

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Record of Decision for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project Final Environmental Impact Statement



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Pacific Northwest Region
Boise, Idaho**

February 2018

Mission Statements

Department of the Interior

Protecting America's Great Outdoors and Powering Our Future

The Department of the Interior protects America's natural resources and heritage, honors our cultures and tribal communities, and supplies the energy to power our future.

Bureau of Reclamation

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Description
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
B2H	Boardman to Hemingway
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DOI	Department of the Interior
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FAST Act	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
kV	kilovolt
MW	megawatts
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Fisheries	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
OID	Owyhee Irrigation District
PA	Programmatic Agreement
POD	Plan of Development
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
WSA	Wilderness Study Area
WSR	Wild and Scenic River

1 Introduction

Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) action selected in this Record of Decision (ROD) is to issue a Use Authorization for the Idaho Power Company (Applicant) to construct, operate, and maintain the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Agency Preferred Alternative across Reclamation-administered lands, as described in the BLM's Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project (B2H Project) Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS). Reclamation's use authorization will be issued in conformance with the Act of Congress of June 17, 1902 (32 Stat. 388), the Act of Congress approved August 4, 1939 (53 Stat. 1187), Section 10, and 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 429 to respond to a request for use authorizations on Reclamation-administered Federal lands.

Reclamation's ROD adopts the BLM's Final EIS. Reclamation concurs with the selection of the BLM's Agency Preferred Alternative identified in the BLM Final EIS (Maps 2-8a and 2-8b). The B2H Transmission Line will follow guidelines and stipulations outlined for BLM-administered lands during construction, operation, and maintenance of the 293-mile, single-circuit, 500-kilovolt (kV) alternating-current transmission line, as described in the BLM ROD EIS.

Reclamation concludes that the Agency Preferred Alternative, as identified by the BLM Final EIS, fulfills its statutory mission and responsibilities, giving consideration to economic, environmental, technical, and other factors. In its analysis of the alternatives in the Final EIS, BLM considered effects on public lands managed by the BLM, as well as effects on private lands and lands managed by agencies other than the BLM, including Reclamation.

The Reclamation was a Cooperating Agency in the preparation of the Final EIS. Per 43 CFR 1506.3(d), Reclamation's comments and suggestions were incorporated and analyzed in the EIS. Per 40 CFR 1506.3 and 43 CFR 46.120, "an agency may adopt a Federal draft or Final EIS or portion thereof provided that the statement or portion thereof meets the standards for an adequate statement under their regulations." Reclamation affirms that the BLM's EIS meets all requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality, Department of Interior (DOI), and Reclamation for preparation of an EIS.

1.1 Project Overview

The Applicant proposes to construct, operate, and maintain the B2H Project, which is a 293-mile-long, single-circuit, 500-kV, alternating-current, overhead electric transmission line and ancillary facilities, also referred to in this document as the Proposed Action. The transmission line would be constructed within a right-of-way, which has an estimated width of 250 feet, to connect the northern terminus, the Longhorn Substation, at Boardman, Oregon, to the Hemingway Substation near Melba, Idaho. The Longhorn Substation is planned by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) approximately 4 miles east of the city of Boardman, in Morrow County, Oregon. The Hemingway Substation is an existing substation west of the city of Melba, in Owyhee County, Idaho.

Permanent facilities would include:

- A single-circuit, 500-kV, electric transmission line (including structures and conductors, and other associated facilities) between the proposed Longhorn Substation and the existing Hemingway Substation

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- Access roads and access control gates
 - Communication regeneration site every 40 miles
 - Removal of approximately 7 miles of the existing Boardman Line to Tap 69-kV transmission line
 - Re-routing of 0.9 miles of the existing Quartz Line to Tap 230-kV transmission line
 - Developing access roads

The proposed transmission line would cross Federal, state, and private lands in five counties in Oregon and one county in Idaho (Figure 1). A total of 293 miles of transmission line would be constructed as part of the proposed action, of which approximately 1 mile crosses Reclamation-administered lands, representing less than 1 percent of the total 101 miles of Federally managed land within the project boundary. Construction of the B2H Project is planned to begin in 2020, with power delivery scheduled to begin between 2023 and 2025. The B2H Project will be constructed in two geographic segments. Both construction segments are planned to occur simultaneously and are anticipated to take approximately 3 years to complete, followed by revegetation and reclamation activities.

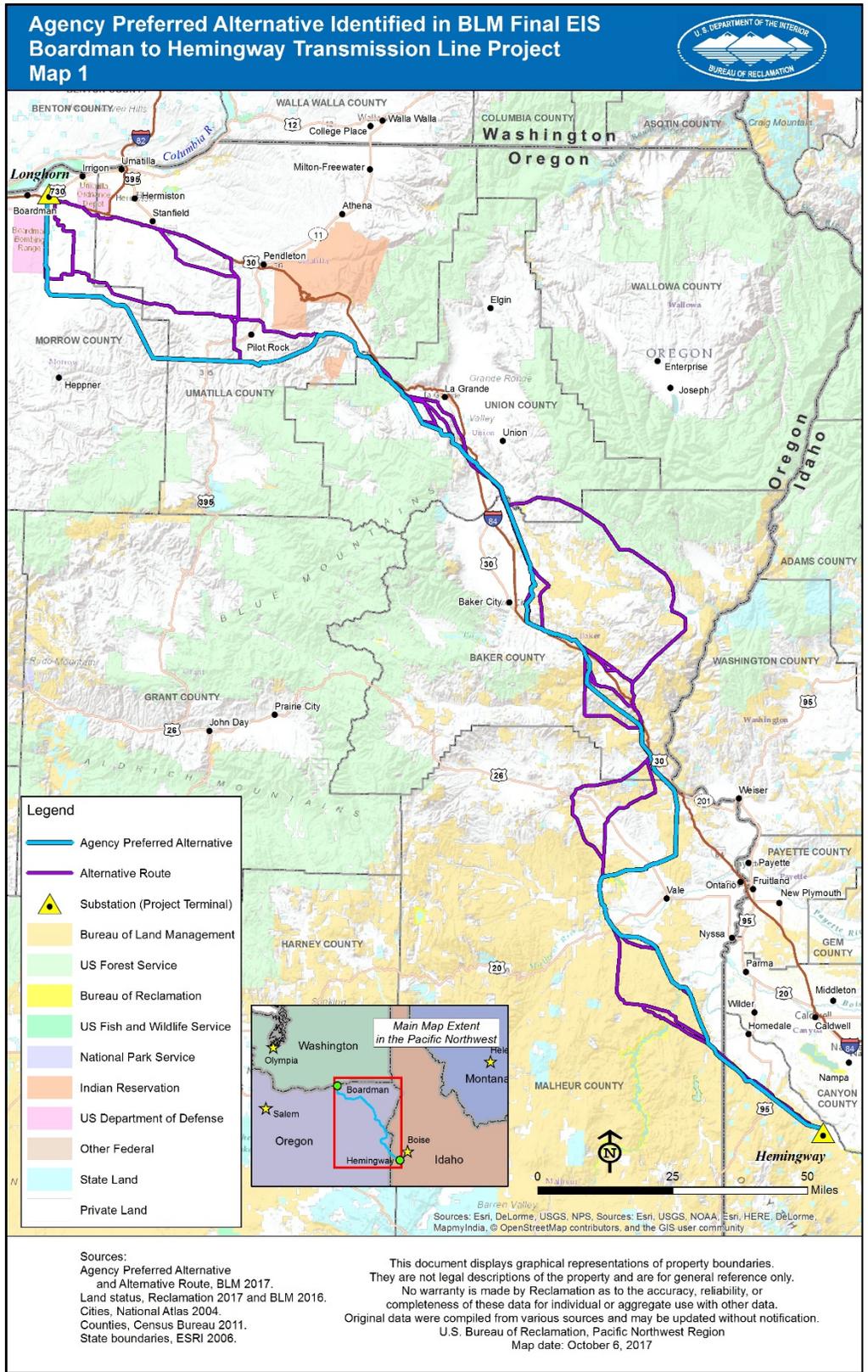


Figure 1. Map 1 – Agency Preferred Alternative identified in the BLM Final EIS

Rules implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) expressly require that an EIS identify and address appropriate mitigation measures in its discussion of environmental consequences and that the associated ROD state whether all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the selected alternative have been adopted, and if not, why. Consistent with those requirements, mitigation and monitoring measures were identified by the Applicant in the Draft Plan of Development (POD) and were developed through the NEPA process to avoid or minimize resource impacts.

The B2H Project includes design features of the Proposed Action for environmental protection and agency-required mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS (Table 2-7 and 2-13, respectively); terms and conditions of the Programmatic Agreement (PA) (refer to Appendix I of BLM's Final EIS); conservation measures in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries (National Marine Fisheries Service) biological assessments; and the NOAA Fisheries Biological Opinion and USFWS letter of concurrence.

After final design and engineering on Reclamation lands, a final Reclamation-approved POD for construction will be required to incorporate all of the mitigation measures required by this ROD, including those identified in the Draft POD. Additionally, as the lead Federal agency for implementing NEPA, the BLM will require the Applicant to post a financial security (such as a surety bond, letter of credit, etc.) with the BLM in an amount sufficient to cover all post-fieldwork costs associated with implementing the Historic Properties Management Plan (i.e., cultural bond), or other mitigation activities, to be required by the Applicant when they contract for services in support of the B2H Project's Programmatic Agreement (PA) for reclamation requirements and activities. The PA is a legally binding document that identifies the terms and conditions agree on by the Applicant to fulfill the lead agency's compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA in accordance with 36 CFR 800.16(t)

1.2 Purpose and Need

The Applicant's purpose for the B2H Project is to provide additional electrical load capacity between the Pacific Northwest region and the Intermountain region of southwestern Idaho. The Applicant's B2H Project would alleviate existing transmission constraints and ensure sufficient electrical capacity to meet present and forecasted customer needs.

Reclamation's purpose and need is to consider the application for a use authorization and to determine whether to grant, grant with modifications, or deny the Applicant's application for use of Reclamation managed lands to construct, operate, and maintain the B2H Project. Reclamation's use authorization may be issued when it is determined that the proposed B2H Project is compatible with authorized Reclamation project purposes, operations, safety, and security.

1.3 Reclamation's Authority

Authorization from Reclamation, a cooperating agency with legal jurisdiction to manage its lands, is required for features of the B2H Project that would be located on or cross over Reclamation lands or facilities. The Reclamation Act of June 17, 1902, as amended and supplemented, 32 Stat. 388; 43 U.S.C. 391, et seq., provides for Reclamation authority to review and to approve or deny use of Reclamation-administered lands. Reclamation's regulations set forth a process for application and agency consideration of use authorizations under 43 CFR Part 429 (Use of Bureau of Reclamation Land, Facilities, and Waterbodies). The DOI's regulations at 43 CFR 46.20(d) allow the responsible

official, who is the Regional Director in this case, to render a decision on a proposed action as long as it is within the range of alternatives discussed in the relevant environmental document. To this end, Reclamation would issue a license for use of United States fee lands under Reclamation’s jurisdiction and would consent to the use where the United States holds a less-than-fee interest (such as an exercise of 1890s reserved right-of-way, exercise of similar state reservations, reserved rights-of-way from land sales, or acquired easement rights). Reclamation’s use authorization document outlines the criteria for the use of the lands under Reclamation’s administration, including but not limited to duration and terms of use.

Approval of the Selected Alternative will require an amendment of the Owyhee Reservoir Resource Management Plan (Owyhee Reservoir RMP¹).

1.4 Other Applicable Laws

As part the Department of the Interior, both the BLM and Reclamation consider the direction and objectives established by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which requires the Secretary of the Interior to both designate energy corridors and seek to expedite applications to construct transmission lines within such corridors in order “to take into account the need for upgraded and new transmission and distribution facilities to (1) improve reliability; (2) relieve congestion; and (3) enhance the capability of the national grid to deliver electricity” (42 U.S.C. 15926.).

The B2H Project is covered by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The approval of the B2H Project also would help meet these objectives of the Act. The President’s Climate Action Plan set a goal of developing 20,000 MW of renewable energy on public lands by 2020. In December 2015, Congress passed the FAST Act. Title 41 of the FAST Act creates a new entity – the Federal Permitting Improvement Council – to oversee the cross-agency Federal permitting and review process. It also expands the scope of projects for which reviews will be accelerated by adding new agencies (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Nuclear Regulatory Commission) and infrastructure sectors (conventional energy generation and manufacturing), and establishes new procedures that standardize interagency consultation and coordination practices. Other FAST Act provisions addressing the project delivery process and tracking environmental review and permitting milestones are set out in Title I and Title IX.

A detailed list of applicable resource specific laws and regulations are provided in BLM’s ROD. Reclamation will comply with the laws and regulations to the extent that Reclamation is subject to them.

1.5 Relationship with Other Plans, Policies, and Programs

Reclamation is responsible for administering and operating congressionally authorized Reclamation projects. The ROD requires Reclamation to make a decision whether to issue license(s) within Reclamation’s project boundaries for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the transmission line by Idaho Power Company. The B2H Project crosses Reclamation’s Owyhee, Vale, and Umatilla Projects. Of the three projects, only the Owyhee Reservoir within the Owyhee Project has a Resource Management Plan. The Owyhee Reservoir RMP encompasses approximately 26,190 acres of land and 12,740-acres of water surface.

¹ Bureau of Reclamation. 1994. Owyhee Reservoir Resource Management Plan, Pacific Northwest Region, Central Snake Projects Office.

The Owyhee Reservoir RMP provides that Reclamation has the authority to review requests and grant rights-of-way across its withdrawn lands and acquired land and land rights and facilities related to a Reclamation project. The management guidelines set constraints under which these types of action can be authorized. The constraints include:

- Avoiding proliferation of separate rights-of-way; encourage applicants to locate new facilities in existing corridors.
- Avoiding rights-of-way use within ¼-mile of special status species use sites.
- Excluding wild and scenic river corridors from rights-of-way use.
- Avoiding rights-of-way use in areas having high or sensitive visual resource qualities.
- Avoiding wetland/riparian protection areas.
- Confining additional facilities to existing corridors; evaluate the feasibility of a facility upgrade before allowing new facility construction.
- Minimizing the area necessary for operation and maintenance rights-of-way.

Management Actions developed for the Owyhee Reservoir RMP require applicants to fund right-of-way clearance studies/inventories for special status species, cultural resources, etc., prior to review and approval by Reclamation. In addition, applicants must submit the Final POD (plans, maps, and other information related to the proposal) for Reclamation evaluation and approval.

Consistent with NEPA and based on the analysis in the BLM's Final EIS, Reclamation will amend the Owyhee Reservoir RMP, December 30, 1994, to modify visual resource restrictions on rights-of-way by including the following language to Section 6.5.7:

The 250-foot wide right-of-way for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Project within an area of high quality visual resources to the north and outside of the Owyhee River Below the Dam ACEC located in portions of:

Township 21S, Range 45E, Sections 13 NWSE and

Township 21S, Range 45E, Section 24 E2SENE

is amended to allow portions of the B2H Project with application of all feasible measures to reduce impacts on visual resources.

With the amendment, the B2H project will conform to the approved RMP.

Although RMPs have not been completed for either the Umatilla or Vale Projects, Reclamation reviews proposals in these project areas to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policy while allowing for appropriate development, adhering to Reclamation project authorizations without undue degradation of resources.

Where a Reclamation Project facility has been constructed, under its authorities, on land where Reclamation lacks authority to provide a use authorization and such authority is held by the BLM, Reclamation will work cooperatively with the BLM so that the issuance of a right-of-way grant or lease will safeguard Reclamation's interests. Decisions resulting from cooperation will address: 1) questions regarding whether the grant should be provided; 2) modification of the grant location from the location applied for, to protect and ensure non-interference in the use, operation, and maintenance of the facility constructed for Reclamation project purposes; and 3) terms, conditions, and stipulations for the grant.

2 Reclamation Lands Related to the Project

The B2H Project area is organized into the same six segments broadly described in the Draft EIS and Final EIS, and is based generally on similar geography, natural features, drainages, resources, and/or land uses. Of those segments, only the four segments that cross Reclamation lands will be addressed in this ROD (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The B2H Project segments that cross Reclamation lands, from north to south, are as follows:

- Segment 1 – Morrow-Umatilla
- Segment 4 – Brogan
- Segment 5 – Malheur
- Segment 6 – Treasure Valley

Agency Preferred Alternative - Segment 1 Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project Map 2a

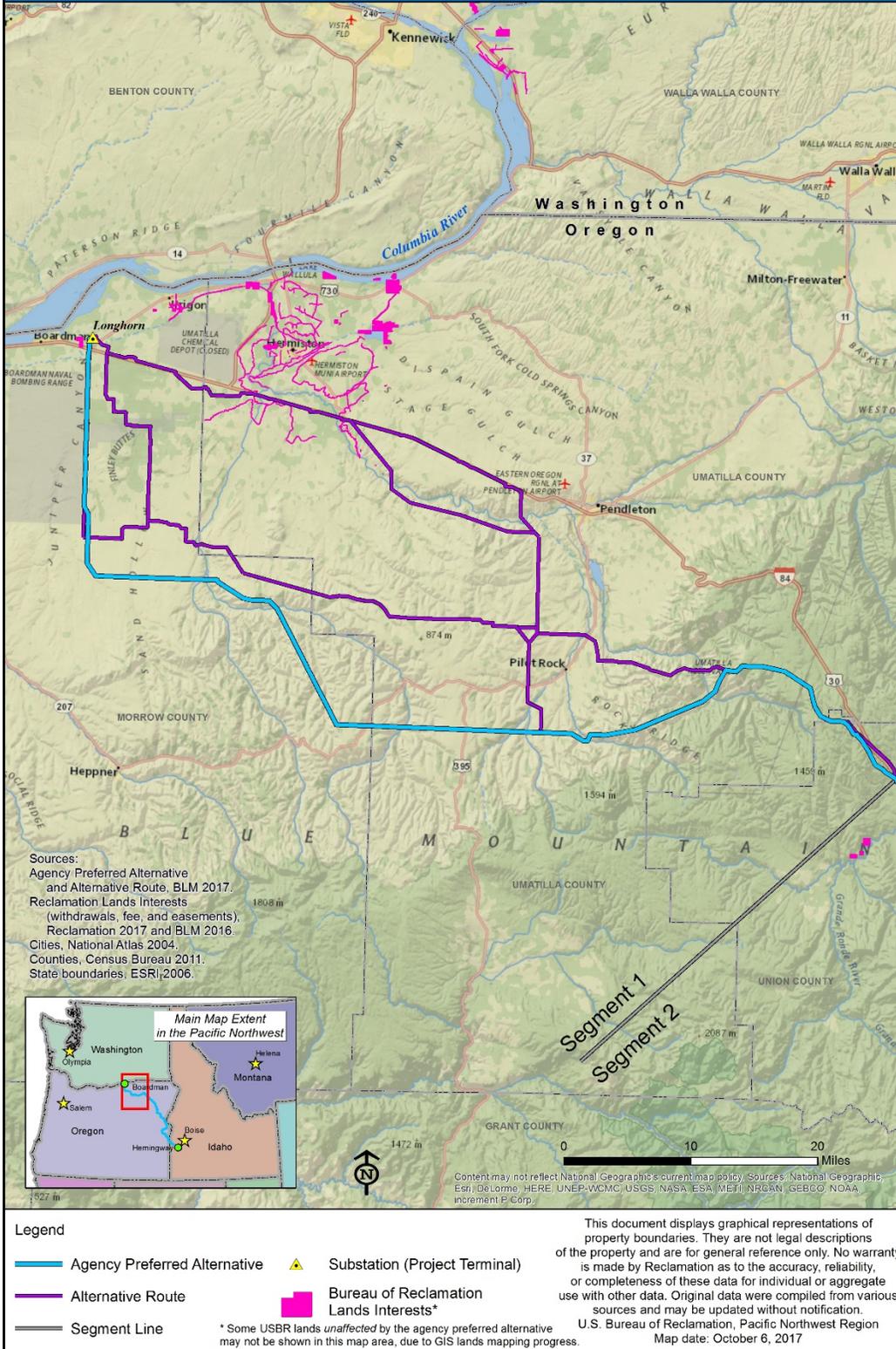


Figure 2. Map 2a – Segment 1 of the Agency Preferred Alternative

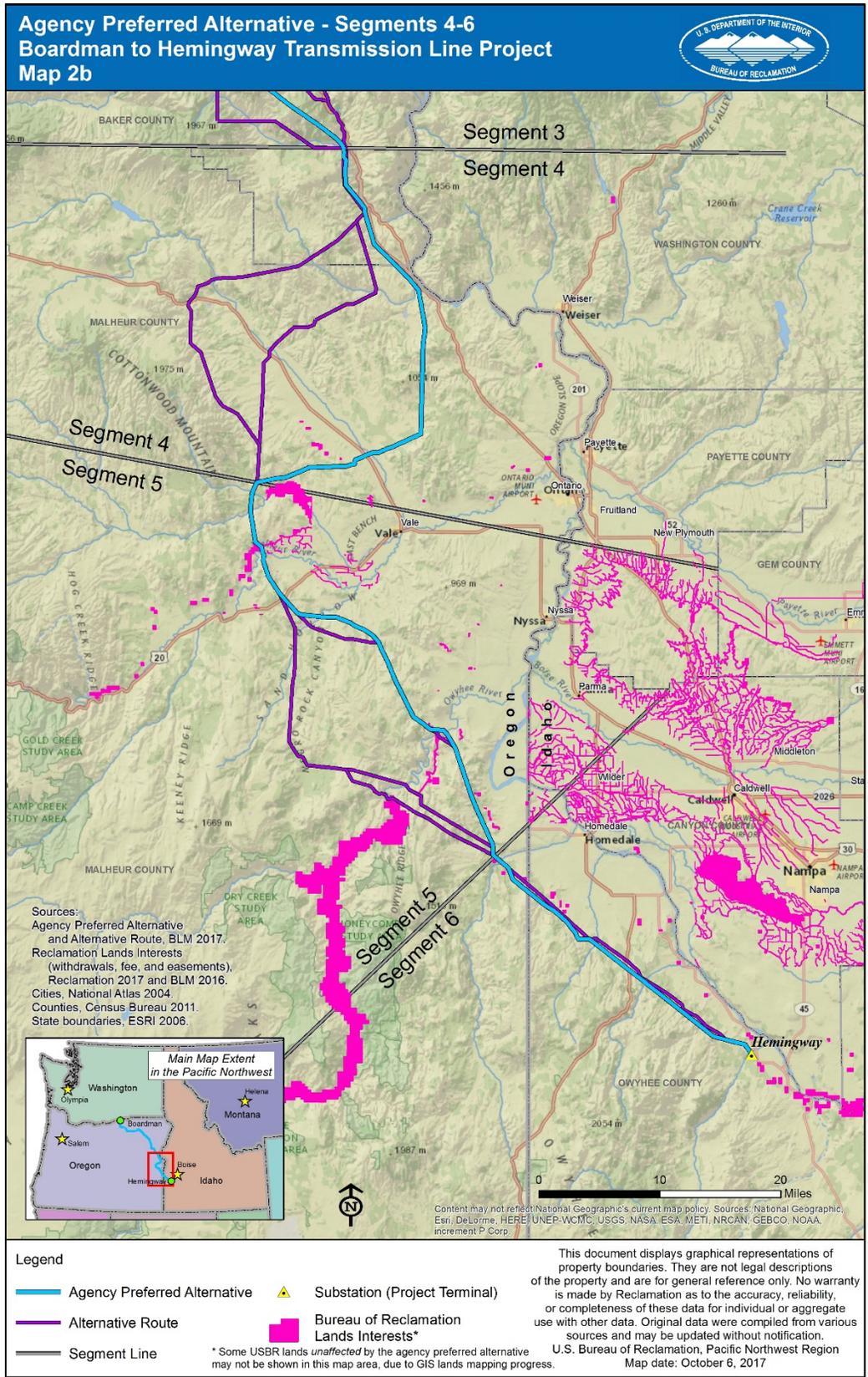


Figure 3. Map 2b – Segments 4 through 6 of the Agency Preferred Alternative

Table 1. Description of Reclamation Crossings and Ownership

Segment Number	Crossing Number on Figures	Type of Crossing	Reclamation Facility	Type of United States Land Interest
1	1	TLC ¹	West Extension Main Canal	Reclamation Acquired – Fee Right-of-Way
4	2	TLC	Willow Creek Lateral	Reclamation Acquired – Fee Right-of-Way
4	3	TLC	Lateral 455	Reclamation Acquired – Fee Right-of-Way
4	4	TLC	Lateral 278	Reclamation Acquired – Fee Right-of-Way
4	5	TLC	Vale Main Canal	Reclamation Right-of-Way/BLM Administration ²
5	6	Access Road	None	Reclamation Withdrawal
5	7	TLC and Access Road	Vale Main Canal	Reclamation Withdrawal
5	8	TLC	Land Only	Reclamation Withdrawal
5	9	TLC	North Canal	Reclamation Right-of-Way/BLM Administration
5	10	TLC	Land Only	Reclamation Acquired – Fee Right-of-Way
5	11	TLC	Land Only	Reclamation Withdrawal
5	12	TLC	Kingman Lateral	Reclamation Right-of-Way/BLM Administration
5	13	TLC	South Canal Tunnel #5	Reserved Right-of-Way
5	14	TLC	South Canal	Reserved Right-of-Way
6	15	TLC	South Canal	Reclamation Withdrawal
6	16	TLC	South Canal	Reserved Right-of-Way
6	17	TLC	South Canal	Reserved Right-of-Way
6	18	TLC	South Canal	Reclamation Right-of-Way/BLM Administration

Segment Number	Crossing Number on Figures	Type of Crossing	Reclamation Facility	Type of United States Land Interest
6	19	TLC	South Canal	Reserved Right-of-Way
6	20	TLC	South Canal	Reserved Right-of-Way
6	21	TLC	South Canal	Reclamation Right-of-Way/BLM Administration
6	22	Access Road	Road	Reclamation Withdrawal
6	23	Access Road	Road	Reclamation Withdrawal
6	24	Access Road	Road	Reclamation Withdrawal

¹TLC = transmission line crossing

² Locations identified as Reclamation Right-of-Way/BLM Administration are locations where the two agencies will cooperate to protect Bureau of Reclamation project facilities in the Right-of Way document generated by the BLM.

2.1 Segment 1 – Morrow-Umatilla

Segment 1 (Figure 2) begins at the planned Longhorn Substation in Morrow County, Oregon, and ends west of La Grande in Union County, Oregon. The three alternative routes and one local route variation in Segment 4 are shown on Map 2-7d of the Final EIS. Figure 4 shows the crossing on Reclamation-administered land in this segment.

**Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
Affected Bureau of Reclamation Property Interests
Selected Alternative Individual Locations**

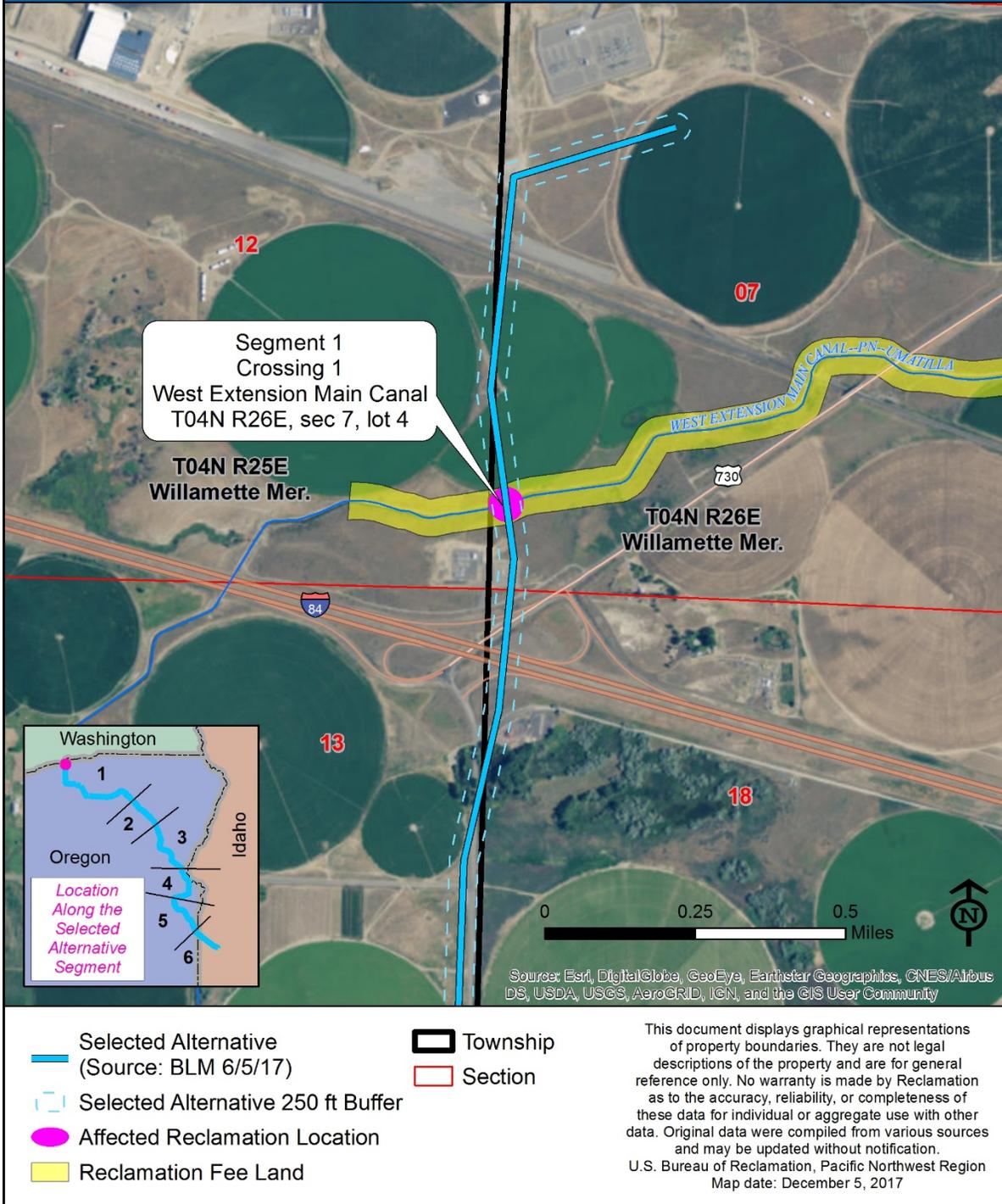


Figure 4. Segment 1 Crossing 1

The selected alternative consists of a single transmission line crossing (Crossing 1) over lands subject to Reclamation’s administration, the right-of-way for the West Extension of the Main Canal of the Umatilla Project.

The Umatilla project, located in northeastern Oregon, was authorized in 1905. It is operated and maintained by four irrigation districts. Storage facilities for the project include the Cold Springs and McKay Dams. Diversion facilities include the Three Mile Falls Dam and the Feed Canal Diversion Dam. The McKay Dam and Reservoir under Public Law 94-228 Title III was reauthorized for the purposes of irrigation, flood control, fish and wildlife, recreation, and to address safety issues.

In 1988, the Umatilla Basin Project Act was passed for the purpose of mitigating the loss of anadromous fishery resources on the Umatilla River while continuing water service to irrigated lands².

B2H facilities will cross Reclamation-administered lands devoted to irrigated agriculture and dryland farming.

2.2 Segment 2 – Blue Mountains

There are no Reclamation-managed lands in this segment.

2.3 Segment 3 – Baker Valley

There are no Reclamation-managed lands in this segment.

2.4 Segment 4 – Brogan

Segment 4 (Figure 3) begins at a point just south of Dixie in Baker County, Oregon, and ends to a point south of Jamieson in Malheur County, Oregon. The three alternative routes and one local route variation in Segment 4 are shown on Map 2-7d of the Final EIS. The selected alternative for transmission line will cross Reclamation fee lands (Crossings 2, 3 and 4) and public lands withdrawn for Reclamation purposes (the Vale Main canal, Crossing 5), as shown on Figure 5 and Figure 6.

² U.S. Government Publishing Office. 1996. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-104srpt387/html/CRPT-104srpt387.htm>. (Accessed July 28, 2017)

**Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
Affected Bureau of Reclamation Property Interests
Selected Alternative Individual Locations**

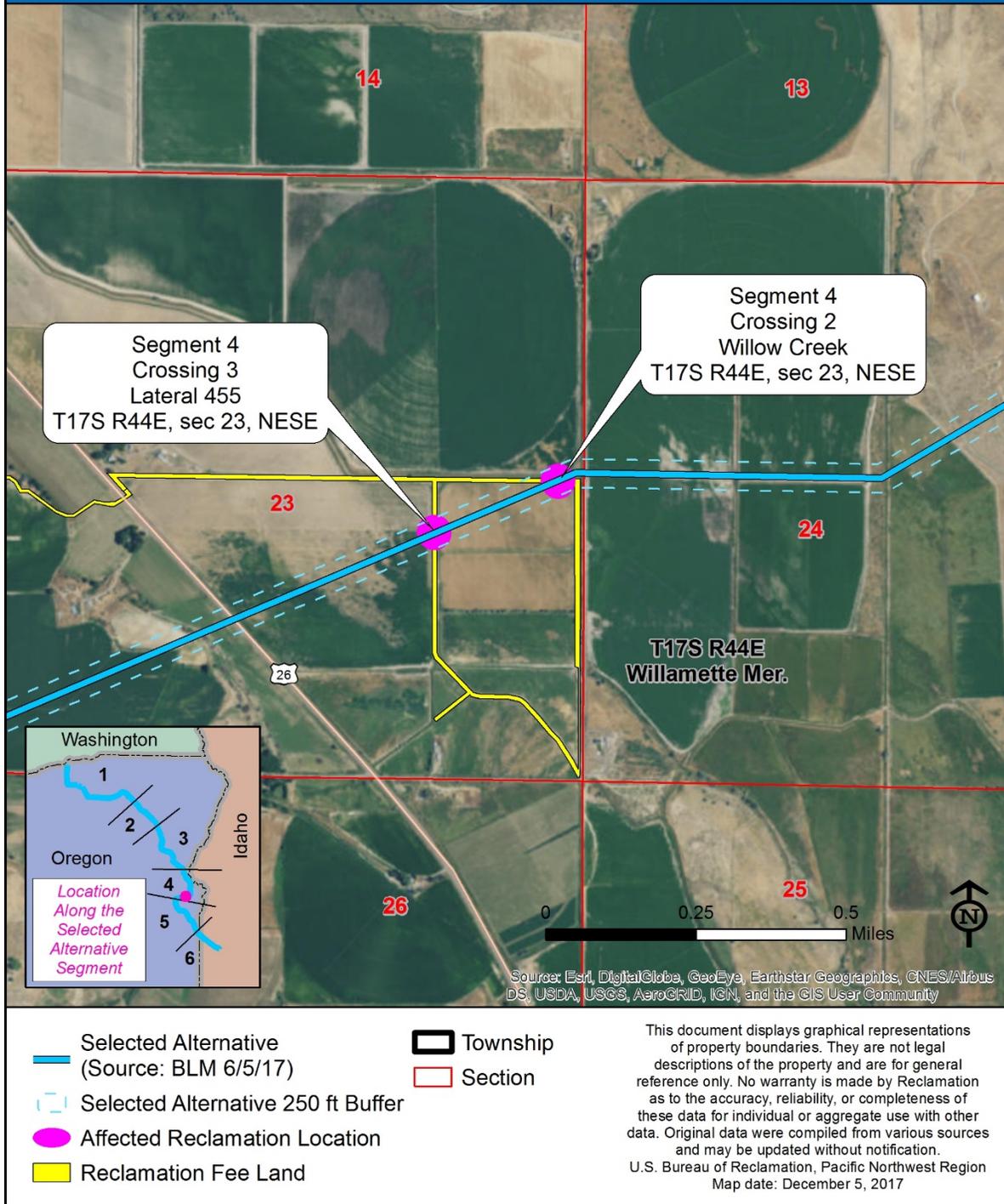


Figure 5. Segment 4 Crossings 2 and 3

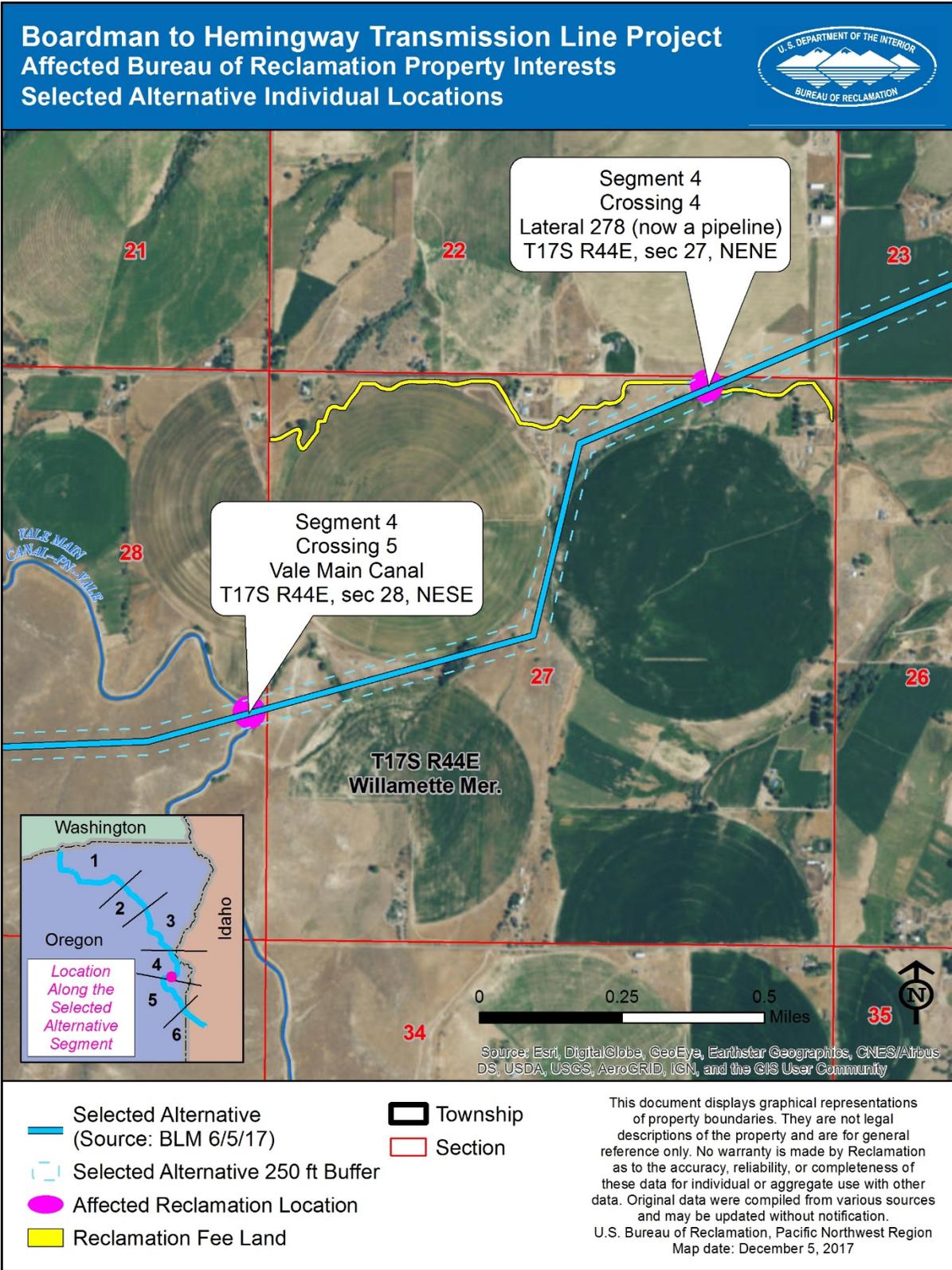


Figure 6. Segment 4 Crossings 4 and 5

The Vale Project was authorized in October 1926 to supply irrigation water to 35,000 acres lying adjacent to the confluence of the Malheur River and Willow Creek, near the town of Vale. The Malheur River is the main water supply for the project, with additional storage being diverted from Warm Springs, Beulah, and Bully Creek Reservoirs. (USBR 1993).

Reclamation administered lands crossed in this segment are primarily farm lands along Willow Creek characterized by irrigated agriculture and some dryland farming. The vegetation/habitat outside the agricultural areas is predominantly grassland/shrubland and sagebrush.

2.5 Segment 5 – Malheur

Segment 5 begins at a point south of Jamieson in Malheur County, Oregon, and ends at a point 3 miles west of the Oregon-Idaho border. Figure 3 identifies Reclamation-administered lands within Segment 5. The three alternative routes and two local route variations in Segment 5 are shown on Map 2-7e of the Final EIS. The selected alternative includes nine crossings of Reclamation-administered lands, as shown in Figures 7 through 11 of this ROD.

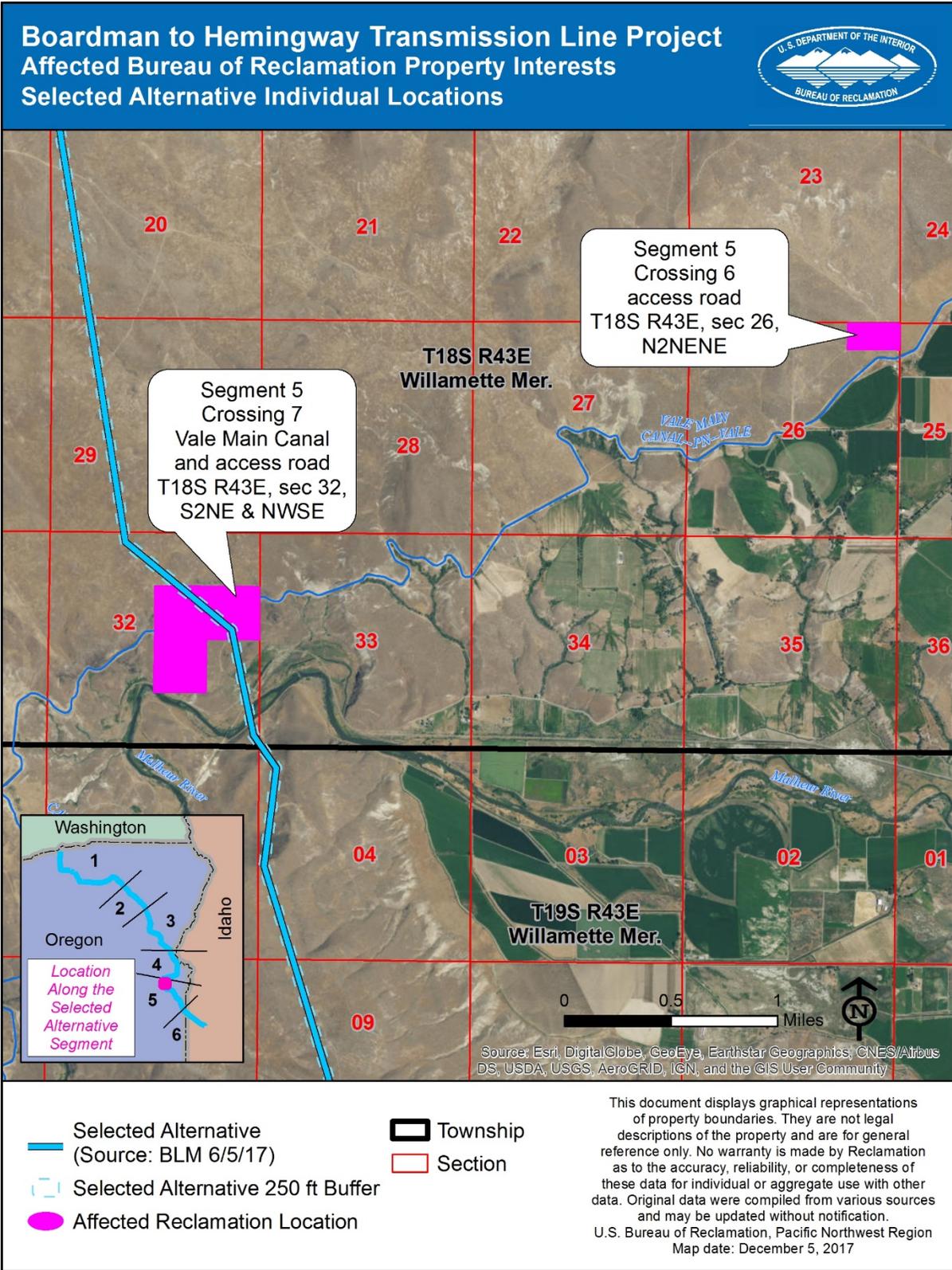


Figure 7. Segment 5 Crossings 6 and 7

**Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
Affected Bureau of Reclamation Property Interests
Selected Alternative Individual Locations**

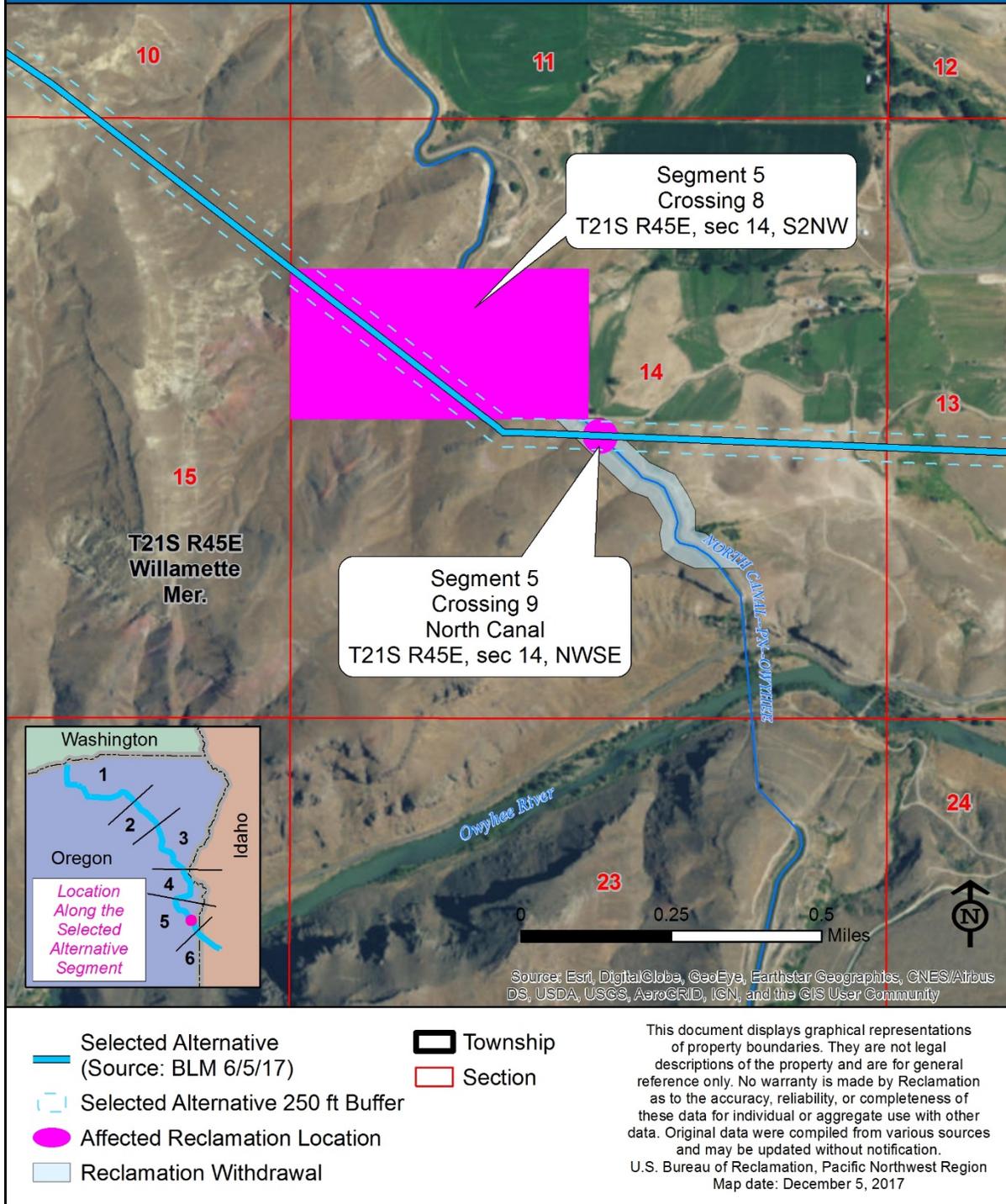


Figure 8. Segment 5 Crossings 8 and 9

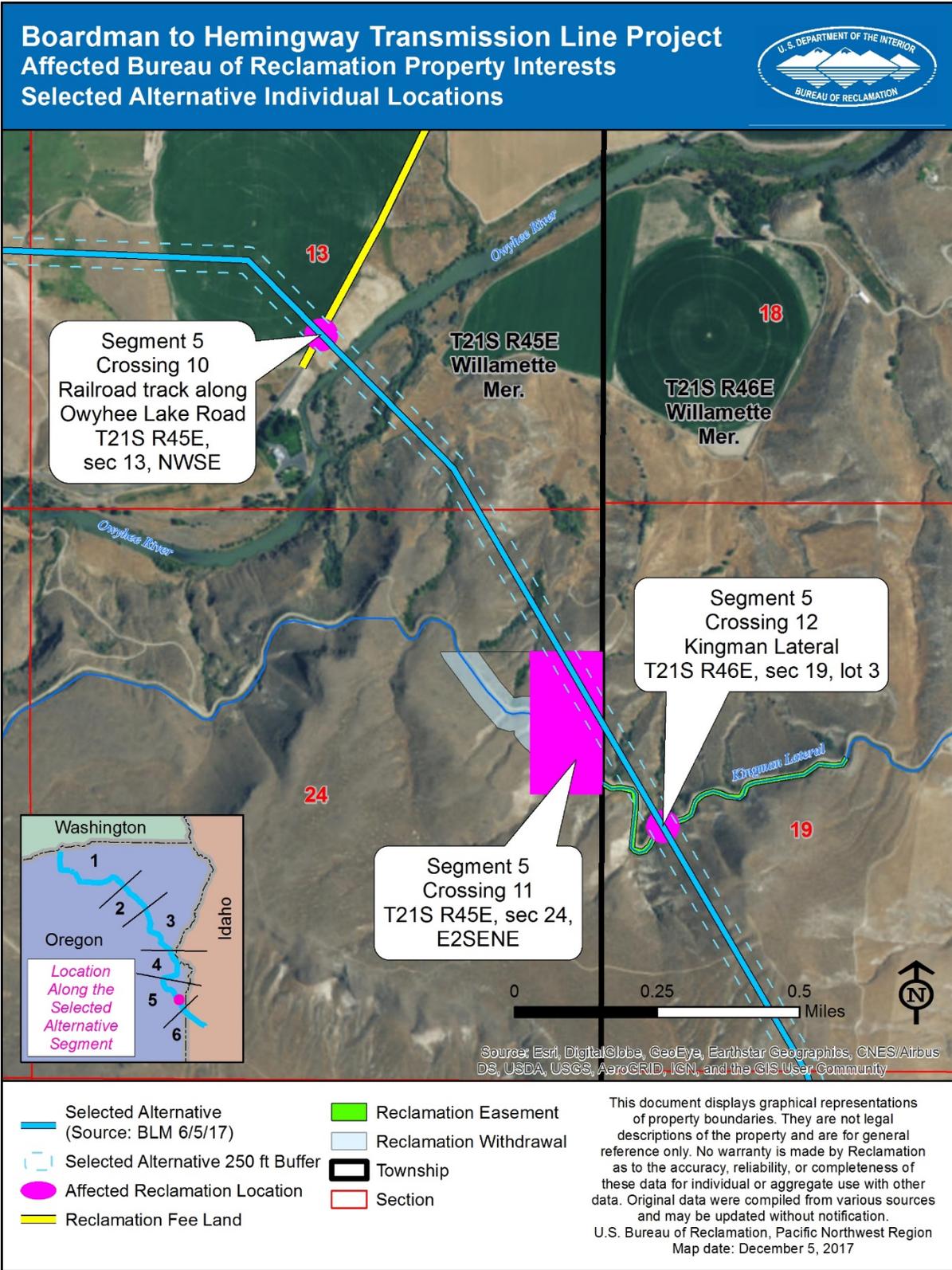
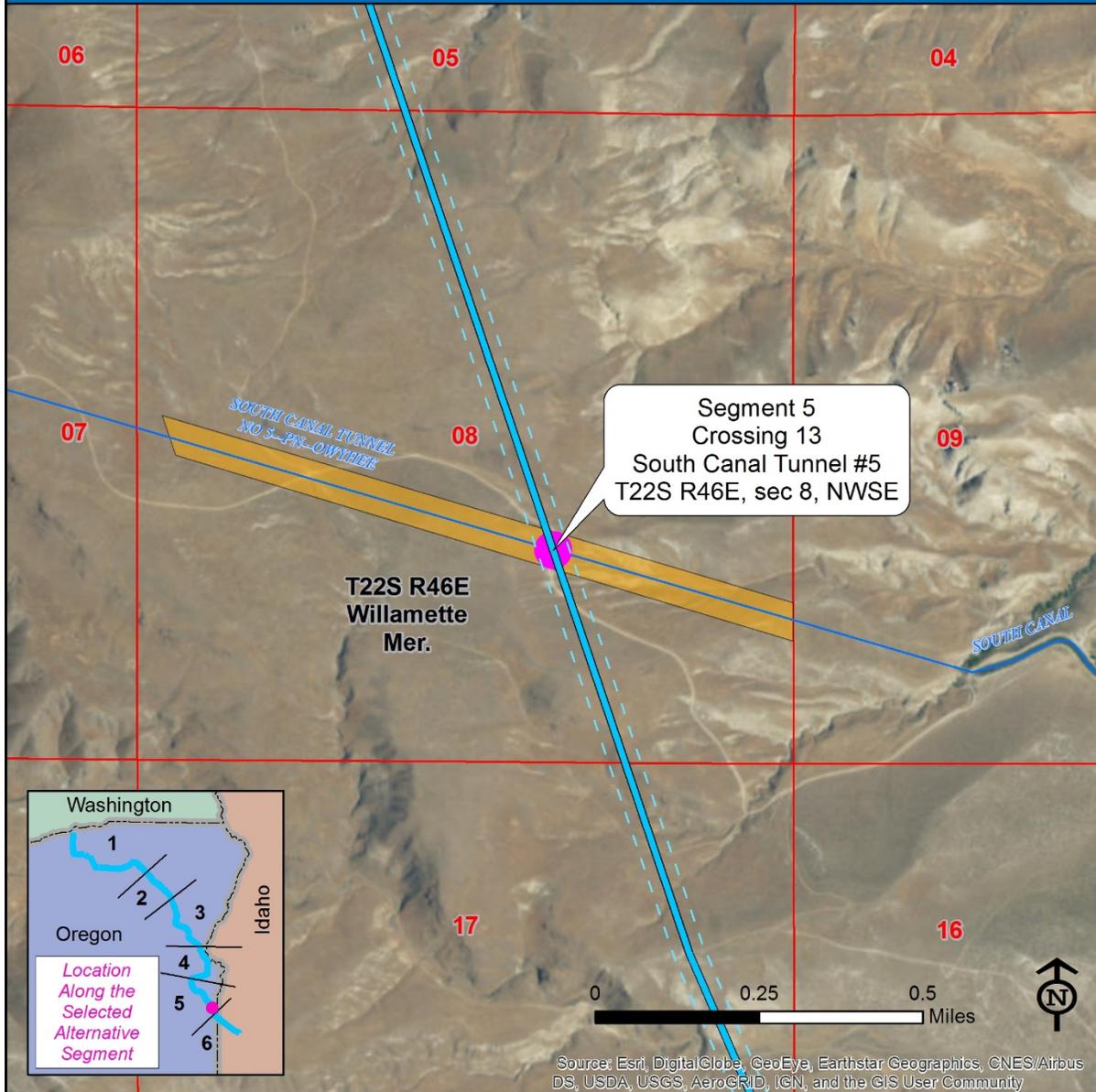


Figure 9. Segment 5 Crossings 10, 11, and 12

**Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
Affected Bureau of Reclamation Property Interests
Selected Alternative Individual Locations**



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

- Selected Alternative (Source: BLM 6/5/17)
- Selected Alternative 250 ft Buffer
- Affected Reclamation Location
- Reclamation ROW
- Section

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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Pacific Northwest Region
Map date: December 5, 2017

Figure 10. Segment 5 Crossing 13

The Owyhee Project was authorized in 1926 to supply irrigation water to 105,000 acres lying along the west side of the Snake River in eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho. The reservoir is located in a rugged canyon and provides a scenic backdrop for recreational opportunities. The reservoir is a well-known warm-water fishery. Developed recreation facilities are available on the reservoir.

This remote area borders a number of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) and three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) known as Leslie Gulch, the Owyhee River, and the Honeycombs, which are adjacent to Reclamation lands. These designations are for BLM-managed lands, but the designations influence how Reclamation administers the lands. The Owyhee River ACEC encompasses 30,400 acres within the Owyhee Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Corridor (Public Law 90-542). The area contains a number of petroglyphs, rock shelters, caves, and cultural artifacts. The RMP outlines specific restrictions and management for the corridor. Non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics are present in the segment. According to the BLM Final EIS and Reclamation Owyhee RMP, these lands have high scenic values.

The selected alternative avoids an area identified as suitable for designation as a WSR Corridor in accordance with Act. Reclamation lands crossed in this segment are primarily used for livestock grazing.

2.6 Segment 6 – Treasure Valley

Segment 6 begins at a point approximately 3 miles west of the Oregon-Idaho border and ends at the Hemingway Substation in Owyhee County, Idaho. One route and two local route variations in Segment 6 are shown on Map 2-7e of the Final EIS. Figure 3 identifies Reclamation-administered lands in this Segment.

The selected alternative has seven crossings over U.S. and private lands via reserved rights and easements for the South Owyhee Canal. One powerline crossing and three access road crossings on Reclamation withdrawn lands are shown in Figures 11 through 13 of this ROD.

Reclamation lands crossed within Segment 6 are devoted to livestock grazing.

Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project Affected Bureau of Reclamation Property Interests Selected Alternative Individual Locations

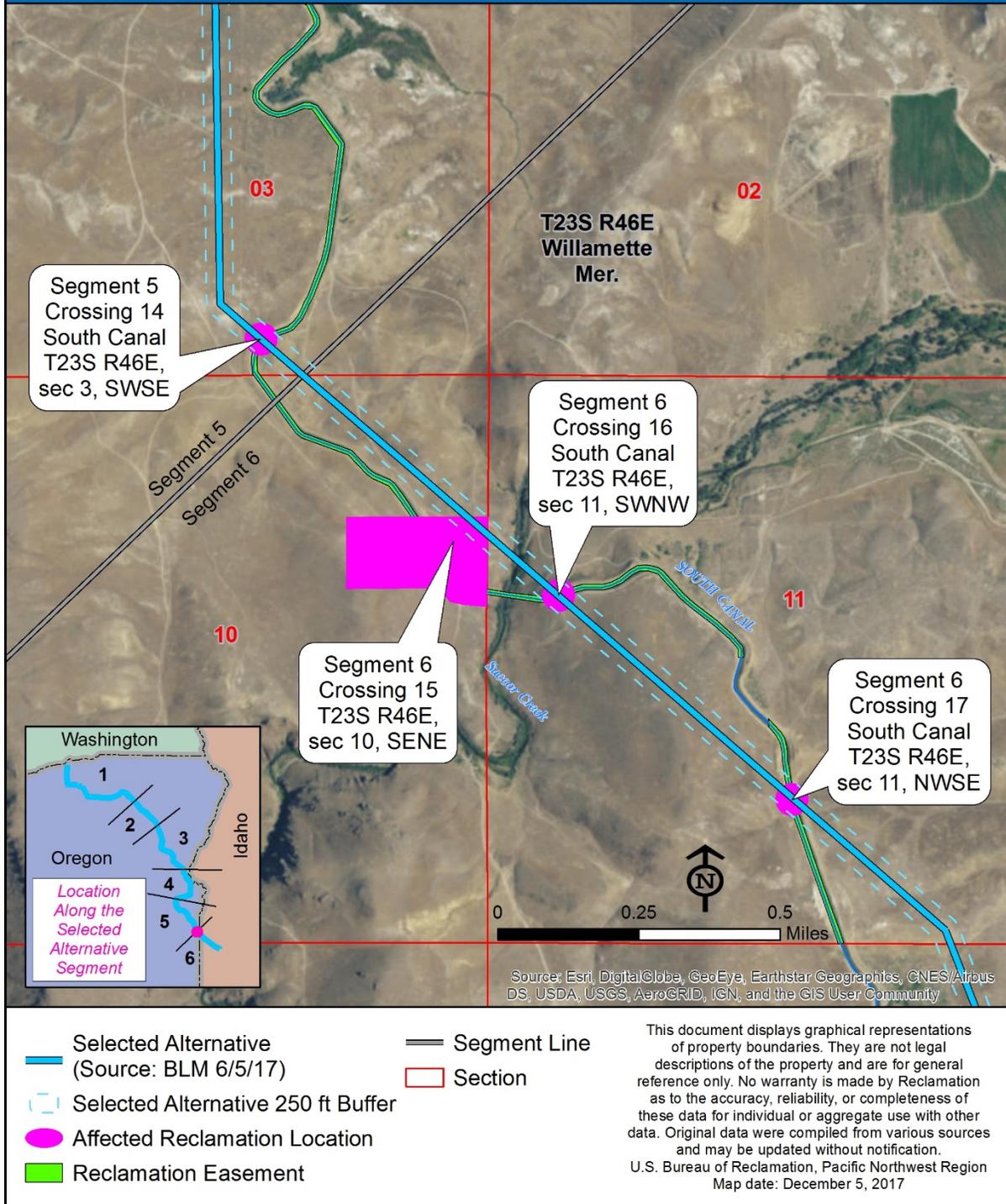


Figure 11. Segment 5 Crossing 14 and Segment 6 Crossings 14 through 17

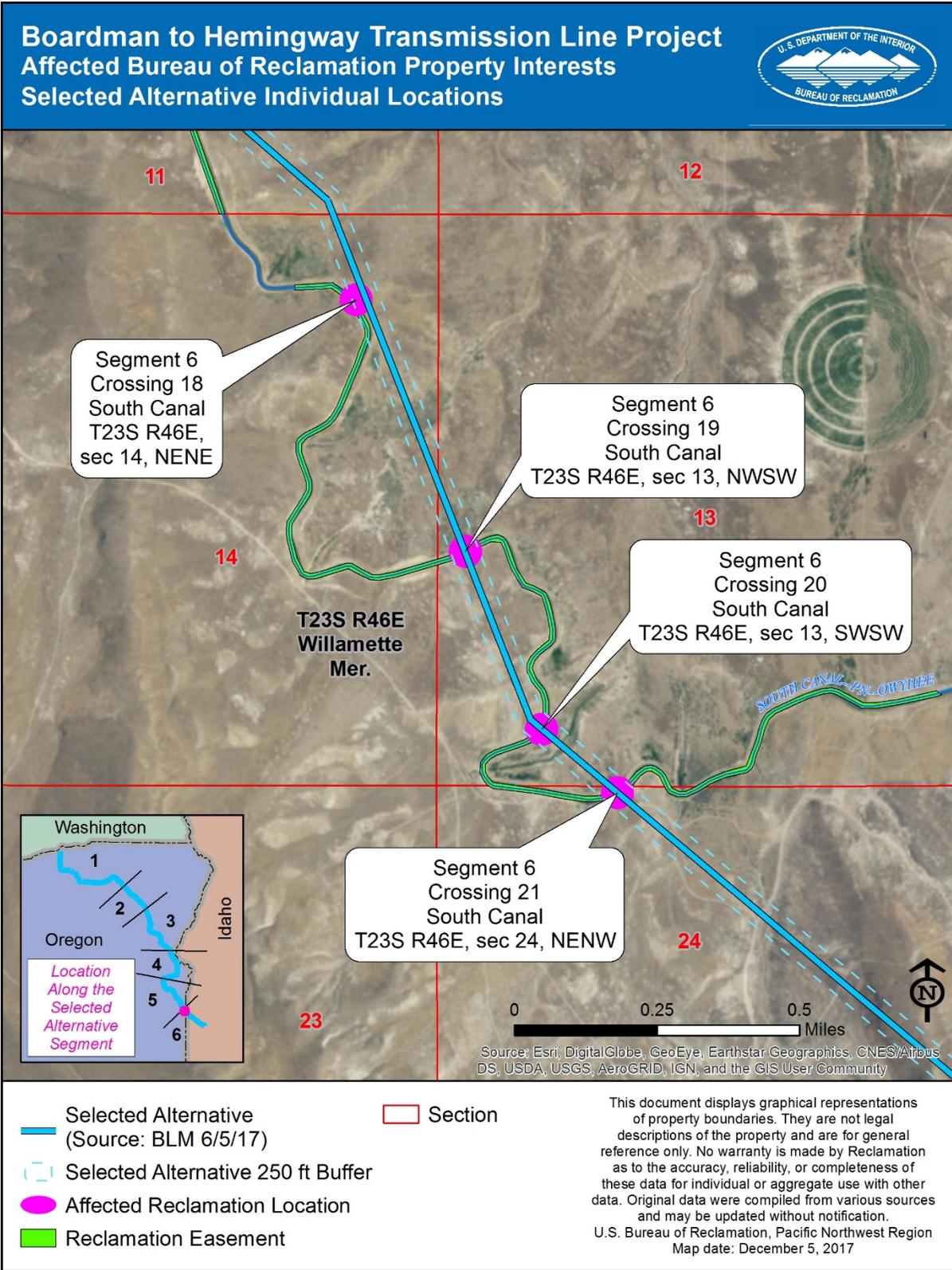
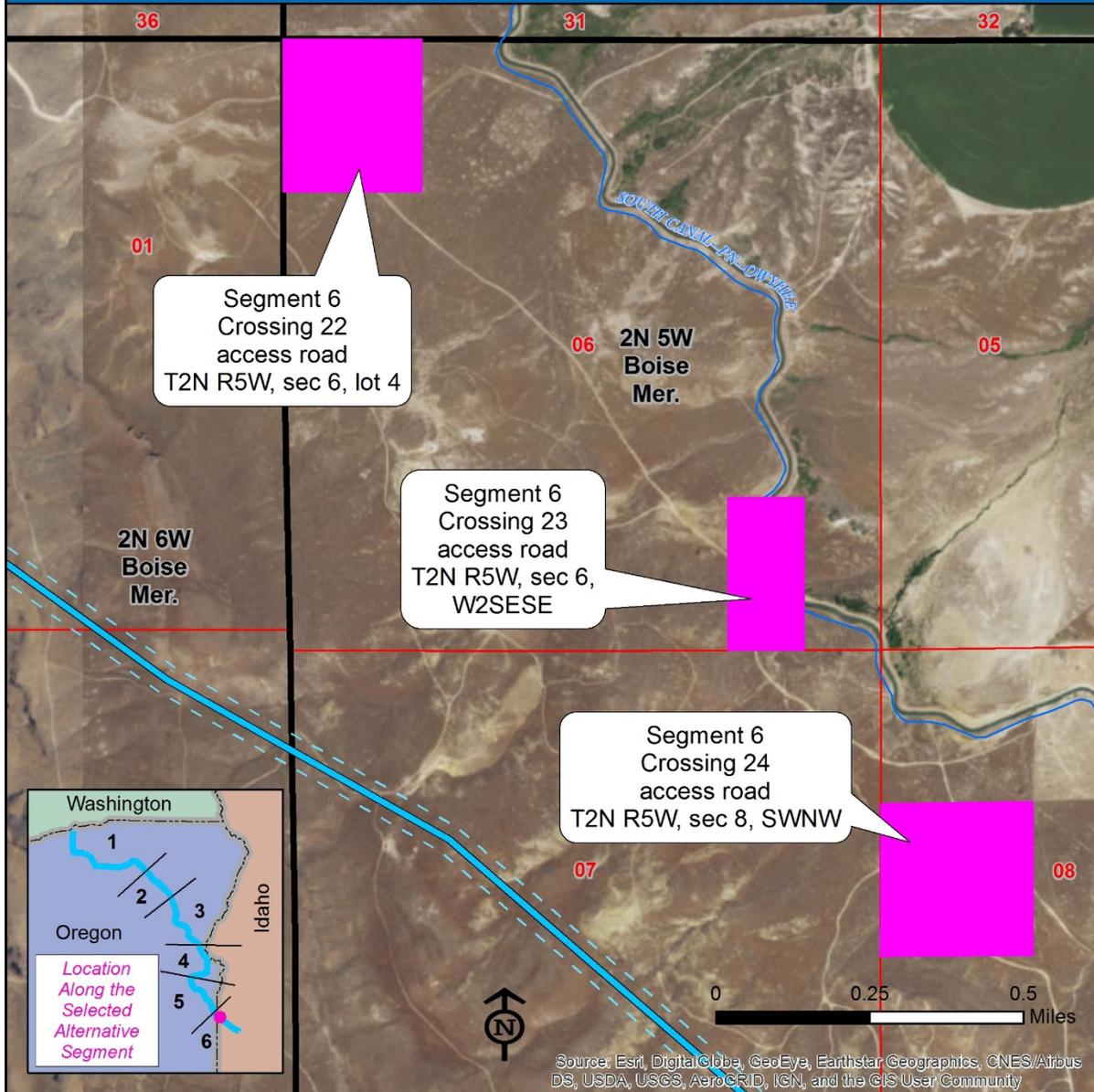


Figure 12. Segment 6 Crossings 18 through 21

**Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project
Affected Bureau of Reclamation Property Interests
Selected Alternative Individual Locations**



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

- Selected Alternative (Source: BLM 6/5/17)
- Selected Alternative 250 ft Buffer
- Affected Reclamation Location
- Township
- Section

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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Pacific Northwest Region
Map date: December 5, 2017

Figure 13. Segment 6 Crossings 22 through 24

3 Alternatives Considered in this Decision

The Applicant's Proposed Action is to construct, operate, and maintain a 500-kV, overhead, single-circuit, alternating-current electric transmission line and ancillary facilities. The transmission line would be constructed within a 250-foot-wide right-of-way to connect the northern terminus, the Longhorn Substation, planned by BPA approximately 4 miles east of the city of Boardman in Morrow County, Oregon, to the existing Hemingway Substation, west of the city of Melba in Owyhee County, Idaho. The Applicant identified a preferred route for the proposed transmission line, which is described in detail in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS.

As described in Section 2 above, the B2H Project area is organized into the six segments described in the Final EIS and is based on similar geography, natural features, drainages, resources, and/or land uses. There are multiple alternative routes in each segment. The alternative routes analyzed for the EIS include the Applicant's Proposed Action route and alternative routes and the route variations identified (1) to address specific resource issues, (2) to consider colocation of the alignment of the proposed transmission line to existing linear features (e.g., other transmission lines), and (3) from recommendations received in comments on the Draft EIS. The alternative routes or variations of routes that cross Reclamation lands are included in the Alternative Route Comparison Summary in Tables 2-19 through 2-36 in the Final EIS.

In addition to route alternatives, a No Action Alternative was considered and analyzed in the EIS. The Final EIS also identified the Agency Preferred Alternative and the Environmentally Preferable Action Alternative. These alternatives are described below.

3.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative describes the existing and future state of the environment in the absence of the Proposed Action. It provides a baseline for comparing environmental effects of the action and demonstrates the consequences of not granting a right-of-way or authorizing special use. If no action is taken, Reclamation would not grant a special-use authorization, and other potentially affected Federal agencies would not grant applicable authorizations or permits to cross Federal lands. The transmission line and ancillary facilities would not be constructed on Federal lands.

The Applicant's objectives for the B2H Project, which include providing additional capacity to connect the Pacific Northwest region with the Intermountain region of southern Idaho to alleviate existing transmission constraints between the two areas and to ensure sufficient capacity so that Idaho Power can meet present and forecasted load requirements (Section 1.4), would not be met. The objectives of Energy Policy Act of 2005 to accommodate additional electrical generation capacity, improve reliability, and reduce congestion by expanding and modernizing the transmission grid through the B2H Project would not be met.

3.2 Agency Preferred Alternative

The Agency Preferred Alternative identified in the Final EIS (Figure 1), hereinafter referred to as the Selected Alternative, is based on the best available information and science, which was analyzed and documented in the Final EIS. It is the alternative that causes the least impact to the biological and physical environment, and it best protects, preserves, and enhances the resources that are present

while achieving the proposed action. The route alignment approved by this ROD (referred to as the Selected Alternative) follows the Agency Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS.

3.3 Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The BLM's ROD identified the following combinations of alternative routes and route variations as the environmentally preferable alternative:

- Segment 1 – Interstate 84 – Southern Route Alternative with Variation S1-A2
- Segment 2 – Glass Hill Alternative with Variations S2-A2, S2-D2, and S2-F2
- Segment 3 – Flagstaff B – Burnt River West Alternative with Variations S3-A2 and S3 B4
- Segment 4 – Tub Mountain South Alternative with Variation S4-A2
- Segment 5 – Applicant's Proposed Action Alternative with Variation S5-B2
- Segment 6 – Applicant's Proposed Action Alternative with Variations S6-A2 and S6-B2

Reclamation agrees that these segments comprise the environmentally preferable alternative.

4 Summary of Comments Regarding Reclamation Lands in the Final EIS

The BLM's Administrative Final EIS was released for public comment on June 20, 2016, and the comment period ended on July 18, 2016. The Owyhee Irrigation District (OID) provided the only comment pertinent to Reclamation lands on August 22, 2016. The OID expressed concerns regarding the Selected Alternative in Segment 5, Crossing 12, in the vicinity of the Kingman Lateral. OID was concerned about the risk of failure of Federal assets related to slope instability, and safety risks to OID's maintenance crews. In OID recommended the alternative routes South and Malheur A as the preferred routes for the transmission line crossing Reclamation facilities that OID operates and maintains.

On November 9, 2016, Reclamation sent a memorandum to the BLM Vale District stating that its preferred alternative, the South and Malheur A alternative in Segment 5, would provide better protection for Federal assets and safety. Reclamation also stated that it would support the preferred alternative if an appropriate mitigation measure was incorporated into the Final POD and use authorization.

On December 13, 2016, Idaho Power Company met with OID to review the location of the tower and crossing. After the meeting, OID agreed with the tower micro-siting location, concluding that the development in the new location improved overhead clearance and did not impose a risk to the stability of the lateral. However, OID still has concerns about clearance over the North Canal and the access using OID's right-of-way for construction purposes. Reclamation's use authorization will stipulate the requirements for clearance and access.

5 Decision and Rationale for the Decision

Based on review of the analysis as documented in the BLM Final EIS, Reclamation concurs with the Selected Alternative and hereby formally adopts the analysis included in the final EIS, and approves the activities and management to avoid or minimize effects to Reclamation lands and project developments. However, the decision does not authorize any surface-disturbing activities. Before

surface-disturbing activities occur, Reclamation requires a use authorization and completion of an approved Final POD for construction. Approved geotechnical activities are described in the Final EIS and require a separate environmental compliance review from Reclamation prior to initiating ground-disturbing activities.

Upon approval of the Final POD, Reclamation will issue the appropriate use authorization with right-of-way widths as identified by Idaho Power Company for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a 500-kV transmission line following the Selected Alternative identified in the Final EIS (2-7e). The use authorization decision applies only to Reclamation lands in the B2H Project area. This decision to issue a use authorization would achieve the B2H Project's purpose while also avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating for impacts to the human environment along the route.

As noted above, mitigation measures, terms, and conditions have been developed based on the analysis in the Final EIS. Site-specific implementation details identified in the Final POD will be adopted prior to issuance of a use authorization.

In addition, in compliance with NEPA and based on the analysis in the BLM's Final EIS, Reclamation will amend the Owyhee Reservoir RMP to modify visual resource restrictions on rights-of-way (see Section 1.5 of this ROD)

The Applicant may not receive a use authorization until Reclamation accepts a Final POD that addresses all of the requirements in the ROD, except when Reclamation may issue a temporary authorization for certain preconstruction activities, such as geotechnical testing, prior to receiving the Final POD from the Applicant.

Regulations in 43 CFR § 429.14 provide the review criteria for use authorizations affecting Reclamation-managed land. The regulations require that the agency consider (a) compatibility with Reclamation's project purposes, project operations, safety and security, (b) environmental compliance, (c) compatibility with public interests, (d) conflicts with Federal policies and initiatives, (e) public health and safety, (f) availability of other reasonable alternatives, and (g) the best interests of the United States.

6 Environmental Commitments

The Applicant will be required to finalize the POD and implement all identified mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS (Table 2-7 and 2-13), as well as terms and conditions of the PA (refer to Appendix I of the Final EIS) and conservation measures in the USFWS and NOAA Fisheries biological assessments and the NOAA Fisheries Biological Opinion and USFWS Letter of Concurrence. No Indian Trust Assets will be impacted on Reclamation-administered lands.

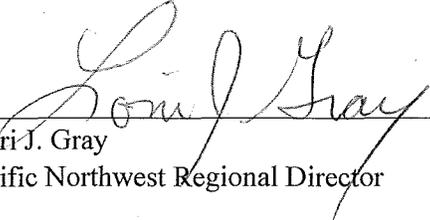
7 Implementation

Execution of the license agreement is contingent upon the Applicant meeting its obligations identified above and in the Final EIS. Reclamation reserves the ability to modify the proposed mitigation measures, as it deems appropriate, to not preclude potential future projects. Nothing in this provision should be construed as granting the state or third parties the right to enforce this provision in any administrative or legal proceeding.

8 Decisions and Appeals

Under 43 CFR 429.35-37, any party that is directly affected by a final determination may appeal by writing to the Commissioner within 30 calendar days after the postmark date of the Regional Director's determination letter. All affected parties have an additional 30 calendar days after the postmark of their written appeal to the Commissioner within which to submit any additional supporting information. The Regional Director's final determination will remain in effect until the Commissioner has reviewed the appeal and provided the appellant with that decision, unless the appellant specifically requests a stay and a stay is granted by the Commissioner.

Approved:



Lorri J. Gray
Pacific Northwest Regional Director

2/5/18
Date