

APPENDIX D

OTHER SPECIAL RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	D-1
2.0	Other Special Resource Considerations and Applicable Mitigation.....	D-1
2.1	Land Use	D-1
2.2	Visual Resources	D-3
2.3	Wild Horses and Burros	D-4
2.4	Noise	D-5

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Appendix D of the COM Plan provides an overview of other special environmental resource considerations associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the projects and mitigation measures to address those considerations. Information included in this appendix addresses existing and planned land use (recreation and grazing), visual resources, wild horses and burros, and noise. Additional information regarding mitigation measures that are applicable to these considerations can also be found in Appendix A – Construction Considerations and in Appendix F – Right-of-Way Preparation, Rehabilitation and Restoration Plan of the COM Plan.

2.0 OTHER SPECIAL RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICABLE MITIGATION

2.1 Land Use

Land use impacts include those that would displace, alter, or otherwise physically affect existing or planned land use. Since the transmission lines are located almost entirely on BLM land and within a designated utility corridor, it is anticipated that these impacts will be associated primarily with short-term effects to recreational users during construction, and limited disturbance to grazing activities and grazing allotments as described below.

2.1.1 Recreation

A primary goal of the BLM is to manage developed and undeveloped recreation experiences and opportunities while also protecting other resources. In general, impacts to recreation use that may occur as a result of the construction and operation of the projects include disturbance and/or disruption to recreational activities, especially during construction (off-highway vehicle use, hunting, hiking, and special events, etc.), and the affects associated with increased long-term public/recreational access.

Key mitigation measures designed to minimize impacts to recreation that will be implemented for the projects include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All supervisory construction personnel will be instructed on key areas of potential concern identified by the BLM, approved mitigation measures, and established protocols regarding encounters with recreational users during construction.
- Notification and updates will be provided to the BLM regarding construction activity locations and times. The Construction Contractor will work directly with the BLM Project Manager to ensure that conflicts with ongoing activities and any special events are avoided or minimized to the degree possible. Signs will be posted in the project areas to notify users of the construction activities (see also Appendix A2 – Transportation Management Plan and Appendix A4 – Flagging, Fencing, and Signage Plan).
- All movement of construction vehicles outside of the right-of-way will be restricted to pre-designated access, contractor-acquired access, or public roads.

- All construction sites and access roads shall be clearly marked or flagged at the outer limits prior to the onset of any surface-disturbing activity. All personnel shall be informed that their activities must be confined within the marked or flagged areas.
- In areas determined to be critical by the BLM Project Manager, speed limit signs will be clearly posted, and these limits will be adhered to by all construction personnel.
- In selective areas, all new access roads not required for operation and maintenance will be permanently closed. At the appropriate time the BLM, in coordination with the Proponent and other potential users of the utility corridor, will determine which of the newly constructed access roads will be closed, restored, or retained. New access roads not required for operation and maintenance of the projects and/or other planned facilities may be closed using the most effective and least environmentally damaging methods appropriate to that area. Where access is to be restored, the practices identified in this COM Plan will be implemented accordingly. This will limit new or improved accessibility into the area.
- Fences and gates will be repaired or replaced to their original undisturbed condition as required by the BLM Project Manager if they are damaged or destroyed by construction activities. New temporary and/or permanent gates will be installed only with the permission of the BLM.

2.1.2 Grazing

The projects cross rangeland suitable for grazing primarily in Lincoln, White Pine and Nye counties. The BLM has established management guidelines for maintaining these rangelands with respect to grazing, the primary focus being the sustained health of rangelands while managing for multiple use(s) and watershed function and health. In order to support the protection of these rangelands, both the Southern Nevada BLM District and the Ely BLM District have established grazing allotments

Key concerns regarding the potential affects to rangelands and grazing allotments are related primarily to the potential for disturbance/harassment of livestock or limiting the movement/working of cattle (e.g., fencing, temporary gates, corrals) during construction, and construction related disturbance that could result in reduction to viable forage. In addition to the mitigation measures identified in Appendix A2 – Transportation Plan, and Appendix F – Right-of-Way Preparation, Rehabilitation and Restoration Plan, several key mitigation measures have been identified to address potential concerns related to grazing that include:

- Prior to construction, the Project Proponent will assist the BLM in the notification of all holders of grazing allotments affected by the transmission line. Information provided to each holder will include a general description of construction activities and the schedule for these activities.
- All supervisory construction personnel will be instructed on current livestock grazing practices and activities in areas potentially affected by construction. Included in this instruction will be policies regarding encounters with livestock or individuals moving or working with livestock, and the protocols and measures to address potential issues associated with grazing.

- Watering facilities (tanks, natural springs and/or developed springs, water lines, wells, etc.) will be repaired or replaced if they are damaged or destroyed by the Construction Contractor to their pre-disturbed condition as required by the BLM Project Manager.
- Fences and gates will be repaired or replaced to their original predisturbed condition as required by the BLM Project Manager if they are damaged or destroyed by construction activities. New temporary and/or permanent gates will be installed only with the permission of the BLM.

2.2 Visual Resources

Visual impacts associated with the construction of the projects include the effects to the quality of scenic resources, and the views from sensitive land use and recreation areas or sites (including scenic travel routes). The BLM has established Visual Resource Management objectives to assist in the management of public lands in a manner that protects the quality of scenic values and directs the level of acceptable change to the landscape. The BLM encourages the development of linear facilities and rights-of-way such as the SWIP – Southern Portion and SWIP – Central Portion in designated areas. Since the transmission lines are located within a designated utility corridor, the visual impacts expected to occur as a result of the projects are based primarily on the introduction of new facilities in areas of higher scenic quality when visible from sensitive viewing locations.

Through the selective location of facilities in a designated corridor, the use of dulled-metal finish on structures, and the use of non-specular conductors these impacts have been minimized to a large degree during the siting, engineering and design of facilities. Additional key mitigation measures and guidelines that will be implemented during the construction of the projects that are designed to reduce visual impacts are identified in other portions of the COM Plan and address minimizing new disturbance, controlling erosion, and restoring disturbed areas (see Appendix A2 – Transportation Plan, Appendix A5 – Erosion, Dust Control and Air Quality Plan, Appendix F – Right- of-Way Preparation, Rehabilitation and Restoration Plan, and others).

Several of the key mitigation measures identified to address potential concerns related to visual resources include but are not limited to, the following:

- In selective areas, no widening or upgrading of existing access roads as defined and identified in this COM Plan (see Volume II, Map Sets 1 and 2) will be undertaken in the area of construction and operation, except for repairs necessary to make roads passable without the filing of a project variance and approval by the BLM and the CIC (refer also to Section 4.0 – Deviations During Construction of the COM Plan).
- In selective areas there would be no blading of new access roads in the area of construction and operation in selective areas. Existing crossings would be utilized at perennial streams, National Recreational Trails, and irrigation channels. Off-road or cross-country access routes would be used for construction and maintenance. This would minimize ground disturbance impacts. These access routes must be flagged with an easily seen marker and the route must be approved in advance of use by the authorized officer.

- In selective areas, the alignment of any new access roads or overland routes that may be identified during construction should follow the designated area's landform contours where possible, providing that such alignment does not additionally impact resource values.
- In selective areas, all new access roads not required for operation and maintenance would be permanently closed. At the appropriate time the BLM, in coordination with the Proponent and other potential users of the utility corridor, will determine which of the newly constructed access roads will be closed, restored, or retained. New access roads not required for operation and maintenance of the projects and/or other planned facilities may be closed using the most effective and least environmentally damaging methods appropriate to that area. Where access is to be restored, the practices identified in this COM Plan will be implemented accordingly. This will limit new or improved accessibility into the area.
- All movement of construction vehicles outside of the right-of-way will be restricted to pre-designated access, contractor-acquired access, or public roads.
- All construction sites and access roads shall be clearly marked or flagged at the outer limits, prior to the onset of any surface-disturbing activity. All personnel shall be informed that their activities must be confined within the marked or flagged areas.
- In construction areas, as specified by the BLM, surface restoration will occur. The method of restoration will normally consist of returning disturbed areas back to their natural contour, reseeding, and the installation of erosion control measures (to the degree possible, and if required).
- To minimize disturbance to timber resources and reduce visual contrast in selective areas, clearing of trees in and adjacent to the right-of-way will be minimized to the extent practicable to satisfy conductor-clearance requirements (National Electric Safety Code and 10 years of timber growth). Trees and other vegetation will be removed selectively (e.g., edge feathering) to blend the edge of the right-of-way into adjacent vegetation patterns, as practicable and appropriate.

2.3 Wild Horses and Burros

Since 1971, the BLM has been managing free-roaming horses and burros on public lands in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act. This Act mandates that wild and free-roaming horses and burros be protected from unauthorized capture, branding, harassment, or death, and furthermore that these animals be considered as an integral part of the natural systems based on their distribution.

In order to support the protection of these animals, the BLM has established Herd Management Areas (HMAs). The desired objective is to manage for sustainable population levels in areas of suitable habitat, while preserving a multiple use relationship with all other resources. While no HMAs have been established by the Southern Nevada BLM District that are affected by the SWIP – Southern Portion, in the Ely District area, two HMAs are crossed by the transmission lines including the Triple B HMA (SWIP – Central Portion) and Silver King HMA (SWIP – Southern Portion). These areas are shown on Figure B2-3 Other Key Biological Concerns Map.

Key concerns regarding the potential affects to wild horses and HMAs are related primarily to the potential for harassment or disturbance based on construction activities associated with the projects, and activities during construction that could result in degradation of habitat, or limiting the free-roaming nature of herds (fencing, etc.). In addition to the mitigation measures identified in other portions of the COM Plan that address minimizing new disturbance (Appendix A2 – Transportation Plan), and right-of-way, rehabilitation, and restoration practices (Appendix F – Right-of-Way Preparation, Rehabilitation and Restoration), several key mitigation measures have been identified to address potential concerns with wild horses that include:

- Prior to construction all supervisory construction personnel will be instructed on the protection of wild horses and the policies regarding encounters with wild horses.
- Watering facilities (tanks, natural springs and/or developed springs, water lines, wells, etc.) will be repaired or replaced if they are damaged or destroyed by the Construction Contractor to their predisturbed condition as required by the BLM Project Manager.
- Fences and gates will be repaired or replaced to their predisturbed condition as required by the BLM Project Manager if they are damaged or destroyed by construction activities. New temporary and/or permanent gates that could limit free-roaming herd activities will be installed only with the permission of the BLM.
- Appropriate signage, designating the potential presence of wild horses will be posted along major construction access roads, at intervals determined with the BLM Project Manager in the Triple B and Silver King HMAs.

2.4 Noise

Some increased level of noise will result from the construction and maintenance of the transmission line. During construction, noise will be generated from equipment used for grading (e.g., access roads, staging areas and towers sites), tower erection activities, helicopters, vehicle movement along the corridor, and blasting. Additionally, noise will be generated during the rehabilitation phase of the projects due to vehicle use and re-vegetation activities, road reclamation, and landform contouring along the right-of-way. These noise levels will be temporary in nature and be primarily isolated to areas of construction. Some low levels of residual audible noise may result from the conductors, a phenomenon referred to as Corona-generated noise.

Potential noise issues may prove disruptive, or a nuisance to wildlife. Mitigation measures designed to restrict the timing of construction in key areas (Greater Sage Grouse, Mule Deer wintering habitat, etc.) are presented in Appendix B2 – Biological Protection Plan to address these concerns. In addition, noise generated concerns related to blasting (where needed) are discussed in Appendix A3 – Blasting Plan Methodology. While primarily rural in location, other potential mitigation measures to be implemented on behalf of local residents in the immediate vicinity of the projects will include:

- The Project Proponent will continue to monitor industry studies performed to determine the effects of audible noise in order to ascertain whether these effects are significant.

- The Project Proponent will respond to complaints of line-generated radio or television interference by investigating the complaints and implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The transmission line will be patrolled on a regular basis so that damaged insulators or other line materials that could cause interference are repaired or replaced.