

CHAPTER 1 - PURPOSE AND NEED

INTRODUCTION

Rocky Mountain Power (RMP), a division of PacifiCorp, has applied for right-of-way easement from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) to construct and operate a 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line, referred to as the Populus to Ben Lomond 345kV Transmission Project (Project), on the Brigham Face Wildlife Management Area (BFWMA), which is administered by UDWR. The UDWR is considering issuing a right-of-way easement to RMP for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the facilities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is serving as the lead agency because the BFWMA was purchased with federal funds. The BFWMA was purchased between 1940 and 1942 with a Wildlife Restoration grant that funded 75 percent of the purchase and was provided by the Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (UDWR 2008f). The primary purpose for establishing the BFWMA was to provide winter habitat for large mammals (UDWR 2008g). The Wildlife Restoration grant program was enacted through the Pittman–Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, amended through P.L. 106-580, December 29, 2000 (UDWR 2008e). Since the BFWMA was purchased with federal funds, granting of the right-of-way easement through the BFWMA by the UDWR requires the preparation of this environmental assessment (EA).

This EA was prepared for the Service and UDWR with the assistance of RMP and Environmental Planning Group, Inc. (EPG).

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

RMP's 2007 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) forecasts that network electrical load obligation will grow during the next ten years at an annual average rate of three percent. The existing transmission capacity from southeastern Idaho into Utah is fully utilized and no additional capacity can be made available without the addition of new transmission lines. The purpose of this project is to add major incremental transmission capacity between southeastern Idaho and northern Utah and facilitate a stronger interconnection to systems feeding Idaho, Wyoming, and the Northwest in general. RMP determined that the best means of making a major incremental increase in the transmission capacity necessary to continue to reliably and economically serve these growing electrical loads would be to construct a new double-circuit 345kV transmission line, connecting the southeastern Idaho transmission system to the Utah load center in the Wasatch Front. Construction of the new 345kV transmission line is needed to accommodate electrical load growth and enhance transmission grid reliability in portions of northern Utah and southeastern Idaho. Construction of the overall project is planned to begin in April 2009, to meet an in-service date of May 2010. Meeting the in-service date is critical to providing adequate service and reliability to RMP's customers. The addition of these new 345kV circuits would provide access to existing and future thermal and renewable generating resources and would enhance the reliability of the existing system.

PROPOSED ACTION

RMP is proposing to construct a new 90-mile-long 345kV transmission line, between the Populus Substation, to be located near Downey, Idaho, and the existing Ben Lomond Substation located in southern Box Elder County, Utah (Figure 1). Construction of this 345kV line requires that RMP obtain a 150- to 195-foot-wide right-of-way easement from the UDWR for a 1.8-mile portion of the Project to cross the BFWMA.

The Project crosses two separate portions of the BFWMA. The northern portion of the Project crosses 1.5 miles of the BFWMA in the vicinity of Brigham City and Perry, Utah (Figure 2). The southern portion of the Project crosses 0.3 mile of the southwestern corner of the BFWMA located southeast of Willard City, Utah (Figure 3).

DECISION FRAMEWORK

The Service is the lead agency for this EA. The decision to be made regards whether or not to approve a right-of-way easement for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed transmission line on UDWR land as proposed. The deciding official can:

- Select the proposed action
- Select the no action alternative
- Include mitigation or monitoring measures, if necessary
- Approve or deny the right-of-way easement for the construction of the proposed transmission line

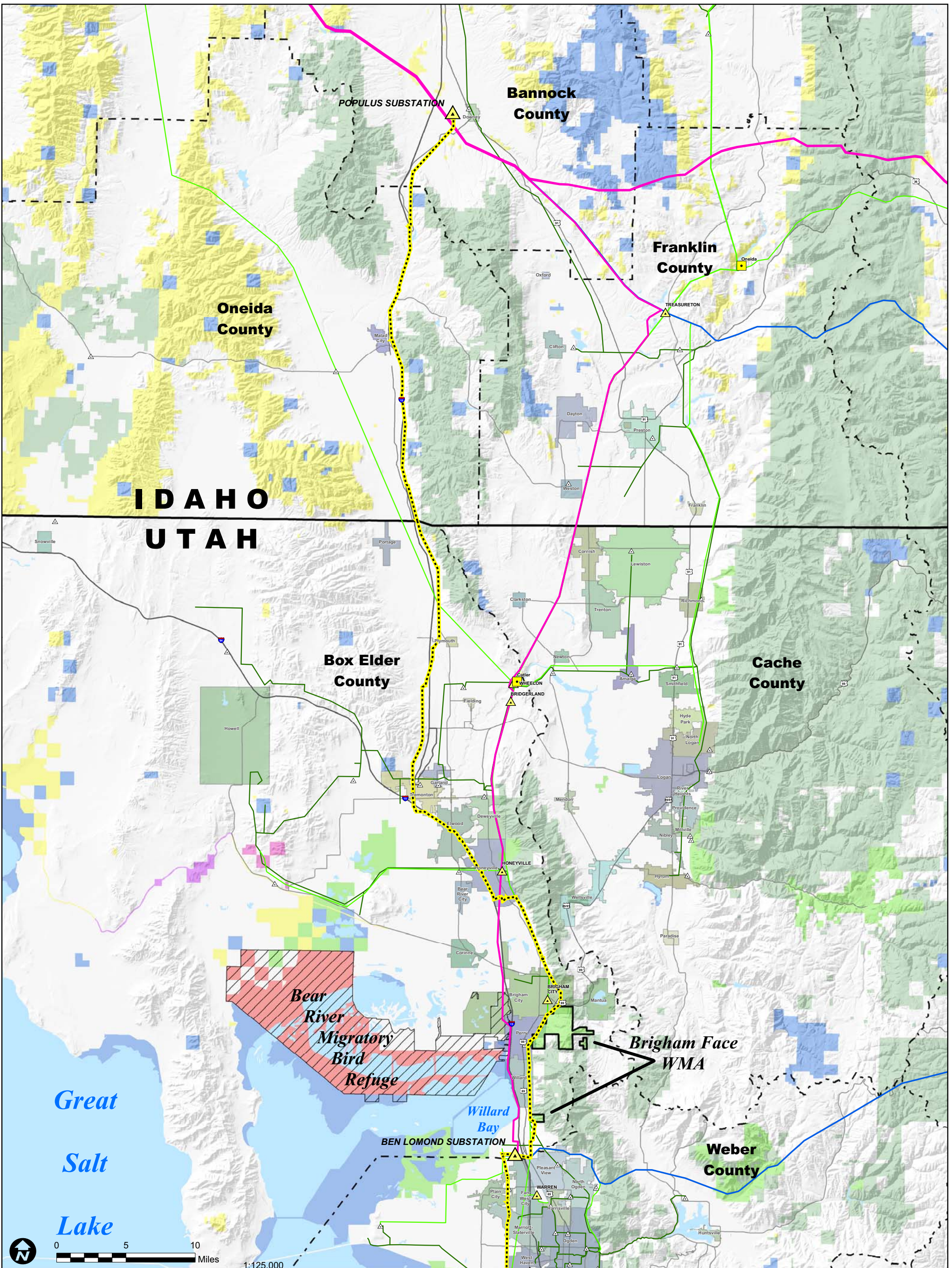
REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS AND COORDINATION

This EA was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality Implementation Procedures outlined in 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, USFWS NEPA Reference Handbook (505 FW 1.7 and 550 FW 1), and documents the affected environment and the potential environmental consequences of the proposed action.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

RMP conducted community leader/stakeholder briefings to inform federal, state, and local officials and staff and other key stakeholders about the transmission line project in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The briefings presented information about the project specific to each jurisdiction and discussed land use, zoning, and general plan information.

A project newsletter was mailed to approximately 800 property owners and stakeholders in December 2007 and a newspaper advertisement was placed in the Standard Examiner (Ogden, Utah) on January 6, 2008 to invite the public to the upcoming informational open houses. On June 9, 2008 a public open house invitation was mailed to Brigham City property owners within 1,000 feet of the proposed route alignment. In November 2008, open house invitations were also inserted into Perry City water bills regarding a meeting with local residents. Appendix A contains examples of the above newsletter, advertisement, and invitations.



<p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed 345kV Transmission Route (approximate location) 	<p>General Reference Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Forest Service Bureau of Land Management Department of Defense National Park Service U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Utah Division of Wildlife Resources State of Utah / State of Idaho 	<p>Existing Transmission Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 345kV Transmission Line 230kV Transmission Line 115/138kV Transmission Line 46kV Subtransmission Line Power Plant Substation Substation 	<p>Brigham Face WMA Project Overview</p>
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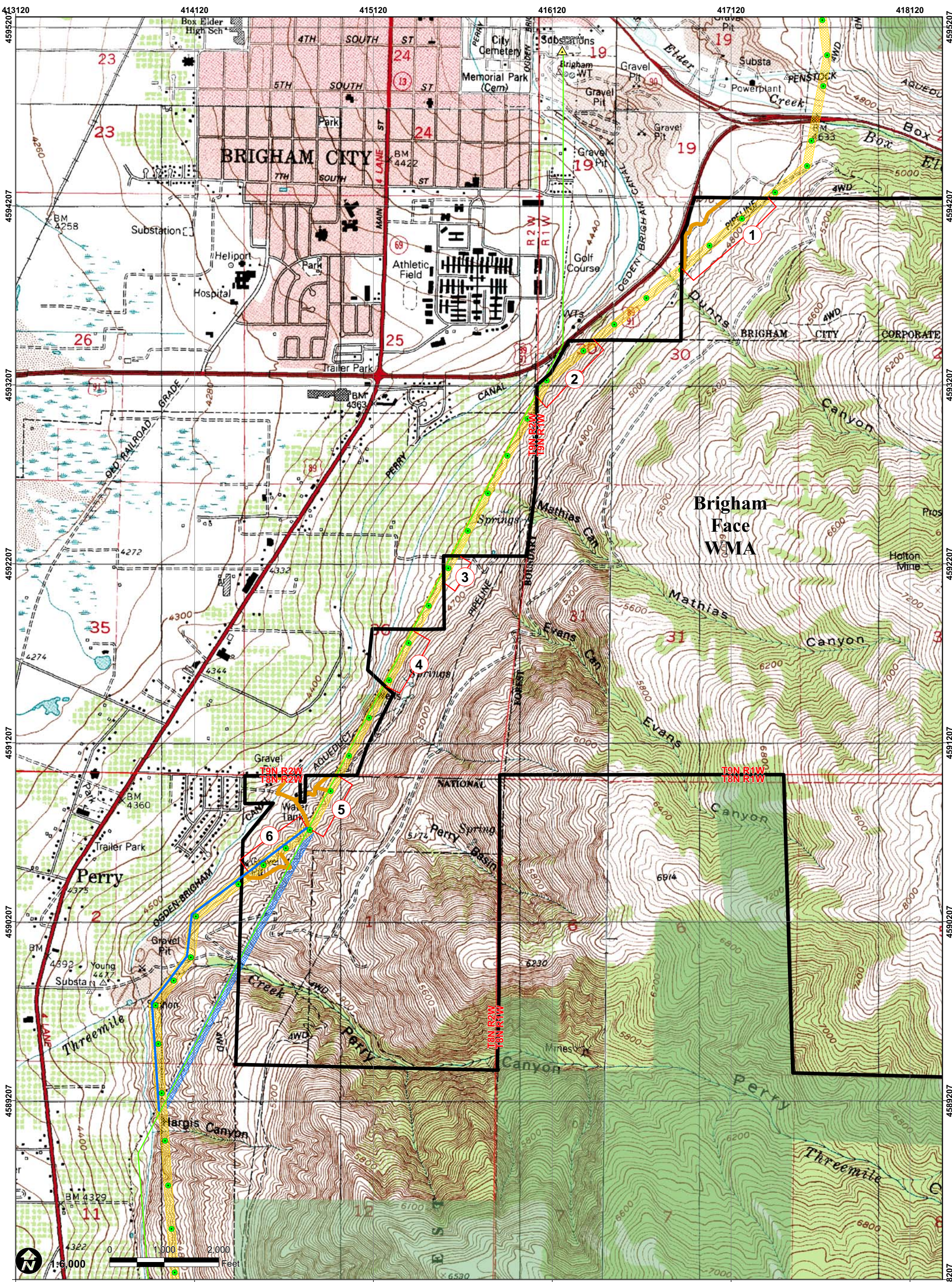
Figure 1
November 26, 2008

SOURCES: Imagery, NAIP 2006; Political Boundaries and Transportation, ESRI; Transmission Lines and Substations, PacifiCorp
NOTE: Transmission systems and substation locations are from PacifiCorp GIS Department. Information is schematic and does not necessarily represent accurate locations.



POPULUS TO BEN LOMOND 345KV TRANSMISSION PROJECT

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- Legend**
- Proposed 345kV Transmission Route
 - Alternative 345kV Transmission Route
 - Proposed Relocation of 138kV Transmission Line
 - Brigham Face WMA Boundary
 - Transmission Line Structures (Approximate Location- Structure Locations May Change Upon Further Engineering)
 - Proposed Access Roads Off ROW
 - 1 Transmission Line Segments

- General Reference Features**
- U.S. Forest Service
 - Township/Range Line

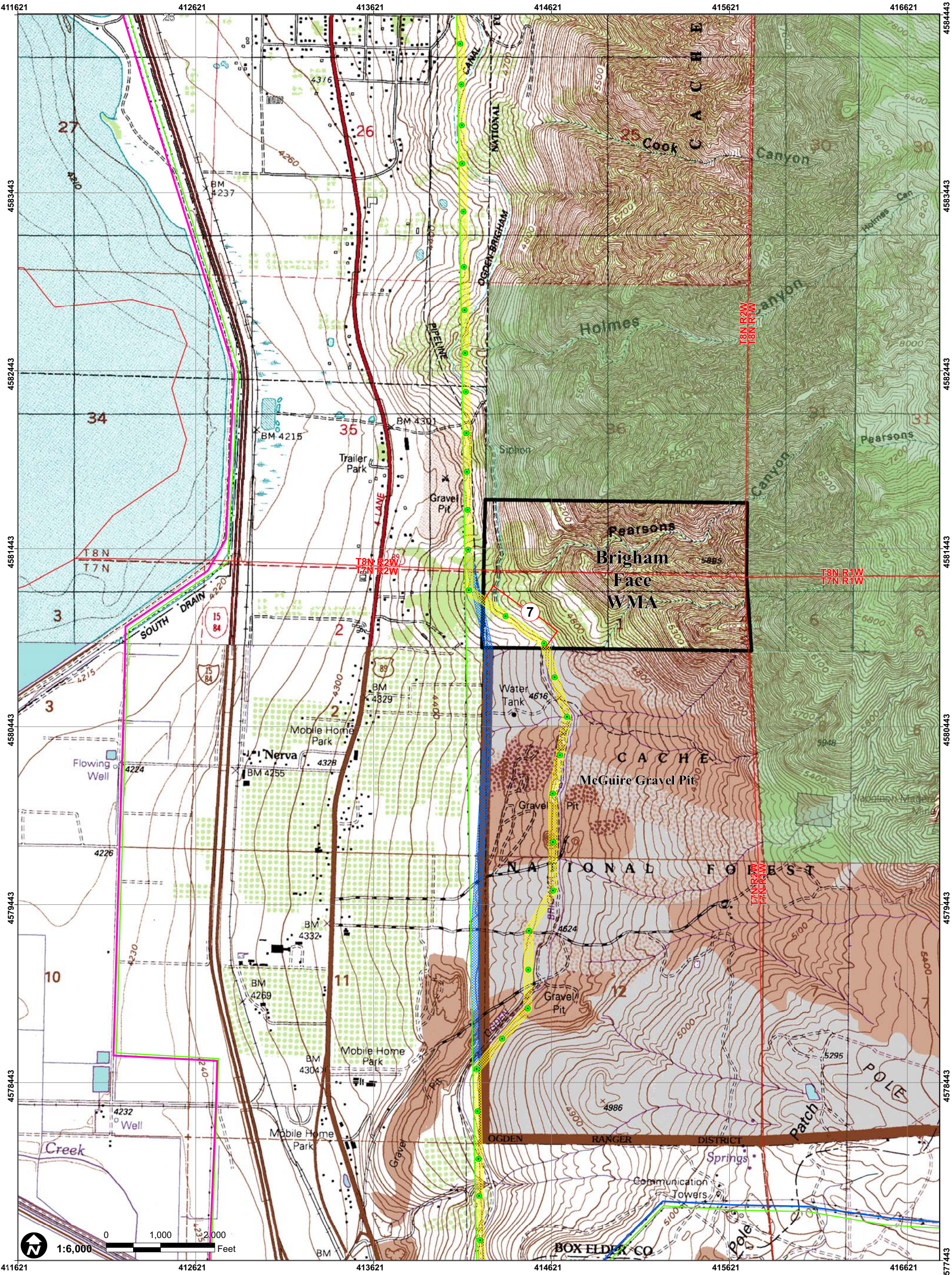
- Existing Transmission Features**
- 138kV Transmission Line
 - ▲ Substation
 - △ Substation

Brigham Face WMA Northern Area

Figure 2

November 26, 2008

SOURCES: Topographic Maps, USGS; Political Boundaries and Transportation, ESRI; Transmission Lines and Substations, PacifiCorp
NOTE: Transmission systems and substation locations are from PacifiCorp GIS Department. Information is schematic and does not necessarily represent accurate locations.



Legend	General Reference Features	Existing Transmission Features
Proposed 345kV Transmission Route	U.S. Forest Service	345kV Transmission Line
Alternative 345kV Transmission Route	Township/Range Line	138kV Transmission Line
Brigham Face WMA Boundary		
Transmission Line Structures (Approximate Location- Structure Locations May Change Upon Further Engineering)		
Transmission Line Segments		

Brigham Face WMA Southern Area

Figure 3

SOURCES: Topographic Maps, USGS, Political Boundaries and Transportation, ESRI, Transmission Lines and Substations, PacifiCorp
 NOTE: Transmission systems and substation locations are from PacifiCorp GIS Department. Information is schematic and does not necessarily represent accurate locations.

November 26, 2008



POPULUS TO BEN LOMOND 345KV TRANSMISSION PROJECT

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Four public open house meetings were held on the following dates at the locations indicated:

January 9, 2008	Brigham City
January 16, 2008	Tremonton City
June 16, 2008	Brigham City
November 12, 2008	Perry City

Public input was also solicited during the following Planning Commission, County Commission, and City Council sessions on the dates indicated:

May 14, 2008	Box Elder County of Governments
May 20, 2008	Brigham City Planning Commission
June 4, 2008	Brigham City Planning Commission
July 15, 2008	Brigham City Planning Commission
July 17, 2008	Box Elder County Planning Commission
August 21, 2008	Willard City Planning Commission
September 30, 2008	Box Elder County Commission

Additional public involvement opportunities included a project website, phone line, and email address.

Relevant issues identified during these efforts are identified below and are addressed in Chapter 3 in this EA. Some issues were not identified in public open house meetings; these issues have been added to the discussion because of regulatory requirements or applicability to the BFWMA.

Biological Resources:

- Potential adverse effects on wildlife associated with the proposed transmission line project include temporary displacement during construction, habitat loss and fragmentation, introduction and spread of noxious and invasive plants, and mortality of individual animals.

Cultural Resources:

- Potential disturbance to cultural resources within the BFWMA from construction and maintenance operations.

Visual Resources:

- The project involves road construction and improvement, vegetation removal, and other activities which could alter the visual character.

Recreation:

- The creation of new access roads has the potential to increase opportunities for unauthorized motorized use in the BFWMA.

Air Quality:

- Construction activities could increase levels of airborne pollutants.

Floodplains, Wetlands and Municipal Watersheds:

- The project could impact floodplains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds.

Prime and Unique Farmlands and Farmlands of Statewide Importance:

- No issues of concern were identified.

Some issues identified during the public involvement efforts were not carried forward for further analysis in this EA. These issues related to the portions of the Project located on private lands and included items such as property value impacts, right-of-way easement compensation, and impacts to future land use development plans.

The Service, Mountain-Prairie Region, will release the draft EA for a 15-day comment period. A news release will be circulated to the affected local area media, and appropriate local, state and federal elected officials. The document will be available on the Service's website at www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/federalassistance. Comments will be analyzed and a determination made as to whether a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is warranted. If a determination is made that the proposed action will have a significant impact on the environment, the Service will prepare an environmental impact statement.