

Decision Name:	NEPA Determination	
Environmental Project Manager:	Loreen McMahon	
Project Manager:	Krishna Shah	
Executive Sponsor:	Charles Cooper	

## DECISION PAPER -- #1-Amended

### *Trinity-Weaverville 69-kV Transmission Line*

## SNR NEPA Determination

---

### 1. Decision Name

Decision #1-Amended—SNR NEPA Determination.

### 2. Background & Decision Strategy

The Western Area Power Administration embarked on a project to improve electric reliability in Trinity County by establishing a direct interconnection for Trinity PUD with the CVP via direct interconnection with Western's transmission system at Trinity Power Plant. The Sierra Nevada Region made the determination to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) in March 2005.

The US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have requested to be cooperating agencies to partner with us in the analysis of the environmental work for this project. Subsequently, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was developed and approved by all three parties on September 7, 2005. The MOU described the responsibilities between the agencies in the development of an EA.

Since that time, biological ground surveys determined that the right-of-way expansion of the existing line in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest contains designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. In a September 9, 2005 letter to Western, the Forest Service indicated their concerns regarding the NEPA Determination, based on the survey results. They stated: "Based on the likely finding of impacts to the [northern spotted owl] associated with this project and recent case law, it appears to us that the appropriate level of NEPA disclosure, for our collective interest, is an EIS."

SNR staff met with the applicant, Trinity PUD, to discuss the differences between the preparation of an EA versus the preparation of an EIS. Time was determined to be the most critical project element. Both approaches require waiting until spring to perform spotted owl surveys, so the time differences were determined to be minimal. Therefore, Trinity PUD supports the preparation of an EIS.

### 3. Funding Approach

Appropriations.

### 4. Business Benefits

This approach offers the highest level of NEPA analysis and protection. It complies with a procedural need to cooperate with other agencies. It meets the integral elements requirements of the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures.

**5. Risks**

Project risks are reduced to the greatest extent by preparing an EIS, but not eliminated. There is still some risk associated with the critical habitat issue, but Western strategy is to reduce impacts.

**6. Schedule**

It is anticipated that an EIS can be completed by December 2006. Compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the need to proceed with formal Section 7 consultation is the critical path on the schedule. This coordination is required regardless of document type. Weather, seasonal survey requirements, and protocol survey standards for the spotted owl will have the most impact on project schedule.

**7. Communication Strategy**

Signature on this document implies approval of the approach to prepare an Environmental Assessment for the Trinity PUD environmental work. This document will be forwarded to the Administrator for his determination. Subsequently, the cooperating agencies and the public will be informed.

**APPROVAL:**

Loreen McMahon, Environmental Project Manager <i>Loreen McMahon</i>	Date: 11/8/05
Cherie Johnston-Waldear, Acting Environmental Manager <i>Cherie Johnston Waldear</i>	Date: 11/8/05
Krishna Shah, Project Manager <i>Krishna Shah</i>	Date: 11/8/05
Charles Cooper, Maintenance Manager <i>Charles W. Cooper</i>	Date: 11/8/05
Jim Keselburg, SNR Regional Manager <i>Jim Keselburg</i>	Date: 11/8/05