. This product is classified as having a high potential for reaching surface water via runoff for several months or more after application. This product is toxic to fish, aquatic invertebrates, and plants.

2.1.5 Construction Workforce and Equipment

Installation of the new power line and removal of the existing power line is anticipated to take approximately 2 months to complete. Construction activities would generally occur between 6:00 am and 10:00 pm, 5 to 6 days per week. No lighting would be used during the hours of darkness, since general lights from vehicles and equipment would suffice. Additional hours

may be necessary to make up schedule deficiencies or to complete critical construction activities. The on-site workforce would consist of laborers, supervisory personnel, support personnel, and management personnel. The on-site workforce is expected to reach a peak of up to six on-site personnel.

Personal vehicles of on-site personnel would be parked off-site (outside of the Project Area boundaries). Most vehicles and equipment would be removed from the Project Area at the end of each day; otherwise, it would be stored in the road shoulder when not in use within the easements. Equipment that would be used to construct the Project would include:

- Pickup trucks (3/4 ton and 1 ton) to transport personnel
- Bucket truck (Class VII) to elevate personnel and equipment
- Tracked excavator for excavating
- HDD rig to bore under I-15
- Semi-truck with trailer to transport removed poles
- Rock saw to dig trench
- Wiring and conduit trailers to transport wire and conduit

On the west side of Beaver Creek, poles and conduit would be laid down on private property.

2.1.6 Surface Disturbance

The surface disturbance from the installation of the new power line and the removal of the existing power line is presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Project Surface Disturbance

Land Ownership	Proposed Activity	Existing Surface Disturbance to be Reclaimed (sq. ft./ac)[1]	Temporary Surface Disturbance to be Reclaimed (sq. ft./ac.)[2]	New Long-term Surface Disturbance (sq. ft./ac.)[3]
New Power Line to Be Installed				
Federal - ARS	Two HDD locations for installation of underground power line conduit under I-15 (within IDOT easement).	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	200 sq. ft./0.005 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.
	Trench to install remaining underground power line conduit and 11 underground vaults.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	7,800 sq. ft./0.179 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.
	Two new poles and associated hardware and conductor	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	2 sq. ft./0.000 ac.

Table 3: Project Surface Disturbance				
Land Ownership	**Proposed Activity**	**Existing Surface Disturbance to be Reclaimed (sq. ft./ac)[1]**	**Temporary Surface Disturbance to be Reclaimed (sq. ft./ac.)[2]**	**New Long-term Surface Disturbance (sq. ft./ac.)[3]**
New Power Line to Be Installed				
Private	Three new poles and associated hardware and conductor	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	3 sq. ft./0.000 ac.
Existing Power Line to be Removed				
Federal - ARS	Remove 20 poles and associated hardware and conductor	20 sq. ft./0.000 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.
Private	Remove 53 poles and associated hardware and conductor	53 sq. ft./0.001 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.	0 sq. ft./0 ac.
Total:		**ARS: 20 sq. ft./0.000 ac.** **Private: 53 sq. ft./0.001 ac.**	**ARS: 8,000 sq. ft./0.184 ac.** **Private: 0 sq. ft./0 ac.**	**ARS: 2 sq. ft./0.000 ac.** **Private: 3 sq. ft./0.000 ac.**

sq. ft. = square feet; ac. = acre

[1]Existing surface disturbance consists of the current pole footprints that would be removed. Each existing pole footprint is 1 foot by 1 foot.

[2]Temporary surface disturbance consists of the two HDD locations, each 10 foot by 10 foot, within the IDOT I-15 easement and an approximately 3,900 foot (0.74-mile) long 2 foot wide and 3 foot deep trench from west HDD location to new pole on east side of Beaver Creek. The 6 inches that would be dug around the surface of each pole to be removed is not included in the temporary surface disturbance, since it is too small. Also, areas where overland travel (drive and crush) would occur (i.e., in the easements and overland access routes outside the easements) are not considered surface disturbance.

[3]Long-term disturbance is expected disturbance for the life of the new power line easement and consists of the footprint of the new poles. Each new pole footprint would be 1 foot by 1 foot.

2.1.7 Construction Best Management Practices

Construction best management practices (BMPs) that would be adhered to during installation of the new power line and removal of the existing power line include the following:

- All terms and conditions of the ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022 and temporary ROE for construction easement would be followed during construction.
- All terms and conditions of the IDOT and private landowners' easement grants would be followed during construction.
- All vehicle movement would be restricted to predesignated access.
- No permanent discoloring agents would be applied to rocks, vegetation, structures, fences, or other features to indicate survey limits.
- The spatial limits of construction activities would be predetermined, with activity restricted to and confined within those limits.

- All trash, construction debris, and other materials would be removed from the Project Area upon completion of construction activities.
- Appropriate measures, such as the use of portable toilets, would be used to dispose of human waste during the construction period.
- If required, a spill prevention, control, and countermeasures plan would be developed prior to the initiation of construction activities.
- The overhead power line portion of the new power line would comply with Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) standards (APLIC 2006, 2012, 2015, 2018).
- The open burning of trash would not be allowed unless permitted by the appropriate authorities.
- Disturbed areas that are not part of the access roads in the easements would be reclaimed and reseeded with a certified weed-free seed mix approved by ARS for the federal lands and by private landowners for the private lands. Any holes created during construction would be backfilled. Herbicides would be used to curtail weedy annuals (see **Section 2.1.8** below for details).
- Undercarriages of machinery/equipment/vehicles would be treated/washed for plant material prior to entry onto ARS-administered federal lands.
- Temporary construction and maintenance activities would employ overland travel to minimize long-term vegetation removal.
- No guns, firearms, or dogs would be permitted within the easements.
- Where needed during construction, erosion control measures such as earthen berms or straw wattle would be used to minimize erosion.
- Any damage to range improvement projects (e.g., cattle guards or fences) as a result of Project construction would be repaired.
- All vehicles and construction equipment would be maintained to minimize exhaust emissions and would be muffled properly to minimize noise. Disturbed areas would be watered during construction of the Project and during future O&M activities on the new power line as necessary to suppress fugitive dust.

2.1.8 Applicant-committed Design Features

In addition to the construction BMPs listed in **Section 2.1.7**, RMP would implement the design features listed below.

Weeds

Weed control measures are provided below:

- All equipment, including pickup trucks and passenger vehicles, would be cleaned of soils, seeds, vegetative matter, or other debris or matter that could contain or hold weed seeds prior to entering or leaving the Project Area.

- Any proposed use of herbicides would comply with IDOT, private landowners, and ARS weed control requirements (see **Section 2.1.4**).
- All construction areas not needed for normal O&M would be returned to their original condition, where feasible, as specified by ARS.
- All areas subject to temporary surface disturbance (e.g., underground conduit, HDD entrance/exit bore, and new pole and existing pole areas) would be restored to their original contours. Disturbed areas around poles would be raked and seeded. A certified weed-free seed mix approved by ARS for federal lands and by private landowners for private lands, would be used during reclamation activities.
- A weed risk assessment and completion of a Project-specific weed management plan would be completed.

Wildlife

Wildlife measures are provided below:

- Preconstruction resource surveys would be conducted, depending upon the timing of construction and species potentially present.
- The overhead portion of the new power line would be developed in compliance with APLIC standards (APLIC 2006, 2012, 2015, 2018).
- Activities would not occur within recommended spatial and seasonal buffers around active avian nests. For most raptors, spatial buffers would be 0.5 mile from the active nest, and seasonal buffers would be April 1 to July 31. If existing topography limits actual line of sight between an active nest and construction activities, the spatial and seasonal buffers could be reduced if approved by ARS based on site-specific analysis.
- To avoid or minimize potential short-term and long-term impacts to migratory birds, intrusive construction activities would be either limited during the migratory bird breeding season (based on dates recommended by ARS), or a migratory bird nesting survey would be completed in areas proposed for disturbance during this time period.
- Encounters with a protected species (e.g., raptors, migratory birds, or other special status species) would be reported to the ARS or the appropriate oversight agency (e.g., United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS]), or both. Any contractor or employee who inadvertently kills or injures a protected species would immediately report the incident to ARS or the appropriate oversight agency, or both.
- No construction or O&M activities that create noise would occur during the greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) lekking season (i.e., from March 15 to May 15 per 2021 Idaho Plan [State of Idaho 2021]).

Cultural Resources

A Class III cultural resources inventory was completed for the portion of the Project on ARS-administered federal lands to identify cultural resources and to assess the possible impacts on

them per ARS' request. The report was submitted to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for review. The Idaho SHPO concurred with the determinations of effects with stipulations (see **Section 3.8.2** and **Appendix A**).

Hazardous Waste

Hazardous waste measures are provided below:

- RMP would follow all applicable federal and state regulation for the storage and disposal of any hazardous material, including oil and fuel.
- RMP would not use polychlorinated biphenyls during the construction and future O&M activities on the new power line or during removal of the existing power line.
- RMP would not knowingly use or transport any hazardous material at any time, as defined in the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) Section 101(14), 42 United States Code (USC) 9601(14).

RMP would comply with CERCLA, 42 USC 9601(14).

2.1.9 Construction Schedule

Construction of the new power line and removal of the existing power line is scheduled to occur in the fall/early winter of 2024 as soon as notice to proceed is received from ARS.

2.1.10 O&M Activities (New Power Line Only)

Periodic O&M activities on the new power line is necessary throughout the life of the power line. O&M activities would be limited to access roads and the easement to the extent practicable. See **Table 4** for the types of O&M activities that may be performed in the future.

Table 4: Future O&M Activities on the New Power Line

Typical Activity	Activity Description	Equipment Needed	Frequency
Ground or aerial inspection	Visual physical inspection of lines and structures (poles) to detect any problems	Off-highway-vehicle (OHV), four-wheel drive (4WD) truck, drones, pedestrian access	6-month intervals or during unplanned outage conditions
Structure testing and treatment	Inspection	OHV, 4WD truck, pedestrian access	10-year cycle
Insulator replacement	Replacement of an insulator upon failure	OHV, 4WD truck, bucket and line truck	Infrequent, based on inspection
Hardware tightening	Tightening of existing hardware on structures	4WD truck, boom truck	10-year cycle
Pole replacement	Poles would be augured next to existing poles, line would be transferred to the new poles, and the old poles would be removed	4WD truck, boom truck, bucket and line truck	As needed, based on inspection

Table 4: Future O&M Activities on the New Power Line			
Typical Activity	**Activity Description**	**Equipment Needed**	**Frequency**
Vegetation management	Ongoing monitoring and treatment of weeds; monitoring and removal of vegetation in the conductor zone as needed	Sprayer (herbicide), trimming, pruning	Treatment would be completed by RMP as necessary based on monitoring

2.2 Other Alternatives

Other than the No Action Alternative, no additional alternatives to the Proposed Actions are analyzed in this EA. Alternatives were considered, including crossing other ARS-administered federal lands or private lands. However, since there is already an existing ARS easement (i.e., ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022), these other alternatives were dismissed.

2.3 Alternative 2: No Action

Under this alternative, ARS would not grant easements to RMP to (1) install a new power line within the existing 15-foot-wide easement on ARS-administered federal lands (ARS Easement Grant 57-2056-06-022), reclaim the easement, and conduct O&M activities on the easement; and (2) remove 20 poles and associated hardware and conductor from the existing power line on ARS-administered federal lands and reclaim the areas disturbed. The existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. RMP would continue to conduct O&M activities on the existing power line. RMP would reevaluate methods to reduce wildfire risk to ensure safe and reliable power for this section of the Dubois Circuit and to the agricultural customer's pump house, such as rebuilding the existing power line in its current location to meet RMP's internal fire standards. Rebuilding the overhead line in its current location would likely require steel poles and covered conductor, and a wider easement to accommodate the upgrades, and thus a greater surface disturbance area compared to the Proposed Actions. RMP would have to request a new easement grant for the portion of the existing power line on ARS-administered federal lands. RMP would not meet its immediate goals to minimize wildfire risk in an area that meets the criteria to be identified as a FHCA and to provide reliable power to its agricultural customer and throughout Clark County.

3 Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts

This section describes the existing conditions of the environmental resources that have the potential to be impacted by the Proposed Actions. The affected environment includes the existing properties, land, and environmental resources in the area of the Proposed Actions location. Boundaries of the affected environment are limited to the confined structures present at the locations where work under the Proposed Actions would occur and the immediate surroundings. The boundaries of the affected environment are identified in **Figure 1**. The affected environment consists of areas or ecosystems that may be affected by the Proposed Actions immediately or in the long-term.

Impacts to the affected environment for each resource area that has potential to be impacted by the Proposed Actions are analyzed in this chapter. The impacts of construction activities and future O&M activities (new power line only) associated with the Proposed Actions has been included in this analysis. This chapter also describes the resource areas that have been dismissed from further analysis.

The impacts analysis review addresses the duration and intensity of the impact on the resource. The duration of the impact includes both short- and long-term impacts. Impact intensity is the degree to which the Proposed Actions would beneficially or adversely affect a resource. Impact intensities are quantified as negligible, minor, moderate, or significant. As part of the impacts analysis, mitigation measures and/or BMPs are identified to lessen the intensity of the impact on some resource areas.

The following factors or resources are considered in this EA:

- Land Use, Zoning, Aesthetics:
    - Transportation and Parking
- Utilities:
    - Energy
    - Water Source and Sewer Capacity
- Noise
- Solid and Hazardous Waste
- Air Quality
- Geology, Topography, Soils:
    - Farmland
    - Geological Hazards
- Water Resources:
    - Surface Water Quality
    - Floodplains
    - Wetlands
    - Federally Protected Water Resources
- Biological Resources:
    - Vegetation, Wildlife, and Habitat

    - Federally Protected Species
- Cultural Resources:
    - Historic Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures
    - Archaeological Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Socioeconomic Resources
- Cumulative Effects

A desktop review was conducted using publicly available data to determine which of these factors and resources have potential to be impacted by the Proposed Actions to a degree that would require further analysis. See **sections 3.2** through **3.10** for the factors and resources identified as requiring further analysis. See **Section 3.1** for the factors and resources not carried forward for further analysis.

3.1 Factors or Resources Dismissed from Further Analysis

Table 5 lists the factors or resources that have been dismissed from further analysis because the factors or resources are not present or the Proposed Actions were found to not have any potential to impact these factors to a degree requiring further analysis in this EA.

Table 5: Factors and Resources Dismissed from Further Analysis

Factor or Resource	Rationale for Dismissal
Land Use and Zoning: • Transportation and Parking	Land Use: The federal land administered by ARS within the Project Area is a research facility focused on sheep production (grazing) and sustainability of rangelands. The private lands within the Project Area are pasture and open rangelands. The Proposed Actions would not change these land uses. Zoning: The zoning map in the Clark County, Idaho Comprehensive Plan (updated 2019) indicates the Project is in an area zoned for rural living. The Project does not entail commercial, industrial, or residential development. The Proposed Actions would be consistent with the uses expected in land areas zoned as rural. Transportation and Parking: The Project Area would be accessed from existing roads (I-15, Old Highway 91, and other unnamed roads) and overland travel within the easements where no road is present. The I-15 IDOT easement would be used for boring of conduit under the highway. No new access roads would be developed. No road closures would be needed for use of the existing roads during construction. No parking areas would be developed or used. See **Section 2.1** in the text for more detail. As there would be no change to the transportation system or existing road access, the Proposed Actions would not affect transportation or parking.

Table 5: Factors and Resources Dismissed from Further Analysis	
Factor or Resource	**Rationale for Dismissal**
Utilities: Water Source and Sewer Capacity	The Project is in rural, undeveloped lands where no water or sewer utilities have been developed. Water may be used to suppress fugitive dust, and would be obtained from a municipal source and trucked to the site. The water would be sprayed overland and would dissipate into the soil. There would be no discharge from a point source. Portable toilets would be used during construction. The Proposed Actions would not affect water sources or sewer capacity because utilities are not present in the Project Area and there would be no withdrawals from or releases into surface water or groundwater in the Project Area.
Noise	The noise produced during construction would be from equipment and vehicles and from boring activities, which would be temporary, lasting approximately 2 months. There would be minimal noise during future O&M activities, which would primarily be infrequent visits by inspection crews in vehicles. The Project is in a rural area with limited human presence and noise sensitive receptors. Review of aerial imagery revealed there is one residence that is 2 miles away. The increase in noise levels at this residence is expected to be insignificant (not detectable) due to the distance from the Project Area construction equipment and vehicles and boring activities (i.e., the noise levels would be close to baseline noise levels in rural areas of approximately 30 decibels A [dBA]).
Solid and Hazardous Waste	Solid and hazardous waste management BMPs would be implemented (see Project POD). Trash would be removed from the Project Area upon completion. Other solid waste produced or removed (e.g., old conductor, poles, and associated hardware) would be hauled away and recycled or disposed at an appropriate facility. RMP would follow all federal and state regulations for storage and disposal of hazardous material. The Project's hazardous materials would be limited to oil and fuel. Though not anticipated, if contaminated soil is visually identified during implementation of the Proposed Actions, work in the identified area would be halted and the ARS representative advised. ARS Pacific West Area (PWA) Facilities, Safety, and Real Property Team would be notified immediately. Work in this area would not resume until measures in accordance with the CERCLA are implemented.

Table 5: Factors and Resources Dismissed from Further Analysis	
Factor or Resource	**Rationale for Dismissal**
Air Quality	Air quality is determined primarily by the type and number of contaminants emitted into the atmosphere, the size and topography of the air basin, and meteorological conditions. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has developed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants: nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, lead, ozone, and particulate matter. Clark County is within an attainment area for all criteria pollutants (USEPA 2024a). Construction and future O&M activities (new power line only) would result in small amounts of fugitive dust and tailpipe emissions from construction equipment and vehicle traffic. All vehicles and construction equipment would be maintained to minimize exhaust emissions and would be muffled properly to minimize noise. There would be a short-term increase in dust emissions during construction activities; however, disturbed areas would be watered during construction and O&M activities as necessary to suppress dust. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not affect air quality to a measurable degree.
Geology	There are no prominent geologic features present. There are active borrow pits in the vicinity. The Proposed Actions would not affect the geology of the Project Area to a significant degree because the HDD, trench, and new and old pole excavations would be shallow and located primarily in alluvial deposits. Trenching through a 2,500-foot length of subsurface igneous rock would occur but the effect would be insignificant because this is a common rock that is widespread throughout this region of Idaho.
Topography	The topography in the Project Area is mostly flat to gently rolling hills. After construction is complete, the site would be returned to pre-construction conditions. The Proposed Actions would not change the topography to a measurable degree. See **sections 3.4** and **3.5** for further details on soils and vegetation, respectively, which discuss BMPs to prevent future erosion.
Farmland	No prime or unique farmland occurs within the Project Area; therefore, farmland would not be affected by the Proposed Actions.
Geological Hazards	The Project would not be affected by geologic hazards. There are no faults within or near the Project Area. The nearest fault is Deadman fault which is approximately 2.14 miles to the northwest of the Project (USGS 2019). There are no areas susceptible to landslides because there are no steep slopes present. The Proposed Actions would not create geological hazards due to the shallow nature of the proposed construction and O&M activities.

Table 5: Factors and Resources Dismissed from Further Analysis	
Factor or Resource	**Rationale for Dismissal**
Water Resources: • Surface Water Quality • Floodplains • Wetlands • Federal Protected Water Resources	Surface Water Quality, Wetlands, and Federally Protected Water Resources: No wetlands are present in the Project Area. Two creeks, Dry Creek and Beaver Creek, cross the Project Area (see **Figure 1**). The overhead portion of the proposed new power line would span Beaver Creek overhead, and the poles would not be within the riparian zone. Work completed to remove the existing power line that crosses Dry Creek would not occur in the riparian zone. Construction BMPs would be implemented to prevent sediment and other pollutants from entering these two creeks. Due to the Project design and implementation of BMPs, the Proposed Actions are unlikely to affect these two creeks. Floodplains: According to the Flood Insurance Rate Map panel for Clark County, the Project is in an area that the Federal Emergency Management Agency maps as having minimal flood hazards (Zone C).
Socioeconomic Resources	The Proposed Actions would not affect regional economics. There would be no significant change in labor income and employment related to construction or O&M of the new power line. There would no change to the existing agricultural land use. The human population in the vicinity is limited to one residence.

3.2 Aesthetics

Aesthetic or visual resources are generally defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape that are seen and that contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment. Aesthetic or visual resource impacts are generally defined in terms of a project's physical characteristics and potential visibility and the extent to which its presence would alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment.

3.2.1 Affected Environment

The Project Area is located in a rural, undeveloped area of Clark County, approximately 5 miles south of the community of Spencer, Idaho and approximately 7.5 miles north of the city of Dubois, Idaho. The Project Area is within the viewshed of I-15 and Old Highway 91. The federal land administered by ARS within the Project Area are open rangelands. The private lands within the Project Area are pasture and open rangelands, with some cleared, graveled areas for small structures. Review of aerial imagery revealed there is one residence that is 2 miles away. Numerous gravel and two-track roads are present. Overhead electric power lines and a railroad line are established landscape features within and in the immediate Project vicinity. There are two borrow pits between I-15 and Old Highway 91.

The natural vegetation consists primarily of sagebrush-steppe mixed with patches of grasslands with juniper trees encroaching in some areas. This vegetation community is common and widespread across the Snake River Plain region. The views from the Project Area are typical of the area, consisting of relatively flat to rolling hills in the lowlands with adjacent

hills and mountains visible in the distance. The Lost Gold Trails Loop is a scenic driving route in the area, between Dubois and Spencer, and includes the portion of Old Highway 91 in the Project Area. Otherwise, there are no prominent or unique natural land features or built features in the Project Area or the surrounding viewshed.

3.2.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

Installation of the five new poles for the overhead portion of the new power line would have an adverse impact on the visual aesthetics for motorists traveling through the area on Old Highway 91. The visual impact from I-15 is likely negligible because the new poles would not be highly visible, being located 0.75 mile west of I-15. The impact to visual resources would be long-term (for the life of the new power line) but minor due to the small number of poles and because the impact would be localized to a short (0.16-mile) section of Old Highway 91. In addition, the poles would be consistent with other existing developed features in the area, such as graveled and cleared lands and small structures. There would also be a short-term localized visual impact on motorists traveling along Old Highway 91 from 0.184 acre of new ground disturbance from the installation of the approximately 0.82 mile underground portion of the new power line. The surface disturbance is likely to be less noticeable from I-15 due to motorist travel speed and other existing linear features (e.g., power lines, rail line, fences, and gravel and two track roads) and disturbances (borrow pits) around the highway. Following reclamation and subsequent vegetation regrowth, the effect to the aesthetics from the surface disturbance would be negligible.

The removal of the existing power line (73 poles and approximately 2.36 miles of wire) would improve the aesthetics along Old Highway 91 by removing the poles from the viewshed. Given that the number of existing poles and overhead power line that would be removed would be larger than the number of new poles and overhead wire that would be installed, the overall existing power line Proposed Action would have a long-term, beneficial, localized visual impact to approximately 2.36 miles along Old Highway 91.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the visual aesthetics would not change from current conditions. The existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. There would be no new visual impact on motorists traveling along I-15 and Old Highway 91 from the installation of the five new poles, and from ground disturbance associated with the buried/underground portion of the new power line. However, there would be no long-term, beneficial visual impact on motorists traveling along Old Highway 91, since the existing 73 poles and approximately 2.36 miles of wire would not be removed. In addition, a new and potentially more prominent power line (e.g., steel poles versus wooden poles) is likely to be needed to upgrade the existing overhead line in its current location to RMPs internal fire standards, which would be a long term, moderate adverse effect to the aesthetics compared to current conditions.

3.3 Utilities: Energy

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The analysis area for evaluating effects to energy utilities is the Project Area. The Dubois Circuit is the only energy utility present within the Project Area. RMP's Dubois Circuit provides power to rural communities throughout Clark County, Idaho. The Dubois Circuit originates from the Dubois Substation south of the city of Dubois, Idaho (approximately 13 miles to the south of the Project Area) and ends at Huntley Canyon in Spencer, Idaho (approximately 3.3 miles to the north of the Project Area). The Dubois Circuit services agricultural customers in the western portions of Clark County, and also branches out in municipal areas to service customers in the communities of Spencer and Dubois.

There are two portions of the Dubois Circuit in the Project Area: 1) the I-15 portion that runs north-south on the east side of I-15, and 2) the portion that runs along Old Highway 91 (i.e., the existing power line proposed for removal as part of this Proposed Action). The portion along Old Highway 91 services one agricultural customer's pump house.

The portion of the Dubois Circuit along Old Highway 91 resides in a FHCA. It is currently at risk of causing wildfires or being affected by natural wildfire because the poles and hardware do not meet RMPs current internal fire standards due to the age of the power line, having been constructed in the 1930s. There is a risk that under current conditions, wildfires could spread from the Project Area and affect personal and public property as well as RMPs infrastructure in other portions of the Dubois Circuit.

3.3.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

The Proposed Actions would substantially reduce the risk of wildfire affecting personal and public property and RMP's infrastructure by removing and replacing the portion of the Dubois Circuit along Old Highway 91 with a new power line that would be mostly underground. The Proposed Actions would have a beneficial effect to energy utilities, since it would ensure safe and reliable power can continue to be provided to the agricultural customer's pump house, and would also reduce the risk of wildfire affecting other portions of the Dubois Circuit. Fire hardening the new power line would ensure the community of Spencer, Idaho (about 50 customers) has safe and reliable power. Spencer is a remote community with no power delivery redundancy; the Dubois Circuit is the only service to the area. The Proposed Actions would have a major long-term beneficial effect to utilities and the customers serviced by the Dubois Circuit throughout Clark County.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the energy utilities in the Project Area would not change from current conditions. The portion of Dubois Circuit along Old Highway 91 would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. The risk of this portion of the Dubois Circuit causing wildfires or being affected by wildfires would not be immediately reduced. RMP would continue to conduct O&M activities on the existing power line, and would

reevaluate methods to reduce wildfire risk to ensure safe and reliable power to customers serviced by the Dubois Circuit. RMP would likely rebuild the overhead line in its current location at some point in the future to meet RMPs internal fire standards, which would require a larger easement width. There would be a moderate adverse effect to utilities due to the delay in fire hardening the existing power line and subsequent exposure to wildfire risk, and potential loss of power to customers serviced by the Dubois Circuit throughout Clark County.

3.4 Soils

3.4.1 Affected Environment

The analysis area for soil resources is the Project Area. Soils in the Project Area have been mapped and described by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in the soil survey of the Clark County Area, Idaho, Parts of Clark and Butte Counties (NRCS 2023). There are three soil associations mapped in the Project Area. Acreages for these associations and a summary of the soil characteristics are shown in **Table 6**. The soils are primarily gravelly loam derived from alluvium or alluvium over residuum weathered from basalt. The soils have very low to low susceptibility to erosion from runoff due to the gentle slopes and moderately rapid permeability of the soils. The soils have moderately low susceptibility to wind erosion with most of the soils being in wind erodibility group 6 (out of a range of 1 to 8, where 1 is highly erodible and 8 is not erodible). None of the soils are prime farmland according to NRCS (2023). Previous disturbances in the Project Area include gravel and two-track roads and grazing.

The vegetation is an Intermountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe community, which often has a biological soil crust in the interspaces between plants (NatureServe 2024). Biological soil crusts are an association between soil particles and organisms that live within or on top of the soil, such as cyanobacteria, lichens, algae, and mosses (Belnap et al. 2001). The organisms grow in the top layer of the soil, adhering the particles together, which stabilizes and protects the soil surface from wind and water erosion. The crust is also important for soil moisture and fertility.

Table 6: Soils in the Project Area

Soil Association	Landform and Parent Material	Depth to Restrictive Layer	Drainage Class	Runoff Class	Wind Erodibility Group	Acres and Approximate Percentage (%) of Project Area
St. Anthony gravelly loam, 1 to 5 percent slopes	Stream terraces; Alluvium	More than 80 inches	Well drained	Very low	6	9.1 acres, 84.5%

Table 6: Soils in the Project Area						
Soil Association	**Landform and Parent Material**	**Depth to Restrictive Layer**	**Drainage Class**	**Runoff Class**	**Wind Erodibility Group**	**Acres and Approximate Percentage (%) of Project Area**
Kuvasz-Hotspot-Pyrenees, stony complex, 0 to 12 percent slopes	Lava flows; Alluvium over residuum weathered from basalt	Kuvasz and Pyrenees stony: 20 to 39 inches to lithic bedrock; Hotspot: 10 to 20 inches to lithic bedrock	Well drained	Low	6 to 8	1.5 acres, 14.3%
Rock outcrop-Becreek complex, 1 to 35 percent slopes	Stream terraces; Alluvium	Rock Outcrop: 0 inches to lithic bedrock; Becreek: More than 80 inches	Well drained	Very low for Becreek soil; moderate in rock outcrop	3	0.1 acre, 1.2%

Source: NRCS 2023

3.4.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

The footprint of the five new poles would permanently displace 5 square feet of soil. This is a negligible amount of soil relative to the size of the Project Area. Therefore, impacts from permanent soil displacement would be negligible.

The proposed boring and trenching activities would temporarily disturb approximately 0.184 acre of soil. The boring activities (entrance and exit points) would be in areas where soil has previously been disturbed in the I-15 easement, a portion of which has likely been altered by the addition of fill material. In addition, there is surface rock rather than soil in a portion of the proposed trench area. For these reasons, the total amount of native soil disturbed is likely less than 0.184 acre.

The surface disturbing activities would compact soils through use of heavy machinery while trenching and would temporarily remove existing vegetation, biological soil crust, topsoil, and subsoils. Compaction could reduce aeration and the ability of the soil to hold moisture, reducing productivity. Disturbing and moving soils would loosen the soil particles, increasing the risk of soil loss through wind erosion and water erosion during storm events or snow melt. However, there is a low likelihood that the proposed activities would result in severe levels of water erosion because the soil types are moderately permeable and the slopes in the Project Area are gentle. The steepest portion of the Project Area (soils in the Rock outcrop-Becreek complex) is at the Beaver Creek crossing, but no ground disturbing work (trenching or installation of poles) would be occurring within the streambank because the new power line

would go overhead here, spanning the creek. Topsoil would be salvaged and restored during surface reclamation, which would minimize loss of topsoil. However, there could be small reductions in organic matter and nutrients in the topsoil as the soil would mix to some degree and be exposed to air. The loss of soil crust could result in a small increase in susceptibility to wind erosion post-construction until the crust reforms. As the soil textures are not highly prone to wind erosion, the effect would be minimal.

Although the new power line Proposed Action would expose the soil to erosion hazards, the narrow area affected (surface disturbance in 2-foot-wide trench), gentle slopes, and presence of existing plants on either side would keep any soil movement that does occur to a localized area. In addition, the time the soil would be exposed to erosion risk would be short as construction would be completed within 2 months and reclamation would immediately follow. Furthermore, Project design features and application of sediment and erosion control BMPs and dust suppression measures (see **sections 2.1.7** and **2.1.8**), would minimize water and wind erosion during construction. Reclamation and weed control of the easements (see **Section 2.1.4**) would be completed following ARS requirements on federal lands. This includes spraying of pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicide(s) to prevent weed growth, recontouring, application of salvaged topsoil, and reseeding, which would reduce the amount of soil degradation and wind and water erosion over the long-term by reestablishing vegetation cover, minimizing weed invasion, and stabilizing the soil.

Future O&M activities on the new power line would have negligible effects on soil over the remaining life of the easement grant (32 years). The O&M activities are expected to be limited to inspections because the power line would be new and unlikely to require maintenance. Overhead/above ground features where surface disturbance could be needed is minimal (five poles). Vaults would be installed for accessing the buried/underground portion of the power line as needed for inspection and maintenance. Therefore, it is unlikely RMP would need to re-disturb the easement.

The effects to soil described above would be mostly temporary and localized to the Project Area. The amount of soil disturbed (0.184 acre) would be insignificant, and implementation of applicant-committed design features and construction BMPs would reduce the risk of soil loss and degradation. For these reasons, the overall impact to soils would be negligible.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no new construction activities would occur that would disturb soil. The existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential soil disturbance from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles and where vehicles travel overland. The O&M activities would have a negligible impact on soil because future ground disturbing O&M activities is expected to be infrequent, and the amount of soil that could be impacted is insignificant and localized However, RMP would likely rebuild (fire harden) the existing power line in its current location, which would require installation of steel poles and a larger easement width. Rebuilding the existing power line in its current location would have a

moderate adverse impact on soils in the easement compared to the Proposed Actions due to larger disturbance area required, and subsequent exposure to erosion risk.

3.5 Biological Resources: Vegetation

3.5.1 Affected Environment

The analysis area for vegetation resources is the Project Area. The vegetation in the Project Area is an Intermountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe community. The area is arid and natural vegetation consists primarily of sagebrush-steppe mixed with patches of grasslands with juniper trees encroaching in some areas. This vegetation community is common and widespread across the Snake River Plain region.

3.5.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

The footprint of the five new poles would permanently remove 5 square feet of vegetation. This is a trivial amount of vegetation relative to the size of the Project Area and the widespread occurrence of this community type in the surrounding valley. Therefore, impacts from permanent vegetation removal would be negligible.

The proposed boring and trenching activities would temporarily remove approximately 0.184 acre of vegetation. There is surface rock rather than vegetation in a portion of the proposed trench area. Therefore, the total amount of vegetation removed is likely less than 0.184 acre.

The surface disturbing activities would temporarily remove existing vegetation. Disturbed surfaces and vehicle and equipment use increase the probability that weeds may establish and spread. Effects to vegetation in the Project Area from the removal of vegetation and potential for weeds establishment and spread would be reduced through Project design features, construction BMPs, and reclamation and weed control (see **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**). Reclamation and weed control of the easements (see **Section 2.1.4**) would be completed following ARS requirements on federal lands. This includes recontouring, application of salvaged topsoil, reseeding, and spraying of herbicides to prevent weed growth. These measures would reestablish desired vegetation cover and minimize the establishment and spread of weeds that could degrade the sagebrush-steppe community by outcompeting native plant species.

Herbicides that may be used to control weeds are listed in **tables 1** and **2**. All herbicides would be applied by a certified licensed applicator in strict accordance with the herbicide label specifications, herbicide BMPs, buffers (see **Table 1**), and would follow applicable herbicide application protocols in Appendix C of the *U.S. Sheep Experiment Station Grazing and Associated Activities Project Final Environmental Impact Statement* as applicable (ARS 2017). With these measures, herbicide use would be beneficial to the sagebrush steppe community by targeting weed species while having minimal effect on native plants.

Future O&M activities on the new power line would have negligible effects on vegetation over the remaining life of the easement grant (32 years). The O&M activities are expected to be

limited to inspections and where vehicles travel overland because the power line would be new and unlikely to require maintenance. Overhead/above ground features where surface disturbance could be needed is minimal and localized (five poles). Vaults would be installed for accessing the buried/underground portion of the power line as needed for inspection and maintenance. Therefore, it is unlikely RMP would need to re-disturb the easement during the remaining 32 years of the grant and any disturbance that is needed would be limited to small, localized areas.

The Proposed Actions would also have a beneficial effect because it would decrease the fire hazard in the Project Area, thereby reducing the likelihood of a future fire degrading the sagebrush-steppe community.

The effects to vegetation described above would be mostly temporary and localized to the Project Area. The amount of vegetation removed (0.184 acre) during construction would be small, and implementation of reclamation and weed control measures, applicant-committed design features, and construction BMPs would reestablish vegetation cover and minimize weed invasion. Effects from future O&M activities would be negligible because little to no surface disturbance is expected. For these reasons, the overall impact to vegetation in the sagebrush steppe community would be minor.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential vegetation removal and establishment and spread of weeds from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles and where vehicles travel overland. The future O&M activities would have negligible impacts on vegetation because ground disturbing activities are expected to be infrequent, and the amount of vegetation that could be impacted is small and localized. However, under the No Action Alternative, RMP would likely rebuild (fire harden) the existing powerline in its current location, which would require installation of steel poles and a larger easement width. Rebuilding the line in its current location would have a moderate adverse impact on vegetation in the easement compared to the Proposed Action due to the larger disturbance area required, and subsequent short-term vegetation loss and larger area at risk of weed invasion.

3.6 Biological Resources: Wildlife and Habitat

The wildlife analysis is focused on species of conservation concern or management interest, including Idaho Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN; IDFG 2024a) and big game. Idaho SGCN were considered in the analysis if they occur in Clark County according to the county list provided by Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System (IFWIS; IDFG 2024b) and if they are associated with the habitat types that are present in the Project Area. Migratory birds that are SGCN are analyzed in **Section 3.7** along with other federally protected species (i.e., Endangered Species Act [ESA] endangered, threatened, and candidate species).

3.6.1 Affected Environment

Idaho SGCN

Greater sage-grouse

Greater sage-grouse (or sage-grouse) receives special management consideration by the State of Idaho and federal land management agencies, such as ARS, to promote its conservation and reduce the likelihood for future listing under the ESA. The greater sage-grouse is a large upland game bird that occupies sagebrush dominated habitats. During the spring (normally March to mid-May), sage-grouse gather on leks, which are traditional breeding areas where males perform courtship displays. Females begin moving from winter range to breeding areas from late February to early March. After breeding, females move away from the lek to establish nests and rear their broods. In Idaho, females nest an average of 2 to 3 miles from their lek but may move more than 11 miles to nest (ISAC 2006). In late summer as vegetation in sagebrush rangelands desiccates, sage-grouse move their broods to mesic areas, such as wet meadows, riparian edges, and irrigated fields (Braun et al. 2005). In the fall (late September through December), they often move to higher elevations benches and ridges with north aspects to seek out remaining green forage (Braun et al. 2005). Greater sage-grouse populations in Idaho have been declining primarily due to habitat degradation resulting from wildfire and invasive species (e.g., cheatgrass), and to a lesser degree, habitat fragmentation from large-scale infrastructure (State of Idaho 2021).

The 2021 Idaho Plan (State of Idaho 2021) is the State of Idaho's official policy for greater sage-grouse management in Idaho per the Governor's Executive Order (EO) No. 2022-03. The purpose of the 2021 Idaho Plan is to provide, in the context of multiple-use management, Idaho specific policy direction and recommendations for sage-grouse conservation and management on lands administered by federal agencies, or for other actions with a federal nexus in Idaho's Sage-grouse Management Area (SGMA). While the ARS does not have any formal agreement with the State of Idaho to coordinate on sage-grouse habitat policy and mitigation or to abide by the 2021 Idaho Plan, the ARS strives to ensure their actions are consistent with the plan.

Sage-grouse habitat in Idaho's SGMA is classified into three management categories: Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA), Important Habitat Management Area (IHMA), and General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA) based on modeling of sage-grouse breeding density, habitat connectivity, and persistence; scientific knowledge acquired from surveys and radio-telemetry studies; and the recommendations of the 2012 Task Force (State of Idaho 2021). PHMAs have the highest value to maintaining greater sage-grouse populations. PHMAs are used for breeding and late brood-rearing activities and may also contain winter habitat and migration or connectivity corridors (BLM 2015).

The analysis area for evaluating the effects of the Proposed Actions to greater sage-grouse is the Project Area plus a 2-mile buffer. This analysis area was selected following project design guidelines in the 2021 Idaho Plan for greater sage-grouse management in Idaho (State of Idaho 2021), which recommends a 2-mile buffer from occupied leks for limiting noise and human

disturbance (depending on the level and frequency of the noise) and a 1.2-mile buffer from minor linear features (e.g., distribution poles) in PHMA.

The analysis area is wholly within a PHMA. Greater sage-grouse are known to occur in the analysis area because there is a lek present. Review of the most current Greater Sage-grouse Lek Database from the IFWIS indicated there is one occupied greater sage-grouse lek within 2 miles of the Project Area. The lek is the Sheep Station #11 Wet Camp Lek (Lek ID 5C168). It is located 0.88 mile to the southeast of the Project Area on the east side of I-15, on federal lands administered by ARS. According to the IFWIS data, sage-grouse were present at the lek during the most recent survey conducted in 2020. As most sage-grouse nesting occurs within 3.1 miles of leks and given the Sheep Station #11 lek is 0.88 mile from the Project Area, nesting and brood-rearing activities likely occur in the analysis area. . There are limited mesic habitats present that would attract late summer use, but some small irrigated fields occur within 0.5 mile of the Project Area. Fall use could occur in the bench areas in the northwest portions of the analysis area, but low use is expected in the Project Area due to its location in a basin area. Sage-grouse could also use the analysis area in winter although no winter high concentration areas are known to occur.

Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) (or sharp-tailed grouse) is a large upland game bird that breeds in native bunchgrass and shrub-bunchgrass communities. They may also use grassy agricultural areas (e.g., pasture, hay fields). Adjacent areas of deciduous shrub thickets (e.g., hawthorn, chokecherry, serviceberry), aspen, and riparian areas provide winter cover and are also an important source of food (berries) during late summer and fall (IDFG 2015). Leks are typically located on elevated land features with sparse vegetation, such as low knolls, benches, and ridges. Sharp-tailed grouse populations have declined across their range due to habitat loss and degradation resulting from conversion of native grassland habitats to pasture and croplands, overgrazing by domestic livestock, energy development, use of herbicides, altered natural fire regimes, invasion of non-native plants, and urban and rural expansion (Hoffman and Thomas 2007).

The analysis area for sharp-tailed grouse is the Project Area, plus a 2-mile buffer. This analysis area was selected because little information is available on sharp-tailed grouse response to infrastructure, but it is assumed that they respond similarly to sage-grouse and other gallinaceous birds that inhabit prairies and open habitat types (IDFG 2015). Based on review of the IFWIS database, there are no sharp-tailed grouse leks within 2 miles of the Project Area. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) does not monitor the leks annually. Although no leks are known to be present and therefore no breeding is known to occur, sharp-tailed grouse could use the analysis area for other activities (foraging, loafing). The analysis area contains sagebrush steppe and grassland communities and also agricultural fields that may be suitable habitat for the species. No winter habitat (deciduous shrubland) occurs in the Project Area. However, based on review of aerial imagery and land cover maps, there are likely some deciduous shrublands further out in the analysis area, such as in the foothills northwest of the Project Area.

Nongame Wildlife Idaho SGCN

The analysis area for non-game wildlife that are Idaho SGCN is the Project Area plus a 0.5-mile buffer. See **Section 3.7** for analysis of SGCN that are migratory birds. Based on the query of the IFWIS database (IDFG 2024c), there are no occurrence records of other Idaho SGCN within the analysis area. However, based on their geographic range and having habitat requirements tied to sagebrush-steppe, the following SGCN could occur in the analysis area:

- Amphibians:
    - Western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) - No breeding habitat is present (open water), but this species could be found in the analysis area outside the breeding period.
- Mammals:
    - Pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) – Found in tall dense sagebrush, including sagebrush steppe, where friable soils are present to support burrows.
    - Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) – No roosting sites or hibernacula present (caves/mines) but will forage long distances from roosting areas, and therefore could forage in the analysis area.

Big Game

The analysis area for big game is the Project Area plus a 0.5-mile buffer. The analysis area is within the Big Desert Mountain Valley Complex Priority Area, which is important winter range for pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and elk (*Cervus canadensis*). The analysis area also overlaps with the Upper Snake River Plain pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) migration route and stopover area, and the Reno elk migration route (IDFG 2023, 2024a).

3.6.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

Habitat Loss/Modification

The footprint of the five new poles would permanently remove a trivial amount of habitat (5 square feet total) within the analysis area. Therefore, impacts from permanent habitat removal would be negligible.

Impacts from temporary habitat removal are analyzed in detail below. The temporary impacts would occur during construction, as future O&M activities are not expected to re-disturb the Project Area other than a negligible area around the 5 poles.

Nongame Wildlife Idaho SGCN and Big Game

The proposed boring and trenching activities would temporarily remove 0.184 acre of habitat, which would reduce wildlife forage and cover resources in the analysis area, and potentially nectar plants used by monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) during migration. The effect would be localized to the trench, 2 bore holes, and the 5 new poles (see **Table 3**). The creation

of disturbed surfaces and use of vehicle and equipment during Project construction increases the probability that weeds may establish or spread and degrade wildlife habitat in the Project Area by competing with native vegetation species. During and immediately following construction, weed control measures and other BMPs and design features (**sections 2.14**, **2.17,** and **2.18**) would be implemented, and reclamation would be completed in the disturbed areas in accordance with the IDOT, private landowners, and ARS requirements (see **Section 2.1.4**). This includes washing of equipment and vehicles prior to entering the Project Area, recontouring, application of salvaged topsoil, reseeding, and spraying of herbicides to prevent weed growth. These measures would reestablish vegetation cover and minimize weed establishment/spread and degradation of the habitat over the long-term and therefore effects to big game, western toad, pygmy rabbit, and Townsend's big-eared bat habitat would be minor and short term.

Greater Sage-grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse

There would be no direct effect (i.e., surface disturbance) to greater sage-grouse or sharp-tailed grouse leks because there are none in the Project footprint. The proposed surface disturbing activities would alter greater sage-grouse nesting and brood-rearing habitat in PHMA. While grouse foraging and cover resources would be temporarily removed in a small area (0.184 acre), the disturbed areas would be reseeded with a seed mix that would reestablish grasses and big sagebrush commensurate with the pre-disturbance sagebrush-steppe community (see **Section 2.1.4**). Weed control measures would reduce the risk of weeds degrading the sagebrush-steppe habitat. With these measures, effects to sage-grouse habitat in the PHMA and sharp-tailed grouse habitat would be minor (due to the small area affected) and short-term (because vegetation would be reestablished).

Five new poles would be installed. The closest of these poles (i.e., one on east side of Beaver Creek) would be located 1.66 miles from sage-grouse Lek 5C168. There would be a net decrease of 68 poles (5 new poles, 73 removed) in the analysis area. Tall structures provide nest and perch sites for avian predators, such as corvids and raptors (Connelly et al. 2004). Therefore, removal of the 68 poles would be beneficial to sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse by reducing the risk of avian predation on these grouse species (Manier et al. 2014).

Noise/Human Disturbance

Construction activities could disturb and displace wildlife that are in the analysis area during construction, including Idaho SGCN (western toad, pygmy rabbit, and Townsend's big-eared bat) and big game. Given the relatively small disturbance area (0.184 acre), this would affect a small number of individuals and for a short duration (2-month construction period). No breeding areas (bat roost sites or toad breeding ponds) are present, and therefore the impact would be primarily during foraging activities. The activities would occur in the fall and early winter and would not disturb big game during harsh winter months when they may be stressed and undernourished. The disturbance impact to wildlife, including Idaho SGCN and big game, would be minor and temporary.

There are no sharp-tailed grouse leks within 2 miles of the Project Area; therefore, no breeding sharp-tailed grouse would be affected by the Proposed Actions. Greater sage-grouse have potential to be present in the analysis area year-round, but likely occur in greatest numbers in the nesting and early summer brood-rearing seasons. There is one occupied greater sage-grouse lek within 2 miles of the Project Area. Per Project design features (**Section 2.18**), no construction or O&M activities that create noise would occur during the sage-grouse lekking season (i.e., from March 15 to May 15 per 2021 Idaho Plan [State of Idaho 2021]). RMP expects to complete construction in the fall/early winter months. Construction noise/disturbance would not affect sage-grouse lekking activities because no construction activities would occur during this season. In addition, the fall construction dates mean there would be no disturbance to sage-grouse nesting or brood-rearing, which are complete by late summer. As these sensitive times would be avoided, construction noise/disturbance would not affect reproduction. Given the relatively small disturbance area (0.184 acre) and the fall construction timing when fewest sage-grouse are likely to be present, construction disturbance would disturb and displace a small number of grouse and for a short duration (2-month construction period). Therefore, the disturbance impact to greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse would be minor and temporary.

Noise/disturbance from future O&M activities on the new power line would have a negligible effect on big game, greater sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and other Idaho SGCN because these activities would occur infrequently (about twice per year) and would mostly entail inspections and minor repairs (see **Table 4**) that would not produce much noise. Major corrective maintenance is not expected to occur during the easement grant term because the new power line would be newly constructed. In addition, the sage-grouse lek is on the other side of I-15 from Project activities, and the highway noise is expected to mask any noise and disturbance from routine O&M activities. There would be no long-term increase in O&M disturbance above current levels because future O&M activities on the existing power line would be shifted to the new power line easement location once the existing power line is removed.

Consistency with 2021 Idaho Plan for Greater Sage-grouse

The ARS does not have formal agreement with the State of Idaho to adhere to the 2021 Idaho Plan but ARS strives to be consistent with the plan where it applies. The 2021 Idaho Plan states the following regarding Idaho Policy for infrastructure projects on federal lands (pertains to lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management or United States Forest Service):

Section IV C 4i – Idaho's Policy Language for Lands Managed by the Federal Government in PHMA – Infrastructure:

The development of infrastructure[1] authorized in areas designated as PHMA is prohibited, except if the development is pursuant to valid existing rights[2], renewals of valid existing rights, incremental upgrade and/or capacity increase of existing development (authorized prior to approval of the 2021 Idaho Plan) subject to the required design features in Section IV-F of the 2021 Idaho Plan. The development of new infrastructure must first be deemed significant high value benefit to meet critical needs for the State of Idaho, then if so, it must be developed pursuant to the exemption criteria in Section IV C 4-ii of the 2021 Idaho Plan.

RMP is proposing to replace a portion of the existing Dubois Circuit with a new mostly underground distribution power line (small-scale infrastructure) within existing private landowner and ARS easements. The portion of the existing power line that is proposed for replacement services a customer's pump house that is used for agricultural applications. The Proposed Actions are an upgrade of existing development (built in the 1930s) that predates the 2021 Idaho Plan and therefore is consistent with this section of the plan. The above ground portion of the new power line and 5 poles would be 1.66 miles from greater sage-grouse Sheep Station #11 Lek (5C168). This is consistent with the minimum buffer in the 2021 Idaho Plan to place minor linear features, such as distribution poles) at least 1.2 miles from occupied leks when in a PHMA.

RMP is required by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission Title 61 - Public Utility Regulation, Chapter 3 – Duties of Public Utilities, Section 61-302 – Maintenance of Adequate Service to provide safe and reliable power to its customers. RMP has identified that the existing power line is in an FHCA and therefore could cause or be affected by wildfires. The rebuild of this portion of the Dubois Circuit is needed to allow RMP to continue to provide safe and reliable power to the agricultural customer and customers throughout Clark County and the community of Spencer, and reduce the risk of destructive wildfires affecting large areas, including in the PHMA. This would be consistent with the policy in the 2021 Idaho Plan for reducing wildfire in greater sage-grouse habitat, especially PHMA. In addition, there would be a net decrease of 68 power poles (5 new poles, 73 removed poles), which would have a beneficial effect on sage-grouse and its PHMA habitat by reducing predation risk. With removal of the poles, reclamation

[1] Section I – Guiding Principles, E – Valid Existing Rights: All management areas and recommendations are intended to be subject to and protect all valid existing rights. It is critical that the valid land uses and landowner activities continue to occur, particularly agricultural activities on all land ownerships.

[2] Section I – Guiding Principles, G – Infrastructure: Infrastructure is defined as discrete, large-scale anthropogenic features or anthropogenic disturbance. Power line development is considered an anthropogenic disturbance. Some utilities are obligated by regulation to serve customers with safe and reliable service. In order to avoid impacting operational abilities and routine maintenance of these companies, agencies, and landowners, certain practices are excluded from this definition; however, utilities must comply with the required design features for sage-grouse in Section IV-F of the 2021 Idaho Plan. Infrastructure related to small-scale ranch, home, and farm businesses (e.g., stock ponds, fences, range improvements) do not fall within this definition and are addressed in other sections of the 2021 Idaho Plan (State of Idaho 2021).

of the newly disturbed areas, and reduced fire risk, there would be no net loss of functional acres of sage-grouse habitat in the PHMA.

The Project would be consistent with the design features in the 2021 Idaho Plan for projects in PHMA (i.e., Section IV-F Infrastructure-Required Design Features), which is documented in **Appendix B**.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential surface disturbance from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles. Noise and human presence could disturb and displace wildlife from the analysis area, but O&M activities would occur infrequently (e.g., inspections twice per year). The O&M activities would have a negligible impact on Idaho SGCN (including sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse) and big game and their habitat because future disturbance from O&M activities is expected to be infrequent, and the amount of habitat that could be impacted is small and localized. However, under the No Action Alternative, RMP would likely rebuild (fire harden) the existing power line in its current location, which would require installation of steel poles and a larger easement width. Rebuilding the existing power line in its current location would have a moderate adverse impact on wildlife habitat in the easement compared to the Proposed Actions due to the larger disturbance area required, and subsequent short-term removal of forage and cover resources in the easement and larger area at risk of habitat degradation from weed invasion. Greater sage-grouse (and its habitat in PHMA) and sharp-tailed grouse would not benefit, since the existing power line and predator perch sites (poles) would not be removed. The habitat would have longer exposure to wildfire hazard until the existing power line is fire hardened in its current location.

3.7 Biological Resources: Federally Protected Species

Federally protected species evaluated include:

- Endangered, threatened, and candidate species listed under the ESA
- Birds protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)

3.7.1 ESA Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

Federal Requirements: The ESA establishes a national program for the conservation of threatened and endangered species. Under the ESA, species that are, or are likely to become in danger of extinction are listed as “endangered” or “threatened.” Section 7 of the ESA requires federal agencies to ensure that actions do not jeopardize listed species or destroy or adversely affect the critical habitat of the species. Section 7 includes requirements for when a federal agency must consult with USFWS to help determine a proposed action’s effect on a listed species and its critical habitat(s). Species that are candidates listing under the ESA do not require consultation with USFWS.

Affected Environment

The Project boundaries were submitted to the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website to acquire an official list of endangered, threatened, and candidate species to consider for the Project. **Table 7** presents the species on the Project IPaC list, which are North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) and monarch butterfly (**Appendix C**). Information on the status, habitat and range, and potential occurrence of each species within the species-specific analysis areas is provided below.

Table 7: ESA Threatened and Candidate Species

Common Name (Scientific Name)	Taxa	Federal Status	Habitat Requirements
North American Wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*)	Mammal	Threatened	In Idaho, occurs in cold, relatively inaccessible landscapes at high elevations (5,906 to 11,483 feet) where snow persists late into spring. Physical/structural features such as talus slopes and rugged terrain are required for denning (reproduction) (USFWS 2023).
Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	Insect	Candidate	In Idaho, breeds in extensive stands of milkweed that are found in mesic habitats, such as grasslands/wetlands, cottonwood riparian woodlands, and edges of agricultural fields and canals (Waterbury et al. 2019). Often roosts in trees. Migratory habitat includes milkweed stands, but also other areas with flowering nectar plants.

North American Wolverine

North American wolverine (or wolverine) is a large bear-like mustelid that is highly adapted to cold, snowy climates. Wolverines inhabit western regions of the United States, where verified reproducing wolverine populations are found in the mountains of Idaho, Washington, Montana, and northwest Wyoming (USFWS 2018).

Wolverines travel long distances searching for food, maintaining large territories in remote areas that are typically difficult for humans to access (USFWS 2023). In the contiguous United States, they inhabit cold, high elevation, rugged terrain in alpine and subalpine forests and non-forested areas around treeline (e.g., meadows, talus slopes, avalanche chutes, cirque basins). Elevation, terrain features (i.e., talus slopes and ruggedness), and snow conditions are predictive of wolverine distribution year-round. In studies conducted in Idaho and Montana, resident wolverines were rarely found below 7,050 feet (2,150 meters), even during winter (Copeland et al. 2007; Inman et al. 2012).

Young wolverines will disperse from their natal range to seek suitable habitat for establishing a territory. Habitats used during dispersal are more diverse and of lower quality compared to habitat where home ranges are established (Carroll et al. 2020). For example, wolverines will

cross lowland areas, such as grasslands and shrublands when dispersing, and will also cross rivers and highways (USFWS 2018).

The analysis area used for evaluating effects to wolverine is a 0.5-mile buffer around the Project Area to account for potential noise and visual disturbance that would extend beyond the Project footprint. The analysis area is within USFWS mapped range for wolverine (**Figure 1**). However, there is no habitat in the analysis area that would support a resident wolverine population. Wolverines in Idaho occupy rugged, alpine and subalpine mountainous terrain where snow persists into late April/early May, whereas the analysis area is in a low elevation (around 5,520 feet) sagebrush steppe basin. The habitat in the analysis area is dispersal habitat. Although a wolverine could travel from mountains to the north (e.g., Beaverhead and Centennial mountains) and through the analysis area during dispersal movements, the habitat and terrain features in and around the analysis area are not conducive to wolverine dispersal or exploratory movement. The analysis area is at the southern edge of wolverine range, and is within a broad, low elevation basin, such that to connect to other mountain ranges a wolverine would have to cross more than 50 miles of the Snake River Plain that is not USFWS mapped wolverine range. There is no natural movement corridor connecting mountain ranges in or near the analysis area. In addition, I-15 poses a barrier to wolverine movement through the analysis area. For these reasons, it is highly unlikely that wolverines would be found in the analysis area. The IFWIS database has no records of wolverines occurring within 2 miles of the Project (IDFG 2024c).

Monarch Butterfly

Monarch butterflies (or monarchs) are found in Idaho from early June through mid-September, after which they migrate to wintering grounds, primarily in California. Breeding habitat in Idaho is characterized by dense stands of milkweed within mesic grasslands, wetlands, deciduous forest, and shrub-steppe communities (Waterbury et al. 2019). The most productive breeding sites have co-occurrence of showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*) and swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*). Grassland-wetland habitats support the largest and most dense stands of milkweed, followed by cottonwood (*Populus* spp.) riparian forests and the edges of agricultural areas and canals. Nectar plants used by monarchs include milkweeds and other native flowering plants, such as sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) and goldenrod (*Solidago* spp., *Euthania* spp.). Non-native nectar plants are also used, including thistles (*Cirsium* spp.) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) (Waterbury et al. 2019). Migratory habitat is generally synonymous with breeding habitat in being tied to milkweed, except that monarch butterflies may also nectar on abundant native species that flower in late summer and early fall, such as rabbitbrush (*Ericameria* spp. and *Chrysothamnus* spp.) and sunflowers, especially where milkweeds are lacking (Xerces Society 2018).

The area used for evaluating effects to monarch butterfly is the Project Area. Noise and human disturbance are unlikely to affect monarch butterfly. The analysis therefore is focused on effects to habitat within the Project Area. Breeding habitat is not present as there are no mesic areas with dense stands of milkweed in the Project Area. Showy milkweed could occur within the sagebrush steppe community, but any occurrences are likely to be sparse, scattered

individuals due to the aridness of the habitat. Late flowering nectar plants, such as rabbitbrush, may be present. According to the IFWIS database (IDFG 2024c) and the Western Monarch/Milkweed Mapper (WMMM 2024), there are no known records of monarch butterfly or milkweed in the Project Area. The closest record of showy milkweed is 6.5 miles to the north of the Project Area (WMMM 2024). A small number of monarch butterflies could occur in the Project Area during migration but are not expected to breed in the Project Area due to the lack of suitable breeding habitat.

Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

Effects determinations for the following threatened and candidate species are summarized in **Table 8**.

North American Wolverine

Project activities would result in noise and disturbance during construction, and occasionally during future O&M activities. As explained above, resident wolverines do not occur in the analysis area due to the lack of suitable primary or breeding habitat. The analysis area is dispersal habitat. In addition, although the analysis area is within USFWS-mapped wolverine geographic range, dispersing wolverines are unlikely to occur here due to the landscape features and terrain as explained above. If dispersing wolverines were to travel through the analysis area, they would be present only briefly, as they are expected to move rapidly while making long-distance movements outside of primary habitat. Given that transient wolverines would occur rarely in the analysis area, the Project construction period would be short (2 months), and future O&M activities would be infrequent, it is highly unlikely a wolverine would be in the analysis area at the same time as Project activities. For these reasons, disturbance effects to wolverine are discountable (unlikely to occur). In addition, the new power line would not impede wolverine movement through dispersal habitat over the long-term. The Proposed Action would have no effect on wolverine.

Monarch Butterfly

The footprint of the 5 new poles would permanently displace a trivial amount of vegetation (5 square feet). Therefore, impacts to monarch habitat from permanent vegetation removal would be negligible.

The proposed boring and trenching activities would disturb approximately 0.184 acre. There is surface rock rather than vegetation in a portion of the proposed trench area. Therefore, the total area disturbed is likely less than 0.184 acre. The surface disturbance activities would temporarily remove vegetation, including possible nectar plants, but would be reclaimed immediately after construction and weed control would be implemented. Given that nectar plants such as rabbitbrush are likely to reestablish within a few growing seasons, the area affected would be small (0.184 acre), there is a substantial amount of similar habitat surrounding the Project Area, and monarchs are highly mobile, the temporary vegetation removal would have a negligible impact on monarch or its migration habitat.

Future O&M activities on the new power line would also have negligible effects on monarch butterfly habitat over the remaining life of the easement grant (32 years). Most of the future O&M activities would be limited to inspections because the new power line would be new and unlikely to require maintenance. Above ground features where surface disturbance could be needed is minimal (5 poles). Vaults would be installed for accessing the buried/underground portion of the power line as needed for inspection and maintenance. Therefore, it is unlikely RMP would need to re-disturb the easement. Long term impacts to monarch migration habitat are not expected.

The Proposed Actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of monarch butterfly because effects to migration habitat would be negligible, and there would be no impact to breeding habitat since none is present. The monarch butterfly is a candidate species and therefore, does not have any regulatory protection or Section 7 requirements under the ESA.

Table 8: Effects Determinations for ESA Threatened and Candidate Species

Common/ Scientific Name	Status[1]	Effects Determination for Species	Effects Determination for Critical Habitat
North American Wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*)	Threatened	No effect	Not Applicable[1]
Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)	Candidate	Not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species	Not Applicable[1]

[1]No critical habitat has been designated for this species.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential disturbance from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles and where vehicles travel overland within the easement. The O&M activities would have a negligible impact on wolverine dispersal habitat and monarch migration habitat because future ground disturbing O&M activities are expected to be infrequent, and the amount of habitat that could be impacted is trivial and would be localized to the area around the poles. However, under the No Action Alternative, RMP would likely rebuild (fire harden) the existing power line in its current location, which would require installation of steel poles and a larger easement width. Rebuilding the existing power line in its current location would have a moderate adverse impact on wildlife habitat in the easement compared to the Proposed Actions due to the larger disturbance area required, and subsequent short-term removal of forage and cover resources in the easement and larger area at risk of habitat degradation from weed invasion. The effect to habitat is unlikely to affect wolverine because if one was to disperse through the area, it would be moving quickly and not foraging or seeking cover. In addition, the likelihood of wolverine being present in the analysis area is very low (discountable), and power lines do not impede wolverine

movement. For these reasons the No Action Alternative would have no effect on wolverine. The No Action Alternative would not affect monarch breeding habitat but would affect a larger area of migration habitat compared to the Proposed Actions. Nevertheless, due to the availability of similar habitat in the surrounding area and the fact the monarchs are highly mobile, the No Action Alternative is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of monarch butterfly.

3.7.2 Migratory Birds

Federal Requirements: The BGEPA of 1940 (16 USC §668-668c) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of Interior, from "taking" bald or golden eagles, including their parts (including feathers), nests, or eggs.

The MBTA (16 USC §703–712) implements four (4) international conservation treaties that the United States entered into with Canada, Mexico, Japan, and Russia. The MBTA prohibits the taking (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the Department of Interior USFWS.

Affected Environment

The analysis of potential effects to migratory birds focuses on species with elevated conservation status, including eagles protected under BGEPA and other raptors, USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) (USFWS 2021), and Idaho SGCN (IDFG 2024b).

The analysis areas used for evaluating effects to migratory birds are as follows:

- Raptors: A 1-mile buffer around the Project Area to account for potential disturbance to nests for wide-ranging species.
- Other migratory birds (non-raptors): A 0.5-mile buffer around the Project Area to account for potential disturbance to small birds.

For planning and monitoring purposes, the USFWS identifies conservation regions for BCC across the United States. The Project falls within the Great Basin Bird Conservation Region (Region 9) (USFWS 2021). IFWIS provides a list of Idaho SCGN for each county in Idaho. The BCC list for Region 9 and the Idaho SGCN list for Clark County were reviewed, and the potential for each BCC and Idaho SGCN to occur in the analysis area was determined based on its known range and habitat requirements. In addition, the IFWIS database was queried to locate species occurrence records within 2 miles of the Project (IDFG 2024c).

Migratory birds that are associated with sagebrush steppe habitat and agricultural areas could occur in the analysis areas in the breeding, migration, and/or winter seasons. Migratory birds that could occur or are known to occur in the analysis area are listed in **Table 9** along with their habitat requirements. Any known occurrences in the IFWIS database are also described in **Table 9**. Flyovers of aquatic species that are strictly associated with lakes/open water are not considered occurrences because there is no aquatic habitat of that type present to attract them to the analysis area.

No raptor nesting is known to occur in the analysis area (1-mile buffer). As detailed in **Table 9**, no nesting by golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) or bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is

expected due to the lack of nesting habitat, but they may forage in the analysis area. The IFWIS database has no records of either eagle species occurring in the raptor analysis area. Nesting habitat for other raptor species is limited to some small juniper trees along Beaver Creek as there are no cliffs or large rock outcrops in the analysis area. Ground-nesting raptors, such as short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) and northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), could breed in the analysis area. Northern harrier is the only raptor Idaho SGCN or BCC that has occurrence records in the analysis area. As detailed in **Table 9**, a variety of non-raptor species that are Idaho SGCN or BCC could occur in the analysis area (0.5-mile buffer), with sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) and sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) having recent occurrence records in the analysis area.

Table 9: Migratory Birds				
Common/ Scientific Name	**Status[1]**	**Life History Requirement**	**Habitat Requirements[2]**	**Potential to Occur in Analysis Area[3]**
RAPTORS				
Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)	BGEPA	Year-round	Nests in large trees near fish-bearing water. Found in similar areas in migration and winter but will forage more widely away from water. Idaho receives an influx of eagles from Canada during the winter. Often form winter roosting congregations where large trees occur near water.	No nesting habitat present. No winter congregations or suitable winter roosting habitat is present. Could forage in analysis area in migration and winter seasons.
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)	BGEPA SGCN	Year-round	Nests mainly on cliff faces and occasionally in trees. Forages widely in open habitats such as arid grasslands, shrub-steppe, and sagebrush shrublands where prey such as jackrabbits, ground squirrels and prairie dogs occur.	No nesting habitat present but could forage in the analysis area year-round.
Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)	SGCN	Breeding	Grasslands, desert scrub, and other open habitats. Roost and nest in burrows formed by ground squirrels and prairie dogs.	Could breed in the analysis area if burrows are present.

Table 9: Migratory Birds				
Common/ Scientific Name	**Status[1]**	**Life History Requirement**	**Habitat Requirements[2]**	**Potential to Occur in Analysis Area[3]**
Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)	SGCN	Breeding	Open habitats, such as grasslands, sagebrush, shrub-steppe, and desert scrub, edges of pinyon-juniper. Nests on rock pinnacles, outcrops, knolls, cliffs, haystacks, and pinyon-juniper trees.	No nests known but nesting is possible where juniper trees occur. Could forage in analysis area.
Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*)	BCC	Year-round	Found year-round in marshes, grasslands, sage-brush steppe, open shrublands, and also may use agricultural fields.	Could occur year-round. There is one occurrence record within 1 mile of the Project Area (IDFG 2024c).
Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)	BCC SGCN	Year-round	Mainly found in marshy areas where wetlands meet sagebrush and grasslands. Also, may use agricultural areas, such as hay/fallow fields.	Could occur in grassy or agricultural areas, though mesic areas are limited in the analysis area.
NON-RAPTORS				
Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)	BCC SGCN	Breeding	Breed and nest in open areas such as large fields with a mixture of grasses and broad-leaved plants like legumes and dandelions.	Could occur within grassy agricultural areas in the buffer during spring and summer.
California Gull (*Larus californicus*)	BCC SGCN	Year-round	Nests on islands within lakes and rivers. May forage up to 40 miles away from nesting colony in open areas, such as agricultural fields and pastures, garbage dumps, orchards, meadows, and scrublands. Found year-round in Idaho along the Snake River.	No nesting habitat is present but could forage year-round throughout the analysis area.
Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)	SGCN	Breeding	Open habitats in both rural and urban habitat settings, such as forest/woodland clearings, sagebrush, grasslands, and prairies.	Could occur in open habitats such as sagebrush, grasslands, and clearings.
Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)	SGCN	Breeding	Grasslands, hayfields, pastures with little to no shrub cover and some open areas.	Could occur in pastures and grasslands.

Table 9: Migratory Birds				
Common/ Scientific Name	**Status[1]**	**Life History Requirement**	**Habitat Requirements[2]**	**Potential to Occur in Analysis Area[3]**
Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*)	SGCN	Breeding	Breeds in short grasslands and agricultural fields.	Could occur in grasslands and pastures.
Sagebrush Sparrow (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*)	SGCN	Breeding	Sagebrush shrublands.	Could occur in sagebrush areas.
Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*)	BCC SGCN	Breeding	Sagebrush shrublands.	Could occur in sagebrush areas. There are two occurrence records within 0.5 mile of the Project Area (IDFG 2024c).
Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*)	SGCN	Breeding and Migration	Breeds in open wetlands, fields, and grasslands with standing water and nearby shrubs and trees. Large numbers migrate through Idaho in spring and fall.	Could occur in wetland, grasslands, and pastures in summer and migration seasons. There are two occurrence records within 0.5 mile of the Project Area (IDFG 2024c).

[1] Table lists migratory bird species that are protected under the BGEPA, BCC in Region 9 (USFWS 2021) and/or are Idaho SGCN and have range in Clark County (IDFG 2024b).
[2] Sources: IDFG (2024b); Idaho Birds (2024); Cornell (2024a, 2024b).
[3] The analysis area is a 1-mile buffer around the Project Area for raptor species and 0.5-mile buffer for non-raptor species.

Other raptors that are not Idaho SGCN or BCC could also occur. Based on the query of the IFWIS database (IDFG 2024c), there are recent (since 2017) occurrence records of the following raptor species within the analysis area, which could occur year-round unless otherwise indicated:

- American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*)
- Red-tailed hawk (B*uteo jamaicensis*)
- Rough-legged hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) – occurs only in winter
- Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

Habitat Alteration

The footprint of the 5 new poles would permanently displace 5 square feet of habitat that may be used by migratory birds. This is a negligible amount of habitat. Therefore, impacts to migratory bird habitat from permanent vegetation removal would be trivial.

The proposed boring and trenching activities would disturb approximately 0.184 acre of migratory bird habitat. There is surface rock rather than vegetation in a portion of the proposed trench area. Therefore, the total amount of migratory bird habitat that would be disturbed is likely less than 0.184 acre. The surface disturbance activities would temporarily remove migratory bird habitat. However, it would be reclaimed immediately after construction and weed control measures would reduce the risk of invasive weeds degrading the habitat following ground disturbance. Impacts to migratory bird habitat from temporary vegetation removal would be negligible because the area affected would be small and would be reclaimed following construction, and the affected habitat types are common and widespread throughout the analysis area.

Future O&M activities on the new power line would have negligible effects on migratory bird habitat over the remaining life of the easement grant (32 years). The O&M activities are expected to be limited to inspections because the new power line would be new and unlikely to require maintenance. Above ground features where surface disturbance could be needed is minimal (5 poles). Vaults would be installed for accessing the buried/underground portion of the power line as needed for inspection and maintenance. Therefore, it is unlikely RMP would need to re-disturb the easement.

Noise/Disturbance

The use of vehicles/equipment, noise, and human presence during construction and future O&M activities on the new power line could disturb raptors and other migratory birds when they are present in the analysis area. The disturbance would occur for approximately 2 months during construction and infrequently (about twice per year) during future O&M activities, and would be short in duration and involve a small number of people and vehicles. The disturbance could change the behavior of individual birds by temporarily displacing them from localized areas where construction and future O&M activities are occurring. The migratory bird breeding season is considered April 1 to July 15, for most bird species, but can extend from January 1 to August 31 for some raptor species. Most of the BCC and Idaho SGCN would occur in the analysis area only during the breeding season, whereas construction of the Project is scheduled to occur this fall or early winter. No impacts to nesting would occur during construction due to the timing being outside the breeding season. There would be no effect to bird species that occur in the analysis area only during the breeding seasons because they would not be present during construction.

O&M activities would be conducted outside of the breeding season, as practicable; or if O&M activities are planned during the breeding season, a nest clearance survey would be conducted prior to initiating the O&M activities and nest protection measures implemented, where applicable. If nests are located on any of the five new poles and require removal for operational safety, the removal activities would be coordinated with the ARS and permitted with the USFWS, as applicable. With these measures, disturbance from infrequent O&M activities would have minimal effect on nesting birds.

Injury/Mortality

Injury or mortality could occur from migratory birds colliding with or being electrocuted by the overhead portion of the new power line; however, only 0.1 mile of the 0.92 mile-long new power line would be overhead, the remaining portion would be underground and pose no risk to migratory birds. In addition, the design of the overhead portion of the new power line would lessen the potential for injury/mortality compared to the existing power line. The new overhead power line would be designed to current APLIC avian-safe standards, which specify methods to reduce electrocution risk by constructing the power line to dimensions that would minimize potential for electrical contact. Furthermore, the existing power line Proposed Action would include removal of 73 single poles on the existing power line, which would reduce the number of perch sites in the analysis areas and decrease the likelihood of migratory birds nesting on poles or being exposed to electrocution and collisions hazards. This would have a beneficial effect on migratory birds compared to existing conditions because there would be far fewer poles and less overhead power line in the analysis area.

Overall, the Proposed Actions would have minor effects on migratory birds because effects to habitat and from noise/disturbance and electrocution/collision hazards would be minimal.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential disturbance from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles and where vehicles travel overland. The O&M activities would have a negligible impact on habitat for migratory birds because future ground disturbing O&M activities is expected to be infrequent, and the amount of habitat that could be impacted is trivial and localized. However, under the No Action Alternative, RMP would likely rebuild (fire harden) the existing power line in its current location, which would require installation of steel poles and a larger easement width. Rebuilding the existing power line in its current location would have a moderate adverse impact on migratory bird habitat in the easement compared to the Proposed Actions due to the larger disturbance area required, and subsequent short-term removal of forage and cover resources in the easement and larger area at risk of habitat degradation from weed invasion. The associated electrocution/collision hazards could be reduced if the existing power line is rebuilt in its current location since it would likely meet APLIC standards.

3.8 Cultural Resources

Federal Requirements: The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official list of the country's historic properties (including archeological resources), created by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and includes consultation requirements with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), SHPO, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), and/or Indian Tribes.

State Requirements: The SHPO reflects the interests of the state and its citizens in the preservation of their cultural heritage. In accordance with Section 101(b)(3) of the NHPA, the SHPO advises and assists federal agencies in carrying out their Section 106 responsibilities and cooperates with such agencies, local governments, and organizations and individuals to ensure that historic properties are taking into consideration at all levels of planning and development.

3.8.1 Affected Environment

Section 106 of the NHPA requires that an area of potential effect (APE) be defined specific to a proposed undertaking. For the Proposed Actions, the analysis area or APE identified by ARS for cultural resources consisted of a 30 meter (approximately 100 feet) wide inventory corridor centered on each easement's centerline on ARS-administered federal lands (i.e., a total of 19.3 acres).

A Class III cultural resources inventory of the APE was completed to identify whether NRHP-listed or -eligible historic properties are present that could be affected by the Proposed Actions. The Class III cultural resources report (Idaho SHPO Project No.: 2024-971; Tetra Tech 2024) contains information on the identification and NRHP analysis of cultural resources, as well as the finding of effect from the Proposed Actions on those cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the NRHP in compliance with NHPA. The cultural resources report was submitted to Idaho SHPO by Tetra Tech, Inc. on behalf of ARS. The Idaho SHPO concurred with the determination of effects with stipulations (see **Section 3.8.2** and **Appendix A**). Below is a summary of the Class III cultural resources inventory and findings.

Background Research

Literature Search

A literature search through Idaho SHPO's online Idaho Cultural Resources Information System (ICRIS) database was completed on June 13, 2024. The literature search area consisted of the APE and a 1-mile radius. Based on the literature search, six intensive level cultural resources inventories have been previously completed within the literature search area. Thirteen cultural resources have been previously recorded within the literature search area of which three are located within the APE:

- Segments of Site 10CL983 (the Nez Perce [Nee-Me-Poo] National Historic Trail [NHT]), which is listed in the NRHP;

- Segments of Site 10CL 151/IHSI 33-15052 (United States Historic Highway 91), which is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP; and
- Site 10CL356 (Artifact Scatter), which is eligible for inclusion in the NRHP.

Geneal Land Office Map Review

Additional records were also checked to determine if any unrecorded cultural resources are potentially present within the APE. The available General Land Office (GLO) maps were reviewed through the Bureau of Land Management cadastral survey online database (http://www.glorecords.blm.gov). The GLO map T11N, R36E accepted on October 7, 1882, depicts no man-made features near the APE. The GLO map accepted on September 24, 1915, depicts the "Dubois Spencer Road" trending southwest to northeast through the center of Section 9 of T11N, R36E. The road is in the same location as the previously recorded Site 10CL 151/IHSI 33-15052. A railroad and telephone line are trending southwest to northeast through the western half of sections 10 and 15 of T11N, R36E. Both features are located just east of the APE.

Field Survey

The three previously recorded sites (10CL983, 10CL 151/IHSI 33-15052, and 10CL356,) within the APE were revisited and one new site, 10CL1228 (Dubois-MK-01) was documented during the field survey completed on June 24, 2024. Below are the field survey results for each site:

- *Site 10CL983 (10CW1266) – Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT, NRHP Listed:* This site is the digitized course of the 1877 trail of the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT through Clark County, Idaho. The segment of the site that crosses the APE has never been previously recorded and is a digitized route based off historical records. The area of the digitized route within the APE was revisited.

  NRHP Recommendation - There is no physical manifestation of the site within the APE and the segment is non-contributing.

- *Site 10CL 151/IHSI 33-15052 – United States Historic Highway 91, Eligible under Criterion A:* The site is the United States Historic Highway 91. The site within the APE was revisited. The revisited section of the site is a maintained asphalt road used by residents.

  NRHP Recommendation - No physical evidence for the historic components of the site were observed within the APE. The segment in the APE is a non-contributing segment of the site.

- *Site 10CL356 – Multicomponent Artifact Scatter, Eligible under Criterion D:* The site is a multicomponent artifact scatter (i.e., low-density prehistoric lithic scatter and historic artifact scatter) that was originally recorded in 1982. This site was not evaluated for inclusion in the NRHP in 1989. The 1989 recording indicated a potential for an estimated 20 centimeters of cultural fill at the site; however, the documentation does not describe the extent of the cultural fill potential. The site within the APE was revisited. Most of the

site is located on private land outside of the APE, which was not revisited. During the revisit, few artifacts were noted within the APE. The identified artifacts include one obsidian flake, one historic pan handle, and miscellaneous metal fragments.

NRHP Recommendation - The portion of the site in the APE are residual sediments with dense gravels and bedrock exposures that have little potential to contain intact buried cultural material. Therefore, this part of the site in the APE is non-contributing to the site's NRHP recommendation. The portions of the site outside the APE could be where intact buried material described in 1989 could be located within the site. The site is recommended eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion D until the rest of the site on private lands can be inventoried.

- *Site 10CL1228 (Dubois-MK-01) – 7.2-kV Dubois-11 Distribution Circuit Transmission Line, Not Eligible:* The newly recorded site is the 7.2-kV Dubois-11 Distribution Circuit Transmission Line that trends north to south on the northeastern margin of the Snake River Plain in Idaho. Little is known about the line other than RMP said it was constructed in the 1930s (J. Jorgensen, personal communication, August 8, 2024). RMP has no known associated easement grants or other potential historic-era documentation for this line. A line on the west side of Highway 91 from the Idaho/Montana state line to approximately the northwestern quarter of Section 16 of T11N, R36E does appear on the 1958 1:250,000 United States Geological Survey (USGS) Topographic Map Dubois Idaho; Montana. The line ends in Montana on Pine Top Hill west of Monida, Montana. The 1972 1:24,000 USGS Topographic Map Spencer South, Idaho does not have the line mapped on it. The line has been continually modified, expanded, and changed as the region has grown and the demand for power has changed into the modern period.

  The 1958 map was utilized as the historic line as it was the only definitive evidence for the original historic line. During the field survey, 0.65 mile of the line in the APE was visited. The remaining approximately 21.7 miles of line from the Idaho/Montana state line to the tie in at Section 16 of T11 N, R36E that is outside the APE was not visited. The visited line in the APE is different than the 1958 mapped line; however, this is most likely due to the 1958 map being at 1:250,000 scale. At some point in the past, the original line was repurposed as a local distribution circuit line. New portions of the distribution circuit line were built on the east side of I-15 from Section 16 of T11N, R36E to Spencer, Idaho where it distributes power throughout the town. RMP has no documentation of when this change was done. The original 1958 line along United States Highway 91 remained in service to provide power to a private customer's agricultural operations to the north in Idaho in Section 34 of T12N, R36E. The remaining portions of the 1958 line to the Idaho/Montana border does not appear to be still operated by RMP and may have been taken out of service. The visited segment in the APE is made of single wood poles averaging in height approximately 50 feet. Cross-arms are either wood or metal with three primary conductor wires. Insulators vary from glass to ceramic. The line has been

continuously operated and maintained since its construction hence the variation in cross-arms and insulators.

NRHP Recommendation – This line is recommended not eligible for listing in the NRHP under any criteria. The line was once of many distribution lines built to services local and regional customers by such utilities as Pacific Power and Light in the 20th century. The line has little historic-era documentation and, based on historic-era maps, appears to have existed at least by 1958 to provide power to or from Pine Top Hill west of Monida, Montana. No historic documentation indicates the line itself played an important role within the associated historic themes of electronic transmission and infrastructure development. The line is recommended not eligible for listing under Criterion A. The line is not associated with the life of a person or persons important to our history at the state, local, or national level. The line is recommended not eligible for listing under Criterion B. The line is not significant for its type, period or method of construction nor was it the work of a master. Distribution lines of this style with circuits of voltages of 7.2-kV had been constructed since electric utilities first emerged in Idaho in the 20th century. The line does not possess innovative design or engineering ingenuity. Although the line has undergone maintenance related alterations, the line is the same as numerous distribution lines constructed in the area. The line is recommended not eligible under Criterion C. The line does not have a significant potential to provide additional information that will further our understanding of the area's history. The line does not appear to be a principal source of important information in this regard and is recommended not eligible for listing under Criterion D.

3.8.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

Site 10CL983 (10CW1266) – Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT, NRHP Listed: The Idaho SHPO data is a digitized course based on historic information sources. The history of the trail along with subsequent development in the area creates a low potential that a physical trail would be created and/or preserved in the area within and around the APE. No physical evidence for the trail or any potential associated cultural material was observed in the APE. The segment within the APE is non-contributing. The Project will have no effect to the site.

Site 10CL 151/IHSI 33-15052 – United States Historic Highway 91, Eligible under Criterion A: The site within the APE is a still in-use and maintained local road parallelling I-15. No historic road grades or potentially associated features were observed in the APE. The road retains the same function, but likely does not retain any historic physical aspects within the APE. The segment is non-contributing. The Project will not change or modify the road and the Project will have no effect to the site.

Site 10CL356 – Multicomponent Artifact Scatter, Eligible under Criterion D: The parts of the site within the APE are recommended as non-contributing to the site's NRHP recommendation. The site is recommended eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion D until the rest of the

site on private lands can be inventoried. There would be no adverse effect to the site, if the following Idaho SHPO stipulations are followed:

- Implementation of an Inadvertent Discovery Plan (**Appendix D**) and
- Ground disturbance within 20 meters (approximately 66 feet) of the boundary of the site is monitored by a qualified professional during implementation of the Project

The Project Inadvertent Discovery Plan was filed with the Idaho SHPO and provided to all tribes that ARS engaged with for Section 106 consultation.

A qualified cultural resource construction monitor (hereafter referred to as monitor) will be present during the portions of the Project occurring near the site, including the non-revisited parts of the site outside of the APE. The monitor will observe the construction work in that area and watch for evidence of potential subsurface cultural resource components, coordinate with the construction crews, and stop work, flag off, and report any discoveries to ARS and Idaho SHPO representatives for evaluation and the development of a management plan and Project modifications (if any).

Site 10CL1228 (Dubois-MK-01) – 7.2-kV Dubois-11 Distribution Circuit Transmission Line, Not Eligible: The portion of the line within the APE is a still in-use distribution line parallelling line. Little historical data regarding the line exists; however, it appears to have existed to transmit power to or from Spencer, Idaho since at least 1958. The line has been variously modified as part of maintenance activities during operations. The site is not eligible for inclusion on the NRHP under any potential criteria. The Project will remove all poles, hardware, and conductor for the section of the line within the APE. If the site is determined to be not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP it will not qualify as a historic property under Section 106 of the NRHP.

If any undocumented sites are discovered during the Project, all work shall be halted in the vicinity of the finding until they can be inspected and assessed by the appropriate consulting parties. The ARS staff (510-559-6124) should be contacted immediately to coordinate the proper inspection and assessments.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no new construction activities would occur that would disturb historic properties. The existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential ground disturbance from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles and where vehicles travel overland. Future ground disturbing O&M activities are expected to be infrequent. However, under the No Action Alternative, RMP would likely rebuild (fire harden) the existing power line in its current location, which would require installation of steel poles and a larger easement width. Rebuilding the existing power line in its current location would require a cultural survey be conducted in the larger easement. Effects to historic properties are unknown because this would depend on the results of the survey, but a larger area would be disturbed.

3.9 Environmental Justice

Federal Requirements: EO 12898 directs federal agencies to consider the impact of federal actions on minority and low-income populations, to avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts of federal policies and actions on these populations. EO 14096, *Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All*, supplements EO 12898 to advance environmental justice and help create a more just and sustainable future for all. The EO directs federal agencies to identify, analyze, and address disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards of federal activities on communities with environmental justice concerns. It is noted that EO 12898 and its accompanying guidance uses the terminology minority populations, but the more recent EO 14096 uses the terminology people of color, and that is used in this analysis.

3.9.1 Affected Environment

This environmental justice analysis was conducted using data from the USEPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen) and the United States Census Bureau (USCB) to identify environmental justice communities. EJScreen is a web application developed by USEPA to provide a nationally consistent dataset and approach that combines environmental and demographic indicators in maps and reports. EJScreen's socioeconomic data source is the USCB's American Community Survey 2018–2022 5-year estimates. In EJScreen, USEPA defines the "percent people of color" as the percent of individuals who list their racial status as a race other than white-alone and/or list their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino. The word "alone" in this case indicates that an individual is of a single race, not multiracial. The USEPA defines the "percent low-income" as the percent of the population in households where the household income is less than or equal to twice the federal poverty level (USEPA 2024b).

This analysis followed CEQ's *Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act* (CEQ 1997) and the USEPA's *Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews* (Promising Practices) (USEPA 2016). Per CEQ's guidance, people of color populations should be identified where either the people of color population of the affected area (i.e., an appropriate geographic unit such as a census block group, census tract, or a county[1]) exceeds 50 percent or is meaningfully greater than the percentage of people of color in the general population (e.g., United States) or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis (a "reference community," e.g., a county or state). The CEQ guidance does not provide a numerical definition of the term "meaningfully greater." The USEPA's Promising Practices recommends for the meaningfully greater methodology the use of a reasonable, subjective threshold, such as 20 percent greater than the reference community.

[1] The analysis uses a geographic unit that represents, as closely as possible, the potentially affected area. A census tract is a subdivision of a county; it is a geographic area for which the USCB provides consistent sample data and it is comprised of smaller census block groups. Census tracts generally contain a population between 1,200 and 8,000 people. A census block group is the smallest geographic area for which the USCB provides consistent sample data, and generally contains a population between 600 and 3,000 individuals (USCB 2022b).

For this analysis, the affected area geographic unit was established at the smallest geographic level of a census block group, and the reference community was established at the state level. The Project Area is in a sparsely populated area. There is only one residence within 2 miles of the Project Area. An EJScreen report was produced for the census block group that includes the Project Area (block group 160339501001). Because of the low population of the area, the block group is equivalent to the boundaries of Clark County. It includes the communities of Dubois and Spencer, which are approximately 7.5 miles south of and approximately 5 miles north of the Project Area, respectively. Following USEPA's Promising Practices guidance, a block group is determined to have an identified population of people of color if the percentage of people of color exceeds the state average by 20 percent or more, or is 50 percent or more of the population. On the basis of this analysis, the block group has an identified population of people of color (**Table 10**). The block group consists of 52 percent people of color. The breakdown by race is 48 percent white, 42 percent Hispanic, 1 percent black, 8 percent some other race, and 1 percent two or more races (USEPA 2024c). See **Appendix E** for the EJScreen report.

Per CEQ guidance, low-income populations should be identified using poverty data from the USCB. The USCB defined the weighted average poverty thresholds for 2022 as an annual income of $14,880 or less for an individual and $29,950 or less for a family of four (USCB 2022a). Following USEPA's Promising Practices low-income threshold criteria analysis, a block group is determined to contain a low-income population if the percentage of individuals identified as low-income is equal to or exceeds the state percentage. On the basis of this analysis, the block group has an identified low-income population (**Table 10**). The block group population is 40 percent low-income, compared to 31 percent for the state.

EJScreen shows that 30 percent of households in the block group are limited English-speaking households compared to 2 percent for the state, meaning that all members of those households 14 years old and over have at least some difficulties with English (**Table 10**). Thirty-eight percent of the block group's population has less than a high school education compared to 9 percent for the state, meaning that people aged 25 or older do not have a high school diploma. The percentage of persons with disabilities is very similar between the block group and the state (USEPA 2024b, 2024c).

Table 10: EJScreen Demographic Data

Geographic Area	People of Color Population	Low Income Population	Limited English-speaking Households	Less Than High School Education	Persons with Disabilities
Block Group 160339501001	52%	40%	30%	38%	15%
State of Idaho	19%	31%	2%	9%	14%

% = percent
Source: USEPA 2024c.

The EJScreen model also serves as a screening-level tool to identify areas that may have a higher susceptibility to environmental justice effects because of their demographic composition and existing exposure to contaminants or proximity to facilities. The model uses environmental indicators to quantify susceptibility to exposure, including data related to proximity to ozone and other air toxins, lead paint, traffic, and underground storage tanks (USTs). In addition to providing people of color and low-income population data, EJScreen calculates Environmental Justice Indexes (EJ Indexes) and Supplemental Indexes for a defined geographic area. The EJ Index screens for 13 environmental burden indicators in combination with a demographic index that includes 2 socioeconomic indicators of people of color and low income. The Supplemental Index screens for the 13 environmental burden indicators in combination with a supplemental demographic index that includes 5 socioeconomic and health indicators of low income, limited English speaking, less than high school education, persons with disabilities, and low life expectancy. The 13 environmental burden indicators are Particulate Matter 2.5, Ozone, Nitrogen Dioxide, Diesel Particulate Matter, Toxic Releases to Air, Traffic Proximity and Volume, Lead Paint, Superfund Site Proximity, Risk Management Plan Facility Proximity, Hazardous Waste Proximity, UST and Leaking UST, Wastewater Discharge, and Drinking Water Non-Compliance. The USEPA typically considers a project to be in an area of potential environmental justice concern when an EJScreen EJ Index or Supplemental Index for the affected geographic area shows 1 or more of the 13 indices that exceed the 80th percentile in the nation and/or state. EJScreen uses the 80th percentile as screening level to indicate areas that may merit closer attention. Block groups in the 80th percentile or above have index values well above the national or state mean or median for the given indicator. A relatively high percentile means the value is relatively uncommon. A percentile is a relative value. For a place at the 80th percentile nationwide or statewide, that means that 20 percent of the United States or state population has a higher value and 80 percent has a lower value (USEPA 2024b).

Using the EJScreen EJ Index and Supplemental Index, the block group meets or exceeds the 80th national and state percentile thresholds for Lead Paint, Superfund Proximity, and drinking water non-compliance in both indexes. In the Supplemental Index, the block group exceeds the 80th state percentile threshold for ozone (USEPA 2024c).

EJScreen also provides Health Indicators, Climate Indicators, and Critical Service Gap Indicators. The Health Indicators are Asthma, Cancer, Heart Disease, Low Life Expectancy, and Persons with Disabilities. The Climate Indicators are Flood Risk and Wildfire Risk. The Critical Service Gap Indicators are Lack of Broadband Internet Access, Food Desert, Housing Burden, Lack of Health Insurance, and Transportation Access Burden. The 80th percentile also is used as the screening level for these indicators to indicate areas of potential environmental justice concern.

The EJScreen Health, Climate, and Critical Service Gap indicators show the block group exceeds the 80th national and/or state percentile for heart disease, lack of health Insurance, flood risk, and wildfire risk (USEPA 2024c).

EJScreen also has tools to identify community landmarks (hospitals, parks, places of worship, prisons, public housing, schools, and subsidized housing) and Tribal lands and Indigenous areas. EJScreen was used to identify these landmarks near the Project Area.

The only community landmarks EJScreen showed within 5 miles of the Project Area is land owned by the Bureau of Land Management, the United States Forest Service, and State Trust Land, which EJScreen identifies as "parks"; however, a review in Google does not show any local, state, or national parks in or adjacent to the Project Area. EJScreen reports no hospitals, places of worship, prisons, public housing, schools, or subsidized housing within 5 miles of the Project Area. The nearest community landmarks are the public schools in Dubois, approximately 7.5 miles to the south. EJScreen did not identify any Tribal lands in or adjacent to the Project Area. The nearest Tribal land is about 70 miles to the south (USEPA 2024c).

3.9.2 Environmental Impacts

Alternative 1: Proposed Actions

No adverse effects would be expected on the environmental justice communities. The Proposed Actions to construct and operate a new power line and remove an existing power line would result in environmental effects that would be negligible and mostly confined to the Project footprint. The Project Area is not adjacent to or near on- or off-post residential communities. The nearest residence is 2 miles away, and the nearest community is about 5 miles away. Noise from construction would be indetectable to these residents. The Proposed Action would not affect air quality to a measurable degree and Clark County would remain in attainment for all criteria pollutants. The Proposed Action would not adversely affect or reduce pasture and rangelands, would not create a geologic hazard, would not affect regional economics, and is unlikely to affect Beaver and Dry creeks (see **Table 5**). Construction BMPs would be implemented to minimize soil erosion and prevent sediment and other pollutants from entering the creeks. The Proposed Actions would not place disproportionate and adverse human health or environmental burdens on communities with environmental justice concerns. The installation of the new power line would replace the old existing power line. The new power line would be more resilient by reducing the risk of RMP infrastructure causing or being affected by wildfires; therefore, RMP would be able to provide more reliable power to its customer, which would be beneficial to the environmental justice communities, the ARS research facility, and the area as a whole.

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no new construction activities would occur. The existing power line would remain in its current location and would not be rebuilt in the new location. Potential ground disturbance from continued O&M activities would be limited to localized areas around the existing poles and where vehicles travel overland. Future ground disturbing O&M activities are expected to be infrequent. There would be no change to environmental resources and therefore no effects; however, the benefit of replacing the existing power line and making it more resilient would be delayed until the line is rebuilt in its current location. No adverse effects would be expected on the environmental justice communities.

3.10 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are "effects on the environment that result from the incremental effects of the action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from actions with individually minor but collectively significant effects taking place over a period of time" (40 CFR 1508.1 (i)(3)).

To determine whether there is the potential for cumulatively significant impacts resulting from the Proposed Actions or No Action alternatives, a review of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the affected area was conducted. The spatial scope for the Proposed Actions is the affected environment identified in **Section 3**, above. The temporal scope is past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects within a 10 year period, consisting of 5 years in the past and 5 years in the future.

3.10.1 Past Projects

Other than routine, small scale O&M activities on the existing power line, no past projects have occurred on ARS-administered federal lands in the Project Area in the last 5 years.

3.10.2 Present Projects

Other than routine, small scale O&M activities on the existing power line, there are no present projects on ARS-administered federal lands in the Project Area.

3.10.3 Reasonably Foreseeable Projects

Beyond the Proposed Actions, no reasonably foreseeable projects on ARS-administered federal lands in the Project Area are expected to be funded in the next 5 years.

3.10.4 Cumulative Impacts - Summary

Aesthetics, utilities: energy, soils, vegetation, wildlife and habitat, federally protected species, cultural resources, and Environmental Justice are the factors/resources potentially affected by the Proposed Actions and No Action alternatives. Implementation of the design features, construction BMPs, and reclamation and weed control requirements (see **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**) would avoid or minimize impacts to these factors/resources. As stated in **sections 3.10.1**, **3.10.2**, and **3.10.3**, other than the past and present routine, small scale O&M activities on the existing power line, there are no other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects in the Project Area. Therefore, no cumulative effects would occur from the Proposed Actions or No Action alternatives.

3.11 Impacts Summary and Conclusions

Two alternatives are considered in this analysis. The first is the Proposed Actions to obtain easements from ARS to 1) install a new power line and 2) remove an existing power line. The second is the No Action Alternative, under which no new construction activities would occur, or the existing power line would be rebuilt in its current location at some later date in the future. RMP would have to request a new easement grant for the portion of the existing power

line on ARS-administered federal lands and would then continue to conduct O&M activities on the line. The No Action Alternative would entail disturbing a larger area because rebuilding the existing power line in its current location would require steel poles and a larger easement width. The alternatives possess differing merit as described in this NEPA evaluation. A summary of impacts, mitigation measures, and BMPs is contained in **Table 11**, below. The Proposed Actions is the superior alternative, because it would replace an existing power line that is in an FHCA, which could cause a wildfire or be affected by a wildfire, would disturb a smaller area compared to rebuilding the line in its current location, and would reduce the number of aboveground infrastructure features. BMPs and design features would minimize effects to resources. The new power line would provide safe and reliable power to the agricultural customer's pump house. The removal of the existing power line would remove the risk of this line starting wildfires that could adversely affect resources in the Project Area and surrounding area. High intensity wildfire can have an adverse effect on vegetation and wildlife habitat, therefore reducing the risk is considered a benefit. There would also be a benefit to greater sage-grouse and its priority habitat by the removal of a significant number of poles that serve as perch sites for avian predators. Implementation of BMPs, design features and reclamation measures would ensure no significant effects occur from the Proposed Actions.

Based upon the evaluation of the alternatives against ARS' NEPA criteria, Alternative 1 – Proposed Actions meets ARS standards for a FONSI.

Table 11: Impacts Summary

Resource Area	Alternatives	Mitigation Measures, Design Features, Construction BMPs, and Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements for Proposed Actions
Aesthetics	**Proposed Actions:** No significant impacts identified. Aesthetics would be improved by decreasing the number of aboveground structures.	**Mitigation Measures:** None. **Design Features/BMPs/Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements:** See **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**.
	No Action Alternative: Impacts would stay the same or be increased by installation of steel poles and a larger easement width.	
Utilities: • **Energy**	**Proposed Actions:** There would be a major beneficial impact by improving power safety and reliability throughout Clark County.	**Mitigation Measures:** None. **Design Features/BMPs/Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements:** See **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**.
	No Action Alternative: There could be adverse impacts by delaying the fire hardening of the Dubois Circuit, which is the only power source to customers in Spencer and other areas of Clark County.	

Table 11: Impacts Summary		
Resource Area	**Alternatives**	**Mitigation Measures, Design Features, Construction BMPs, and Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements for Proposed Actions**
Soils	**Proposed Actions:** No significant impacts identified.	**Mitigation Measures:** None. **Design Features/BMPs/Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements:** See **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**.
	No Action Alternative: Impacts would stay the same as current or could be increased by installation of steel poles and a larger easement width.	
Biological Resources: • **Vegetation** • **Wildlife and Habitat** • **Federally Protected Species**	**Proposed Actions:** No significant impacts identified.	**Mitigation Measures:** None **Design Features/BMPs/Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements:** See **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**. Federally Protected Species: Though not anticipated, if federally protected species are identified during implementation of the Proposed Actions, work will be halted and the ARS representative advised. PWA Facilities, Safety, and Real Property Team will be notified immediately. Work in the sensitive area will not resume until measures to ensure compliance with the ESA are implemented. Greater Sage-Grouse: No construction activities would occur during the greater sage-grouse lek season or nesting/early brood-rearing season (i.e., from March 1 to June 30 per 2021 Idaho Plan [State of Idaho 2021]).
	No Action Alternative: Impacts would be adverse compared to the Proposed Actions because above ground poles would not be removed, and there is a greater (longer) risk of wildfire hazard adversely affecting habitat.	

Table 11: Impacts Summary		
Resource Area	**Alternatives**	**Mitigation Measures, Design Features, Construction BMPs, and Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements for Proposed Actions**
Cultural Resources: • **Historic Districts, Sites, Buildings, Structures** • **Archaeological Resources**	**Proposed Actions**: No significant impacts identified.	**Mitigation Measures:** • Implementation of an Inadvertent Discovery Plan • Ground disturbance within 20 meters (approximately 66 feet) of the boundary of the Site 10CL356 is monitored by a qualified professional during implementation of the Project **Design Features/BMPs/Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements:** See **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**. Though not anticipated, if any undocumented sites are discovered during the Project, all work in the vicinity should be stopped and the ARS staff (510-559-6124 should be contacted immediately.
	No Action Alternative: No significant impacts identified.	
Environmental Justice	**Proposed Actions:** No significant impacts identified.	**Mitigation Measures:** None. **Design Features/BMPs/Reclamation and Weed Control Requirements:** See **sections 2.1.7**, **2.1.8**, and **2.1.4**.
	No Action Alternative: No significant impacts identified.	

4 List of Preparers

Table 12 lists the specialists that assisted in the preparation of this EA.

Table 12: List of Preparers			
Name	**Title**	**Education**	**Responsibility**
Agricultural Research Service			
Phil Smith	Safety & Occupational Health Manager	B.A., Architectural Engineering	Review
Joshua (Bret) Taylor	Animal Scientist/ Range Sheep Production Efficiency Research Leader	Ph.D., Animal Science	Review
Christa Meier	Realty Specialist/Lease Contracting Officer	M.A., Geography: Resource Management & Environmental Planning	Review
Stephanie Frank	Historic Resources Manager	Ph.D., Policy, Planning & Development with specialization in Urban Planning	Cultural Resources
Tetra Tech, Inc. (3rd Party Contractor)			
Jill Reid	Project Manager/Senior Biologist	B.S., Biology	Project Manager and General Resource Writer
Wendy Rieth	Senior Wildlife Biologist/GIS Analyst	M.S., Wildlife Biology	Aesthetics, Utilities: Energy, Soils, and Biological Resources
Michelle Cannella	Environmental Planner	B.S., Mineral Economics	Environmental Justice
Joslin Heyward	Wildlife Biologist/GIS Analyst	M.S., Zoology	EA Figure
Mark Karpinski	Senior Archaeologist/Principal Investigator	M.A., Anthropology and Project Management	Cultural Resources
Elizabeth Karpinski	Senior Archaeologist	B.A., Anthropology	Cultural Resources

5 References

Agricultural Research Service (ARS). 2017. U.S. Sheep Experiment Station Grazing and Associated Activities Project. Final Environmental Impact Statement. July 2017.

Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). 2006. *Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2006.* Edison Electric Institute, APLIC, and the California Energy Commission. Washington, D.C. and Sacramento, CA.

Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). 2012. *Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2012.* Edison Electric Institute and APLIC. Washington, D.C.

Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). 2015. *Best Management Practices for Electric Utilities in Sage-Grouse Habitat.* Edison Electric Institute and APLIC. Washington, D.C.

Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). 2018. *Eagle Risk Framework: A Practical Approach for Power Lines.* Edison Electric Institute and APLIC. Washington, D.C.

Belnap, J., J.H. Kaltenecker, R. Rosentreter, J. Williams, S. Leonard, D. Eldridge. 2001. Biological Soil Crusts: Ecology and Management. Technical Reference 1730-2. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.

Braun, C.E., J.W. Connelly, and M.A. Schroeder. 2005. Seasonal Habitat Requirements for Sage-Grouse: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-38.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2015. Idaho and Southwestern Montana Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment, Attachment I: From the USDI 2015 Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments for the Great Basin Region including the Greater Sage-Grouse Sub-Regions of: Idaho and Southwestern Montana, Nevada and Northeastern California, Oregon, and Utah. September 2015. Available at: https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/lup/103344/143603/176718/2015_IDMT_ARMPA.pdf.

Carroll, K.A., A.J. Hansen, R.M. Inman, R.L. Lawrence, and A.B. Hoegh. 2020. Testing landscape resistance layers and modeling connectivity for wolverines in the western United States. Global Ecology and Conservation 23 (2020) e01125.

Connelly et al. 2004. Conservation Assessment of Greater Sage-grouse and Sagebrush Habitats. Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Cheyenne, Wyoming. June 2004.

Copeland, J.P., J.M. Peek, C.R. Groves, W.E. Melquist, K.S. McKelvey, G.W. McDaniel, C.D. Long, and C.E. Harris. 2007. Seasonal Habitat Associations of the Wolverine in Central Idaho. Journal of Wildlife Management 71)7): 2201-2212.

Cornell University (Cornell). 2024a. All About Birds Online Bird Guide. https://www.allaboutbirds.org. Accessed various dates June 2024.

Cornell University (Cornell). 2024b. Birds of the World. https://birdsoftheworld.org. Accessed various dates June 2024.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). 1997. *Environmental Justice Guidance Under the National Environmental Policy Act*. Council on Environmental Quality, Washington, D.C.

Hoffman, R.W. and A.E. Thomas. 2007. Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse *(Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*): A Technical Conservation Assessment. Prepared for USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region. August 17, 2007.

Idaho Birds. 2024. Species Info from the Idaho Birding and Bird Records Committee. https://idahobirds.net. Accessed various dates June 2024.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). 2015. Management plan for the conservation of Columbian sharp-tailed Grouse in Idaho 2015-2025. Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, USA. July 2015.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). 2023. Draft Idaho Action Plan for Implementing the Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-game Winter Range and Migration Corridors 2023 Version 5.0. January 2023.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). 2024a. Idaho state wildlife action plan. 2023 rev. ed. Boise (ID): Idaho Department of Fish and Game. http://idfg.idaho.gov/ Approved January 2024.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). 2024b. Clark County IDFG Conservation Planner. Received May 2024.

Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG). 2024c. Idaho Fish and Wildlife Information System (IFWIS GIS Shapefiles of Observations [around Project]). Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Received May 15, 2024. Available: https://fishandgame.idaho.gov/species/request-data.

Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee (ISAC). 2006. Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho. July 2006.

Inman, R.M., M.L. Packila, K.H. Inman, A.J. McCue, G.C. White, J. Pederson, B.C. Aber, M.L. Orme, K.L. Alt, S.L. Cain, J.A. Fredrick, B.J. Oakleaf, and S.S. Sartorius. 2012. Spatial Ecology of Wolverines at the Southern Periphery of Distribution. The Journal of Wildlife Management 76(4): 778-792. DOI: 10.1002/jwmg.289.

Manier, D.J., Z.H. Bowen, M.L. Brooks, M.L. Casazza, P.S. Coates, P.A. Deibert, S.E. Hanser, and D.H. Johnson. 2014. Conservation Buffer Distance Estimates for Greater Sage-grouse – A Review. U.S. Geological Survey, Open File Report 2014-1239.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). 2023. Web Soil Survey, National Cooperative Soil Survey. Version 10, September 8, 2023. Available at: websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov. Accessed on: July 24, 2024.

NatureServe. 2024. International Terrestrial Ecological System: Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Steppe. https://explorer.natureserve.org/ Webpage Last Published May 31. 2024.

Rocky Mountain Power (RMP). 2024. Plan of Development Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project. July 2024.

State of Idaho. 2021. Attachment 1 Idaho 2021 Plan. Policy for Greater Sage-Grouse Management in Idaho. October 22, 2021 Version.

United States Census Bureau (USCB). 2022a. *Poverty Thresholds for 2022 by Size of Family and Number of Related Children Under 18 Years*. Accessed September 2024. https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html.

United States Census Bureau (USCB). 2022b. *Geography Program: About: Glossary*. Accessed July 2024. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2016. *Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews*. Accessed July 2024. https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-08/documents/nepa_promising_practices_document_2016.pdf.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2024a. Idaho Nonattainment/Maintenance Status for Each County by Year for All Criteria Pollutants. Accessed July 2024. Available at: https://www.3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/anayo_id.html

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2024b. *EJScreen Environmental Justice Mapping and Screening Tool, EJScreen Technical Documentation for Version 2.3, July 2024*. Accessed July 2024. https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-07/ejscreen-tech-doc-version-2-3.pdf.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2024c. EJScreen Reports. Accessed September 2024. Accessed at https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2018. Species Status Assessment for the North American Wolverine (*Gulo gulo ludscus*). Version 1.2. U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. March 1, 2018.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2021. Birds of Conservation Concern 2021. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Program. Available: https://www.fws.gov/media/birds-conservation-concern-2021.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2023. Species Status Assessment Addendum for the North American Wolverine (*Gulo gulo ludscus*). U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. September 2023.

United States Geological Survey (USGS). 2019. Earthquake Hazard Program. Quaternary Fault and Fold Database of the United States. Available at: https://www.usgs.gov/programs/earthquake-hazards/faults. Accessed July 30, 2024.

Waterbury b., Potter A. and Svancara LK. 2019. Monarch Butterfly Distribution and Breeding Ecology in Idaho and Washington. Front. Ecol. Evol. 7:172. doi: 10.3389/fevo.2019.00172.

Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper (WMMM). 2024. Map data accessed from the Western Monarch and Milkweed Database. Xerces Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Available: www.monarchmilkweedmapper.org. Accessed May 14, 2024.

Xerces Society. 2018. Managing for Monarchs in the West: Best Management Practices for Conserving the Monarch Butterfly and Its Habitat. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Portland, Oregon. Available: www.xerces.org.

Appendix A. Idaho SHPO Concurrence Letter

Frank, Stephanie (CTR) - REE-ARS

From: icris-no-reply <icris-no-reply@ishs.idaho.gov>
Sent: Thursday, September 19, 2024 1:19 PM
To: Frank, Stephanie (CTR) - REE-ARS
Subject: [External Email]Section 106 Consultation Summary for SHPO Project No. 2024-971
Attachments: Project Consultation Summary.pdf

ICRIS
Idaho Cultural Resource Information System

SHPO project no. 2024-971
Project Name: Rocky Mountain Power's Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project
Project Status: Complete

Hello,

Thank you for consulting with our office on the above-referenced project. The Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is providing comments to the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR § 800. Consultation with the SHPO is not a substitution for consultation with Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, other Native American tribes, local governments, or the public.

Pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5, we have applied the criteria of effect to the proposed undertaking. Please review the attached "SHPO Consultation Summary" document with overall determination(s) of eligibility, finding of effect, and conditions of compliance.

If cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this undertaking, work shall be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by the appropriate consulting parties.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please note that our response does not affect the review timelines afforded to other consulting parties. Additionally, the information provided by other consulting parties may cause us to revise our comments. If you have any questions or the scope of work changes, please contact shpo@ishs.idaho.gov to reopen consultation.

Project 2024-971

Thank you,
Idaho SHPO ICRIS Team
icris@ishs.idaho.gov
icris-history.idaho.gov

Become an ICRIS subscriber to access your personal ICRIS tracking queue, the ICRIS Field App, and additional useful GIS layers. More information here:
history.idaho.gov/shpo/icris

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE / IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SHPO Consultation Summary

SHPO Project #2024-971

Any questions please email:
shpo@ishs.idaho.gov

Section 1: Project Information		
Organization Project No(s): 117-012506-24003	Project Name: Rocky Mountain Power's Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project	
Lead Federal Agency: USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS)		
Project Type:	☑ Federal - Section 106	☐ Federal - Section 110
	☐ CLG Survey	☐ Determination of Eligibility
Programmatic Agreement Applied:		

Section 2: Lead Agency Reviewer(s)		
Name: Stephanie Frank	Email: stephanie.frank@usda.gov	Phone: 3018378798

Section 3: Additional Organizations
No Secondary Agencies

Section 4: Project Description
A portion of the existing 7.2-kilovolt (kV) Dubois-11 distribution circuit line (hereafter referred to as existing overhead power line) along and west/east of Old Highway 91 on private and federal lands administered by ARS in Clark County, Idaho has been identified by Rocky Mountain Power (RMP), a division of PacifiCorp, as having a high-risk of being affected by or causing wildfires (i.e., Fire High Consequence Area). To address this risk, RMP wants to (1) construct a new underground/overhead power line within an existing 15 foot (ft) wide right-of-way (ROW or easement) on private and federal lands administered by ARS (ARS ROW Grant 57-2056-06-022) then reclaim the ROW, and later conduct operation and maintenance (O&M) activities on the new underground/overhead power line and (2) remove 73 poles (53 poles on private and 20 poles on federal lands administered by ARS), hardware, and conductor (wire) on the existing overhead power line within a 30-ft-wide ROW on private and federal lands administered by ARS and then reclaim the ROW. No grant could be located by ARS or RMP for the 30-ft-wide ROW where the 20 poles, hardware, and conductor on the existing overhead power line would be

Section 4: Project Description
removed; therefore, ARS would issue a temporary right-of-entry (ROE) for construction easement to allow RMP to remove the 20 poles, hardware, and conductor and then reclaim the ROW. Although the existing overhead power line ROW was previously subjected to a Class III cultural resource inventory, ARS is requiring an inventory of the entire Proposed Actions on federal lands administered by ARS as part of their National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process that must be completed prior to work commencing. RMP contracted Tetra Tech, Inc. (Tetra Tech) to conduct the ARS requested Class III cultural resource inventory on the federal lands administered by ARS in conformance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The Class III cultural resource inventory encompassed a 100 ft [30 meter (m)] wide inventory corridor centered on each ROW's centerline. A total of 19.3 acres was inventoried for the undertaking.

Section 5: Final Determination(s) of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places

	SHPO Count of Resources
Not Eligible	1
Eligible	3
Unevaluated	0

Smithsonian Number(s)	Property Type/Name	*SHPO Determination*
10CL1151	Linear Resource/Historic US Highway 91 Alignment	Eligible
10CL1228	Linear Resource/Dubois 11 Distribution Circuit Transmission Line	Not Eligible
10CL356	Archaeological Site/None	Eligible
10CL983, 10FM482, 10JF405, 10CW1266, 10IH675	Linear Resource/Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT	Eligible
SHPO Comments:		

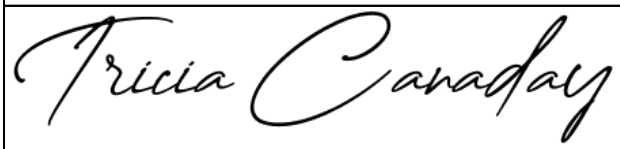
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE / IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SHPO Consultation Summary

SHPO Project #2024-971

Any questions please email:
shpo@ishs.idaho.gov

Section 6: Agency Finding of Effect
☐ No Historic Properties Affected [36 CFR § 800.4(d)(1)]
☑ No Adverse Effect [36 CFR § 800.5(d)(1)]
☐ Adverse Effect [36 CFR § 800.5(d)(2)]
Agency Comments/Summary: USDA ARS has delegated to RMP and their contractor Tetra Tech the responsibility to initiate consultation under Section 106 of the NRHP with Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the project as it occurs on USDA ARS lands. As part of the delegation, USDA ARS defined the cultural resource Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the undertaking. ARS defined the federal undertaking as the power line easement on ARS lands, not the entire project that extends onto privately held lands. Therefore, ARS defines the APE is the portion on ARS lands due to the fact if ARS were to deny this easement, Rocky Mountain Power /PacifiCorp could complete the rest of the project on private lands.

Section 7: Official SHPO Response
The Idaho SHPO has reviewed the documentation and recommendations provided by USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS):
Project Finding of Effect:
☐ We concur with the finding of effect of No Adverse Effect and with the conditions of compliance (if applicable). ☑ We concur with the finding of effect of No Adverse Effect, given stipulations explained below. ☐ We disagree with the finding of effect of No Adverse Effect, as explained below or in the attached letter. ☐ No Comment
 Date 09/19/2024 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Any questions please email:
shpo@ishs.idaho.gov

Section 7: Official SHPO Response
SHPO Comments: Thank you for consulting with our office on this project. Our office concurs with the finding of no adverse effect to historic properties for this undertaking with the following conditions: 1) implementation of an Inadvertent Discovery Plan: https://history.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/Inadvertent-Discovery-Plan-IDP-template.docx and 2) ground disturbance within 20 meters of boundary of historic property 10CL356 will be monitored by qualified professional during implementation.

Appendix B. Consistency with 2021 Idaho State Plan for Greater Sage-grouse

The Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project (Project) is a utilities project involving the construction and operation of a distribution power line and is categorized as small-scale infrastructure under the 2021 Idaho Plan (State of Idaho 2021). Some utilities are obligated by regulation to provide safe and reliable power. To avoid interfering with operations and routine maintenance, utilities are excluded from portions of the 2021 Idaho Plan. However, utilities should comply with the applicable infrastructure required design features. **Table B-1** describes how the Project would be consistent with the infrastructure required design features in the 2021 Idaho Plan. Section 3.6.2 of the EA reviews the Project for consistency with applicable portions of the 2021 Idaho Plan.

Table B-1: Project Consistency with 2021 Idaho Plan Infrastructure Required Design Features

Section in 2021 Idaho Plan	Required Design Feature (RDF) Description	Project Consistency
IV.F.i.	*For proposed actions authorized in the PHMA and IHMA, the following design features are required. For proposed actions authorized in GHMA the following design features are considered best management practices but are not required:* (i.e., IV.F.i.a) through h) below.)	The Project is in PHMA. The RDFs are not required on ARS-administered federal lands as there is no formal agreement between ARS and the State of Idaho for ARS to abide by the 2021 Idaho Plan. However, ARS strives to ensure its actions are consistent with the Plan, and thus the RDFs are reviewed in this table.
IV.F.i. a)	*No repeated or sustained behavioral disturbance from large scale infrastructure or facilities (e.g., visual, noise over 10 dbA at perimeter of lek above ambient) to lekking birds from 6:00 pm to 9:00 am within 2 miles of occupied leks during the lekking season (as determined locally approximately March 15 - May 1 in lower elevations and March 25 -May 15 in higher elevations). (Blickley et al. 2012, Patricelli et al 2013). Ambient noise level should be determined by measurements taken at the perimeter of a lek at sunrise.*	Sheep Station # 11 Lek (5C168) is 0.88 mile to the southeast of the Project Area. However, no construction or O&M activities that create noise would occur during the greater sage-grouse lekking season (i.e., from March 15 to June 15 per the 2021 Idaho Plan). Project construction would occur in the fall. In addition, once installed and operational, the new power line would not produce noise and therefore, its operation would not create repeated and sustained behavioral disturbance to Lek 5C168.
IV.F.i. b)	*Utilize existing roads, or realignments of existing routes to the extent possible.*	RMP will utilize existing roads to access the easements. Overland travel (drive and crush) will occur within the easements. No new roads, realignments of roads, or improvements to roads will be needed.
IV.F.i. c)	*Construct new roads to minimum design standards needed for production activities.*	Not applicable. No new roads would be needed.

Table B-1: Project Consistency with 2021 Idaho Plan Infrastructure Required Design Features		
Section in 2021 Idaho Plan	**Required Design Feature (RDF) Description**	**Project Consistency**
IV.F.i. d)	*Seed above ground disturbance areas with perennial vegetation to meet the needs of sage-grouse, monitor to assess restoration success or annual invasive grass establishment, and respond accordingly.*	RMP would seed all above ground disturbed areas with the applicable landowner (i.e., IDOT, private landowners, and ARS) approved weed-free certified seed mix. The seed mix that would be used on ARS-administered lands includes a mix of native grasses, crested wheatgrass (non-native), and big sagebrush (see Section 2.1.4 of EA), which would meet the needs of sage-grouse. RMP would monitor the easements to ensure restoration success and to control weeds post-construction. RMP also would monitor during O&M as part of its vegetation management activities (see Table 4).
IV.F.i. e)	*To the extent possible, place infrastructure in already disturbed locations where the habitat has not been fully restored and micro-site linear facilities to reduce impacts to sage-grouse habitats.*	The new power line would be constructed primarily on ARS-administered federal lands that are used for sheep grazing. The remaining portion of the new power line is on private lands that are used for agricultural purposes. Most of the new power line would be underground, which would reduce the permanent aboveground impact. The aboveground portions would be next to an existing two-track road and areas that no longer have sagebrush due to anthropogenic disturbance.
IV.F.i. f)	*Control the spread and effects of nonnative plant species, for example by washing vehicles and equipment (Gelbard and Belnap 2003; Bergquist et al. 2007; Evangelista et al. 2011)*	Per construction BMPs and project design features (see sections 2.1.7 and 2.1.8 of EA), equipment and vehicles would be washed prior to entering the Project Area to control the establishment and spread of weeds. Herbicides would be applied as described in Section 2.1.4 of the EA.

Table B-1: Project Consistency with 2021 Idaho Plan Infrastructure Required Design Features		
Section in 2021 Idaho Plan	**Required Design Feature (RDF) Description**	**Project Consistency**
IV.F.i. g)	*For electric power lines, in addition to the features in this Section (F), evaluate BMPs that may be appropriate, applicable, and feasible to minimize or mitigate project impacts (see APLIC 2015).*	The new power line would be built to current APLIC standards. Applicable sage-grouse BMPs from the APLIC 2015 *Best Management Practices for Electric Utilities in Sage-Grouse Habitat* would be implemented. For example, new noise levels would be limited at the perimeter of a lek to not exceed 10 dBA above baseline ambient noise level (existing activity included) during 6:00 pm to 9:00 am during the breeding season (1 March – 15 May) (APLIC 2015, pg. 48, C-19). The Project would result in a net reduction in power poles in PHMA, which would benefit sage-grouse by removing perch sites for avian predators.

Table B-1: Project Consistency with 2021 Idaho Plan Infrastructure Required Design Features		
Section in 2021 Idaho Plan	**Required Design Feature (RDF) Description**	**Project Consistency**
IV.F.i. h)	*Locate staging areas outside the PHMA to the extent possible. If staging areas are necessary, utilize non-habitat areas first and then the least suitable habitat for sage-grouse. Co-locating new infrastructure within existing ROWs and maintaining and upgrading ROWs is preferred over the creation of new ROWs or the construction of new facilities in all management areas. Colocation for various activities is defined as:* • *Communication Sites: Installation of new equipment/facilities on or within or adjacent to existing authorized equipment/facilities or within a communication site boundary as designated in the Communication Site Plan.* • *Electrical Lines: Installation of new ROWs adjacent to current ROWs boundaries, not necessarily placed on the same power poles. To the extent possible, co-locate linear facilities within one kilometer of existing linear facilities.* • *Other Rights-of-Way: Installation of new ROWs within the existing footprint of an approved ROW boundary or adjacent to an approved ROW boundary.* • *Designated Corridors: Installation of new rights-of-way within the existing corridor or adjacent to the existing corridor.*	The Project would not involve an extensive amount of equipment or materials and would not require a large staging area outside of the easements or existing road easements. When possible, equipment or materials would be staged in already disturbed areas. Personal vehicles belonging to construction crews would be parked off-site. The new power line will be located within an existing but undeveloped easement. The aboveground portion would be adjacent to Old Highway 91 and other disturbances associated with agricultural operations.

Table B-1: Project Consistency with 2021 Idaho Plan Infrastructure Required Design Features		
Section in 2021 Idaho Plan	**Required Design Feature (RDF) Description**	**Project Consistency**
IV.F.ii.	*For oil and gas leases issued after the effective date the 2021 Idaho Plan and associated Executive Order, the following best management practices as well as the relevant practices in the general infrastructure category above are required in PHMA and IHMA and recommended as best management practices in GHMA:* (i.e., IV.F.ii.a) through j))	RDF IV.F.ii does not apply to the Project because it is not an oil and gas lease.

Source: State of Idaho. 2021. Attachment 1 Idaho 2021 Plan. Policy for Greater Sage-Grouse Management in Idaho. October 22, 2021 Version.

Appendix C. IPaC Official Species List and Resource List

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Idaho Fish And Wildlife Office
1387 South Vinnell Way, Suite 368
Boise, ID 83709-1657
Phone: (208) 378-5243 Fax: (208) 378-5262

In Reply Refer To: 06/21/2024 19:03:21 UTC
Project Code: 2024-0107428
Project Name: RMP Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological

evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at:

https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/endangered-species-consultation-handbook.pdf

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity, intentional or unintentional, resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts, see https://www.fws.gov/program/migratory-bird-permit/what-we-do.

The MBTA has no provision for allowing take of migratory birds that may be unintentionally killed or injured by otherwise lawful activities. It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures, see https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/threats-birds.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit https://www.fws.gov/partner/council-conservation-migratory-birds.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Bald & Golden Eagles
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

Idaho Fish And Wildlife Office
1387 South Vinnell Way, Suite 368
Boise, ID 83709-1657
(208) 378-5243

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2024-0107428

Project Name: RMP Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild

Project Type: Operations and Maintenance - Electric Power Transmission and Distribution Facilities

Project Description: PacifiCorp dba Rocky Mountain Power has identified a portion of its existing overhead Dubois-11 distribution circuit power line as having a high-risk of being affected by or causing wildfires. In order to address this risk, Rocky Mountain Power is proposing to (1) install a new underground/overhead power line between the west side of Old Highway 91 and east side of Interstate-15 on private and federal lands administered by the United States Department of the Interior-Agricultural Research Services (ARS) and (2) remove a portion of their existing overhead Dubois-11 distribution circuit power line (i.e., 73 poles) along and west/east of Old Highway 91 on private and federal lands administered by USDA-ARS. The project is located in Clark County between Dubois and Spencer, Idaho.

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@44.30162785,-112.21769370385806,14z

Counties: Clark County, Idaho

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 2 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries[1], as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

---

1. NOAA Fisheries, also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

MAMMALS

NAME	STATUS
North American Wolverine *Gulo gulo luscus*	Threatened

No critical habitat has been designated for this species.
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5123
General project design guidelines:
https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/project/JR6TF2RZKVHS3JI52HHKBOLVOI/documents/generated/7151.pdf

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	Candidate

No critical habitat has been designated for this species.
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743

CRITICAL HABITATS

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

THERE ARE NO REFUGE LANDS OR FISH HATCHERIES WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA.

BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

Bald and golden eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act[1] and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act[2].

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to bald or golden eagles, or their habitats[3], should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate conservation measures, as described in the links below. Specifically, please review the "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles".

1. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940.
2. The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918.

3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

THERE ARE NO BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLES WITHIN THE VICINITY OF YOUR PROJECT AREA.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Certain birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act[1] and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act[2].

Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to migratory birds, eagles, and their habitats[3] should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate conservation measures, as described in the links below. Specifically, please review the "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles".

---

1. The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918.
2. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Cassin's Finch *Haemorhous cassinii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9462	Breeds May 15 to Jul 15
Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9433	Breeds Apr 15 to Aug 10

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

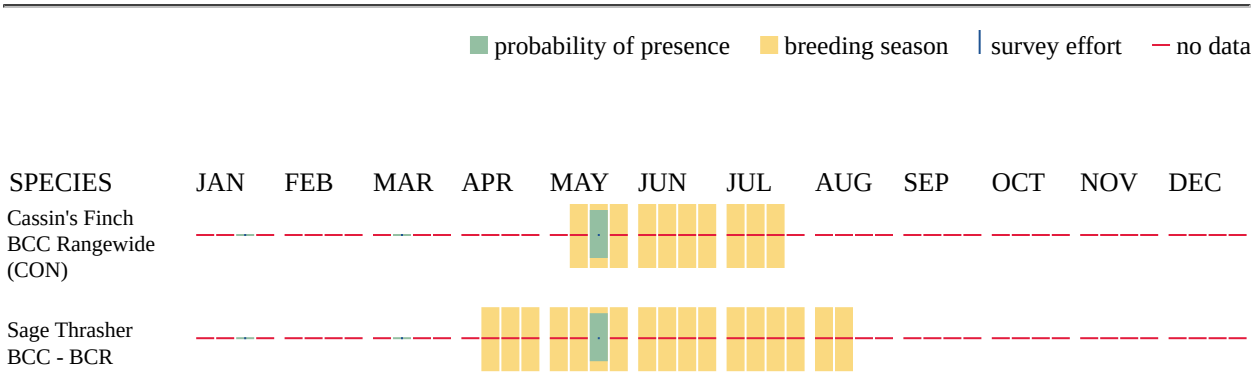
Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (▪)
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide conservation measures for birds https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action

WETLANDS

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

RIVERINE

- R3UBF
- R4SBA

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency: Private Entity
Name: Joslin Heyward
Address: 4750 West 2100 South, Suite 400
City: Salt Lake City
State: UT
Zip: 84120
Email joslin.heyward@tetratech.com
Phone: 8013641064

Appendix D. Project Inadvertent Discovery Plan

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE / IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Inadvertent Discovery Plan

The Inadvertent Discovery Plan (IDP) protocol must be adhered to if cultural materials, including human remains, are encountered during construction

Project: A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of 19.3 Acres for Rocky Mountain Power's Dubois-11 FHCA Rebuild Project, Clark County, Idaho
SHPO Review No.: 2024-971
Project Manager: Jens Jorgensen
Location: Clark County, Idaho

Scope

The scope of the inadvertent discovery plan is for all ground disturbing construction activities associated with the Dubois 11 FHCA project, including but not limited to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office's (SHPO) request that a cultural resource monitor be present for all ground disturbance within 20 meters of the boundary of historic property 10CL356. A monitor is not required for the remaining portions of the project, but the inadvertent discovery plan still applies.

Cultural Resources

Construction work may uncover previously unidentified Native American or Euro-American artifacts. This could occur for a variety of reasons, but may be associated with deeply buried cultural material, access restrictions during project development, or if the area contains impervious surfaces throughout most of the project area which would have prevented standard archaeological site discovery methods. Work must stop and the IDP protocol followed when archaeological artifacts and/or features are encountered.

Native American artifacts may include (but are not limited to):

- Flaked stone tools (e.g. arrowheads, knives scrapers etc.);
- Waste flakes that resulted from the construction of flaked stone tools;
- Modified, shaped, or perforated stones like net anchors, pendants;
- Ground stone tools like mortars and pestles;
- Layers (strata) of discolored earth resulting from fire hearths. May be black, red or mottled brown and often contain discolored cracked rocks or dark soil in association with other artifacts;
- Human remains; and/or
- Structural remains (e.g. wooden beams, post holes, fish weirs).

Euro-American artifacts may include (but are not limited to):

- Glass (e.g. bottles, vessels, windows etc.);
- Ceramic (e.g. dinnerware, vessels etc.);

- Metal (e.g. nails, drink/food cans, tobacco tins, industrial parts etc.);
- Building materials (e.g. bricks, shingles etc.);
- Building remains (e.g. foundations, architectural components etc.);
- Old wooden posts, pilings, or planks (these may be encountered above or below water);
- Old farm equipment may indicate historic resources in the area.

Even what looks to be old garbage could very well be an important archaeological resource.

When in doubt, call it in!

Protocol

I. Stop Work Immediately

In the event of an inadvertent discovery of possible cultural materials, including human remains, all work will stop immediately in the vicinity of the find. The area will then be secured and protected with a 100-foot buffer around the discovery. Work can proceed outside of this buffered area unless additional cultural materials are encountered.

Special Procedures for the Discovery of Human Skeletal Material

Any human skeletal remains, regardless of antiquity or ethnic origin, will always be treated with dignity and respect. Cover the remains with a tarp or other materials (not soil or rocks) for temporary protection and to shield them from being photographed. **Do not call 911 or speak with the media. Do not take pictures.**

II. Notify Appropriate Parties

The project manager must be notified immediately, who will then notify the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the local police or sheriff's department, and the project Archaeologist, as appropriate.

If potential human remains are encountered, the local police or sheriff's department must be notified and they will coordinate with the Idaho State Police (ISP), the local Medical Examiner/Coroner, and appropriate Tribal Governments. Call the non-emergent line and request the Watch Commander or Officer-In-Charge.

PacifiCorp Project Manager Name: Jens Jorgensen Phone: 801.247.4764 Email: Jen.Jorgensen@pacificorp.com	**Tetra Tech Project Archaeologist** Name: Mark Karpinski Phone: 801.209.3992 Email: Mark.Karpinski@tetratech.com
State Historic Preservation Office Name: Lindsay Johansson Phone: 208.334.3861 Email: shsshpo@ishs.idaho.gov	**Tetra Tech Project Manager** Name: Jill Reid Phone: 801.824.5179 Email: Jill.Reid@tetratech.com

Local Law Enforcement Name: Mark McClure-Clark County Sheriff Phone: 208.374.5403 Email: mmcclure@co.clark.id.us	**Local Medical Examiner/Coroner** Name: Brenda Laird Phone: 208.351.8852 Email: blaird@co.clark.id.us
State/Federal Project Manager Name: Stephanie Frank, PhD Phone: 301.837.8798 Email: Stephanie.Frank@usda.gov	**ARS Landowner POC** Name: Jennifer Barnett Phone: 208.374.5306 Email: Jennifer.Barnett@usda.gov

III. Wait for Guidance

No work in the buffered area may resume until consultation has occurred. If a professional archaeologist is needed to assess the discovery, they will consult with the SHPO and appropriate Tribal Governments to facilitate determination of an appropriate course of action. Archaeological investigation or excavations may be required. Until a formal determination can be made, archaeological deposits discovered during construction will be assumed eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and should be protected. The professional archaeologist and project manager, in consultation with SHPO and Tribal Governments, handles this on a case-by-case basis.

IV. Proceed with Construction

Construction can proceed only after the proper archaeological inspections have occurred and environmental clearances are obtained if necessary and clearance has been received from all parties involved. This requires close coordination with SHPO and the Tribal Governments.

After an inadvertent discovery, some areas may be specified for close monitoring or 'no work zones.' Any such areas will be identified by the professional archaeologist to the Project Manager, and appropriate Contractor personnel. In coordination with the SHPO, the Project Manager will verify these identified areas and be sure that the areas are clearly demarcated in the field.

Confidentiality

This project and its employees, contractors, and subcontractors shall make their best efforts, in accordance with federal and state law, to ensure that its personnel keep the discovery confidential. The media, or any third-party member or members of the public are not to be contacted or have information regarding the discovery, and any public or media inquiry is to be reported to PacifiCorp. Prior to any release, the responsible agencies and Tribes shall consult on the amount of information, if any, to be released to the public.

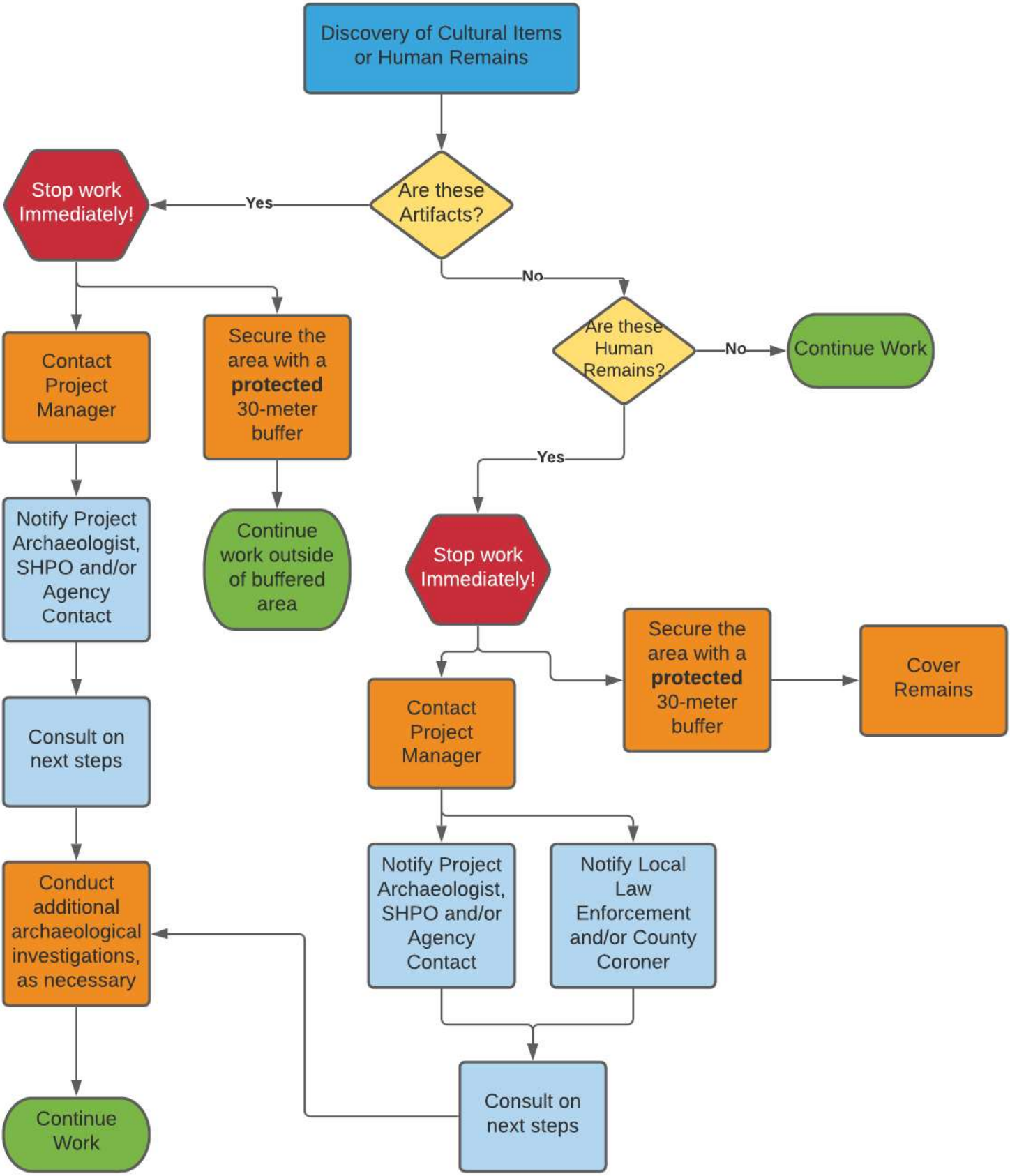
As the designated representative for the project, I acknowledge that I have received this inadvertent discovery plan and will, to the best of my abilities, ensure that it is implemented appropriately.

Jen Jorgensen <ee>

_____

Name: Jens Jorgensen, PacifiCorp Date 10/2/2024

Appendix A: Process Flow Chart



Appendix B: Visual References and Examples of Potential Discoveries

Implement the IDP if …

You see chipped stone artifacts.

- Glass-like material
- Angular
- "Unusual" material for area
- "Unusual" shape
- Regularity of flaking
- Variability of size

Implement the IDP if …

You see ground or pecked stone artifacts.

Stone Artifacts from Oregon

- Striations or scratching
- Unusual or unnatural shapes
- Unusual stone
- Etching
- Perforations
- Pecking
- Regularity in modifications
- Variability of size, function, and complexity

Implement the IDP if …

You see bone or shell artifacts.

- Often smooth
- Unusual shape
- Carved
- Often pointed if used as a tool
- Often wedge shaped like a “shoehorn”

Bone Awls from Oregon and Bone Wedge from California

Implement the IDP if …

You see bone or shell artifacts.

- Often smooth
- Unusual shape
- Perforated
- Variability of size

Tooth Pendant and Bone Pendants from Oregon and Washington

Implement the IDP if …

You see fiber or wood artifacts.

- Wet environments needed for preservation
- Variability of size, function, and complexity
- Rare

Artifacts by Mud Bay, Olympia, Washington

Implement the IDP if …

You see historic period artifacts.

Artifacts from Downtown Seattle, Alaskan Way Viaduct (Upper Left and Lower) and Unknown Site (Upper Right)

Implement the IDP if …

You see strange, different, or interesting looking dirt, rocks, or shells.

Unknown Sites

- Human activities leave traces in the ground that may or may not have artifacts associated with them
- "Unusual" accumulations of rock (especially fire-cracked rock)
- "Unusual" shaped accumulations of rock (e.g., similar to a fire ring)
- Charcoal or charcoal-stained soils
- Oxidized or burnt-looking soils
- Accumulations of shell
- Accumulations of bones or artifacts
- Look for the "unusual" or out of place (e.g., rock piles or accumulations in areas with few rock)

Implement the IDP if …

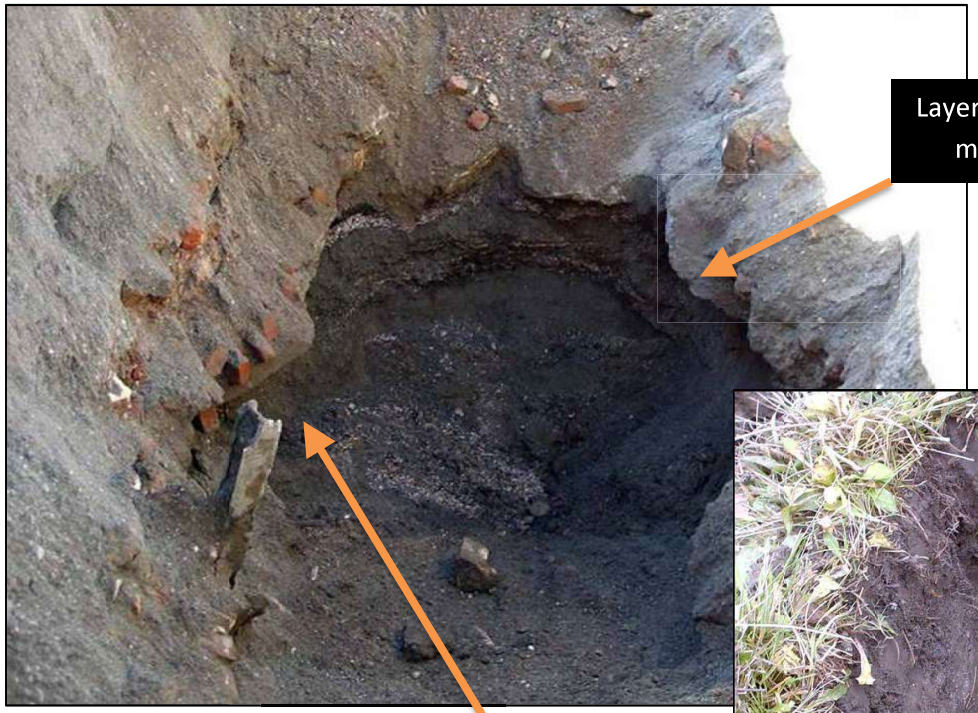
You see strange, different or interesting looking dirt, rocks, or shells.

Site of Muckleshoot Indian Reservation, near WSDOT ROW along SR 164

- "Unusual" accumulations of rock (especially fire-cracked rock)
- "Unusual" shaped accumulations of rock (e.g., similar to a fire ring)
- Look for the "unusual" or out of place (e.g., rock piles or accumulations in areas with few rock)

Implement the IDP if …

You see strange, different or interesting looking dirt, rocks, or shells.



- Often have a layered or "layer cake" appearance
- Often associated with black or blackish soil
- Often have very crushed and compacted shells

Site located within WSDOT ROW near Anacorles Ferry Terminal

Implement the IDP if …

You see historic foundations or buried structures.

45KI1924, In WSDOT ROW for SR 99 Tunnel

Appendix C: Map of Project Area

Include any monitoring areas if applicable

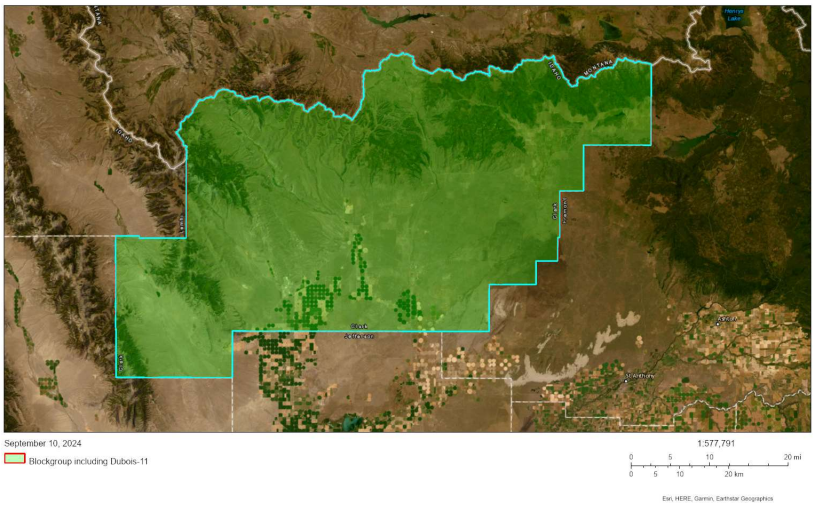
Appendix E. EJSCREEN

EJScreen Community Report

This report provides environmental and socioeconomic information for user-defined areas, and combines that data into environmental justice and supplemental indexes.

Blockgroup including Dubois-11

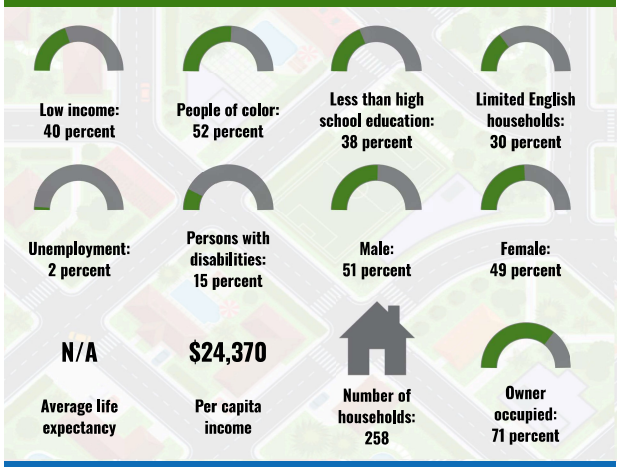
Blockgroup: 160339501001
Population: 756
Area in square miles: 1764.09



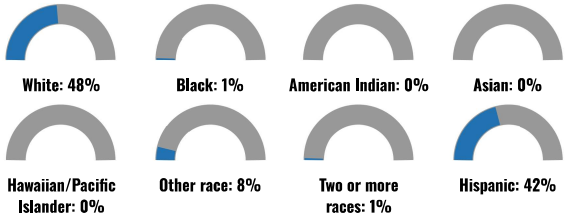
LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

LANGUAGE	PERCENT
English	58%
Spanish	41%
German or other West Germanic	1%
Other and Unspecified	1%
Total Non-English	42%

COMMUNITY INFORMATION



BREAKDOWN BY RACE



BREAKDOWN BY AGE

LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING BREAKDOWN

Notes: Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding. Hispanic population can be of any race.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022. Life expectancy data comes from the Centers for Disease Control.

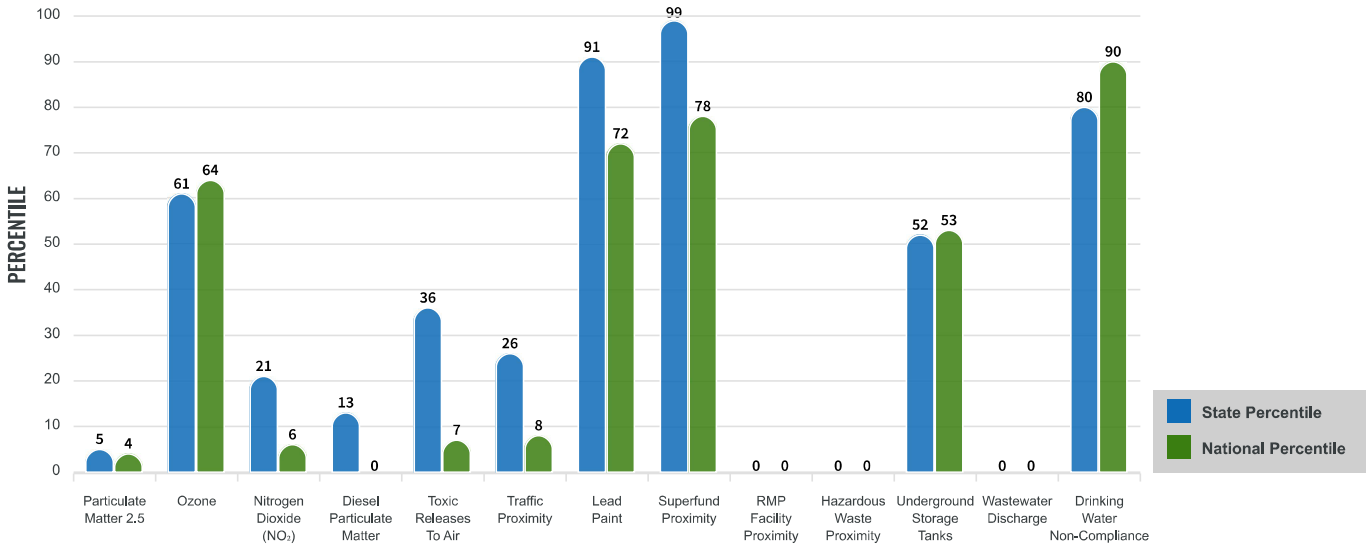
Environmental Justice & Supplemental Indexes

The environmental justice and supplemental indexes are a combination of environmental and socioeconomic information. There are thirteen EJ indexes and supplemental indexes in EJScreen reflecting the 13 environmental indicators. The indexes for a selected area are compared to those for all other locations in the state or nation. For more information and calculation details on the EJ and supplemental indexes, please visit the EJScreen website.

EJ INDEXES

The EJ indexes help users screen for potential EJ concerns. To do this, the EJ index combines data on low income and people of color populations with a single environmental indicator.

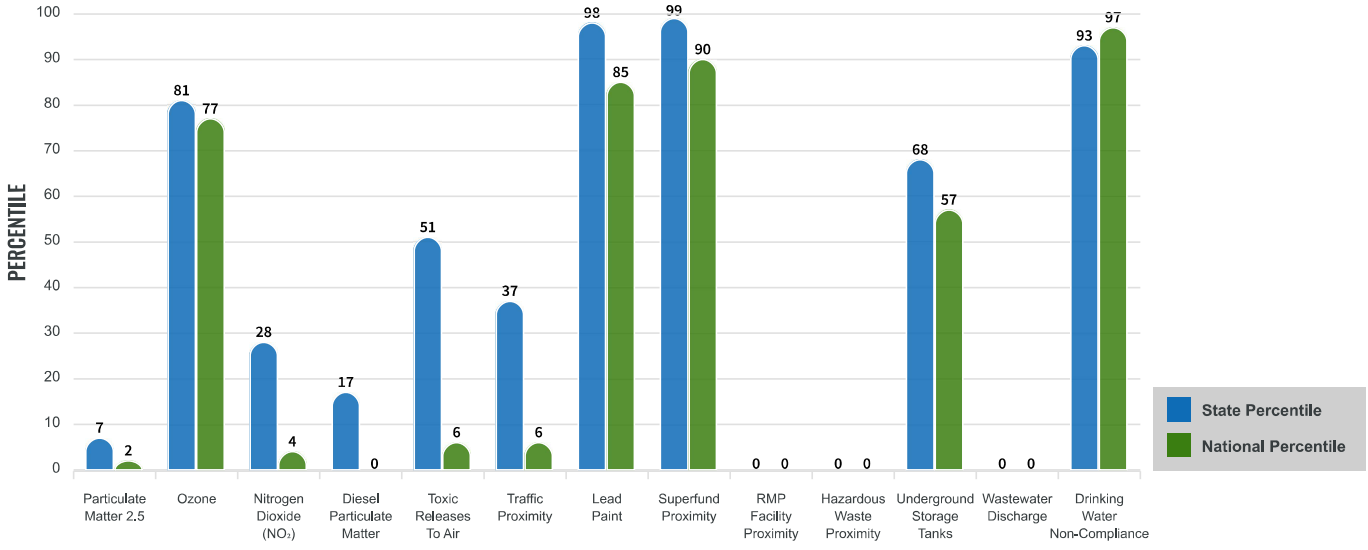
EJ INDEXES FOR THE SELECTED LOCATION



SUPPLEMENTAL INDEXES

The supplemental indexes offer a different perspective on community-level vulnerability. They combine data on percent low income, percent persons with disabilities, percent less than high school education, percent limited English speaking, and percent low life expectancy with a single environmental indicator.

SUPPLEMENTAL INDEXES FOR THE SELECTED LOCATION



Report for Blockgroup: 160339501001

Report produced September 10, 2024 using EJScreen Version 2.3

EJScreen Environmental and Socioeconomic Indicators Data

SELECTED VARIABLES	VALUE	STATE AVERAGE	PERCENTILE IN STATE	USA AVERAGE	PERCENTILE IN USA
ENVIRONMENTAL BURDEN INDICATORS					
Particulate Matter 2.5 ($\mu g/m^3$)	4.94	8.56	2	8.45	1
Ozone (ppb)	58.4	58.7	28	61.8	39
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2) (ppbv)	2	6.9	7	7.8	2
Diesel Particulate Matter ($\mu g/m^3$)	0.0142	0.131	5	0.191	0
Toxic Releases to Air (toxicity-weighted concentration)	0.21	330	14	4,600	3
Traffic Proximity (daily traffic count/distance to road)	7,500	550,000	10	1,700,000	3
Lead Paint (% Pre-1960 Housing)	0.24	0.2	67	0.3	52
Superfund Proximity (site count/km distance)	0.031	0.25	84	0.39	56
RMP Facility Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0	0.22	0	0.57	0
Hazardous Waste Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0	0.27	0	3.5	0
Underground Storage Tanks (count/km^2)	0.0015	1.4	22	3.6	27
Wastewater Discharge (toxicity-weighted concentration/m distance)	0	19000	0	700000	0
Drinking Water Non-Compliance (points)	1	30	44	2.2	78
SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS					
Demographic Index USA	1.77	N/A	N/A	1.34	71
Supplemental Demographic Index USA	2.97	N/A	N/A	1.64	95
Demographic Index State	2.82	1.49	93	N/A	N/A
Supplemental Demographic Index State	3.9	1.36	99	N/A	N/A
People of Color	52%	19%	96	40%	67
Low Income	40%	31%	69	30%	70
Unemployment Rate	2%	4%	45	6%	34
Limited English Speaking Households	30%	2%	99	5%	96
Less Than High School Education	38%	9%	98	11%	96
Under Age 5	7%	6%	64	5%	67
Over Age 64	17%	18%	51	18%	52

*Diesel particulate matter index is from the EPA's Air Toxics Data Update, which is the Agency's ongoing, comprehensive evaluation of air toxics in the United States. This effort aims to prioritize air toxics, emission sources, and locations of interest for further study. It is important to remember that the air toxics data presented here provide broad estimates of health risks over geographic areas of the country, not definitive risks to specific individuals or locations. More information on the Air Toxics Data Update can be found at: https://www.epa.gov/haps/air-toxics-data-update.

Sites reporting to EPA within defined area:

Superfund	1
Hazardous Waste, Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facilities	0
Water Dischargers	7
Air Pollution	1
Brownfields	0
Toxic Release Inventory	0

Other community features within defined area:

Schools	2
Hospitals	0
Places of Worship	0

Other environmental data:

Air Non-attainment	No
Impaired Waters	Yes

Selected location contains American Indian Reservation Lands*	No
Selected location contains a "Justice40 (CEJST)" disadvantaged community	Yes
Selected location contains an EPA IRA disadvantaged community	Yes

Report for Blockgroup: 160339501001

Report produced September 10, 2024 using EJScreen Version 2.3

EJScreen Environmental and Socioeconomic Indicators Data

HEALTH INDICATORS

INDICATOR	VALUE	STATE AVERAGE	STATE PERCENTILE	US AVERAGE	US PERCENTILE
Low Life Expectancy	N/A	19%	N/A	20%	N/A
Heart Disease	7.2	5.7	85	5.8	79
Asthma	10.9	10.5	73	10.3	70
Cancer	6.4	6.6	43	6.4	48
Persons with Disabilities	14.9%	14.2%	57	13.7%	63

CLIMATE INDICATORS

INDICATOR	VALUE	STATE AVERAGE	STATE PERCENTILE	US AVERAGE	US PERCENTILE
Flood Risk	19%	14%	74	12%	84
Wildfire Risk	85%	35%	78	14%	89

CRITICAL SERVICE GAPS

INDICATOR	VALUE	STATE AVERAGE	STATE PERCENTILE	US AVERAGE	US PERCENTILE
Broadband Internet	14%	11%	69	13%	65
Lack of Health Insurance	24%	10%	97	9%	95
Housing Burden	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Transportation Access Burden	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Food Desert	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Report for Blockgroup: 160339501001

Report produced September 10, 2024 using EJScreen Version 2.3

EJSCREEN ACS Summary Report

Location: Blockgroup: 160339501001
Ring (buffer): 0-mile radius
Description: Blockgroup including Dubois-11

Summary of ACS Estimates	2018 - 2022
Population	756
Population Density (per sq. mile)	0
People of Color Population	396
% People of Color Population	52%
Households	258
Housing Units	449
Housing Units Built Before 1950	92
Per Capita Income	24,370
Land Area (sq. miles) (Source: SF1)	1,763.15
% Land Area	100%
Water Area (sq. miles) (Source: SF1)	0.96
% Water Area	0%

	2018 - 2022 ACS Estimates	Percent	MOE (±)
Population by Race			
Total	756	100%	138
Population Reporting One Race	678	90%	285
White	474	63%	126
Black	4	1%	11
American Indian	0	0%	13
Asian	0	0%	13
Pacific Islander	0	0%	13
Some Other Race	200	26%	109
Population Reporting Two or More Races	78	10%	65
Total Hispanic Population	320	42%	80
Total Non-Hispanic Population	436		
White Alone	360	48%	113
Black Alone	4	1%	11
American Indian Alone	0	0%	13
Non-Hispanic Asian Alone	0	0%	13
Pacific Islander Alone	0	0%	13
Other Race Alone	64	8%	73
Two or More Races Alone	8	1%	12
Population by Sex			
Male	387	51%	92
Female	369	49%	77
Population by Age			
Age 0-4	50	7%	33
Age 0-17	157	21%	59
Age 18+	599	79%	117
Age 65+	125	17%	39

Data Note: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding. Hispanic population can be of any race.
N/A means not available. **Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 - 2022 .

EJSCREEN ACS Summary Report

Location: Blockgroup: 160339501001
Ring (buffer): 0-mile radius
Description: Blockgroup including Dubois-11

	2018 - 2022 ACS Estimates	Percent	MOE (±)
Population 25+ by Educational Attainment			
Total	498	100%	90
Less than 9th Grade	76	15%	39
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	115	23%	68
High School Graduate	141	28%	45
Some College, No Degree	75	15%	30
Associate Degree	15	3%	9
Bachelor's Degree or more	76	15%	45
Population Age 5+ Years by Ability to Speak English			
Total	706	100%	122
Speak only English	408	58%	106
Non-English at Home[1+2+3+4]	298	42%	94
[1]Speak English "very well"	93	13%	57
[2]Speak English "well"	52	7%	48
[3]Speak English "not well"	89	13%	70
[4]Speak English "not at all"	64	9%	59
[3+4]Speak English "less than well"	153	22%	92
[2+3+4]Speak English "less than very well"	205	29%	103
Limited English Speaking Households*			
Total	78	100%	55
Speak Spanish	78	100%	50
Speak Other Indo-European Languages	0	0%	13
Speak Asian-Pacific Island Languages	0	0%	13
Speak Other Languages	0	0%	13
Households by Household Income			
Household Income Base	258	100%	78
< $15,000	8	3%	8
$15,000 - $25,000	17	7%	11
$25,000 - $50,000	94	36%	52
$50,000 - $75,000	95	37%	46
$75,000 +	44	17%	24
Occupied Housing Units by Tenure			
Total	258	100%	78
Owner Occupied	182	71%	49
Renter Occupied	76	29%	54
Employed Population Age 16+ Years			
Total	631	100%	112
In Labor Force	412	65%	90
Civilian Unemployed in Labor Force	8	2%	9
Not In Labor Force	219	35%	73

Data Note: Datail may not sum to totals due to rounding. Hispanic population can be of anyrace.
N/A means not available. **Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS)
*Households in which no one 14 and over speaks English "very well" or speaks English only.

EJSCREEN ACS Summary Report

Location: Blockgroup: 160339501001
Ring (buffer): 0-mile radius
Description: Blockgroup including Dubois-11

	2018 - 2022 ACS Estimates	Percent	MOE (±)
Population by Language Spoken at Home*			
Total (persons age 5 and above)	706	100%	122
English	408	58%	117
Spanish	290	41%	83
French, Haitian, or Cajun	0	0%	13
German or other West Germanic	4	1%	10
Russian, Polish, or Other Slavic	0	0%	13
Other Indo-European	0	0%	13
Korean	0	0%	13
Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese)	0	0%	13
Vietnamese	0	0%	13
Tagalog (including Filipino)	0	0%	13
Other Asian and Pacific Island	0	0%	13
Arabic	0	0%	13
Other and Unspecified	4	1%	11
Total Non-English	298	42%	169

Data Note: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding. Hispanic popultion can be of any race.
N/A meansnot available. **Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 - 2022.
*Population by Language Spoken at Home is available at the census tract summary level and up.