Scoping Information Package

Proposal to Construct, Operate, and Maintain the Wanapum-Mountain View 230-kV Transmission Line in Grant County, Washington

This information package summarizes the proposal from Public Utility District No. 2 of Grant County (Grant PUD) to construct and operate the Wanapum-Mountain View 230-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (Project). The Project includes constructing an approximately 32-mile, 230-kV transmission line from the Wanapum Switchyard to the Mountain View Substation near Quincy, Washington. The Project would require a land use authorization to cross approximately 3.2 miles of Reclamation land.

Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences. Reclamation is asking for comments to better identify issues and concerns associated with this proposal.

Background

Grant PUD supplies power and broadband fiber to more than 50,000 customers in Grant County, Washington. Electricity generated at Wanapum and Priest Rapids Dams on the Columbia River is transmitted through high-voltage lines and local distribution networks. To meet increasing demand, Grant PUD proposes constructing a 230-kV transmission line from the Wanapum Switchyard, east of Wanapum Dam, to the Mountain View Substation in Quincy, Washington. Portions of the new line would follow existing transmission corridors. This Project is part of Grant PUD's larger Quincy Transmission Expansion Plan (QTEP) that takes a proactive approach to managing the county's power system, increasing electrical capacity to meet future energy needs.

Reclamation has determined that an environmental review under the NEPA is required prior to issuing consent and a land use authorization for crossings of the Project on Reclamation easements and lands.

Existing Condition and Need for Action

The existing electrical transmission system in Grant County is operating under increasing strain as regional demand for power continues to rise. Much of the project area has experienced long-term conversion to agricultural and industrial uses, and Grant PUD now serves more than 56,000 customer meters within a system that must reliably deliver power from major generation sources such as the Wanapum Dam. The current transmission network lacks sufficient capacity and redundancy to ensure dependable service under all operating conditions, particularly during periods of peak demand, when voltage drops and reliability issues become more likely. As population growth, expanded industrial activity, and the rapid emergence of energy-intensive sectors, such as food-processing facilities, advanced manufacturing, and data centers in the broader Quincy area, continue to increase regional electrical load, the limitations of the existing system underscore the need for additional transmission capacity and a more robust, modernized

power-delivery network. The proposed action responds to these projected increases by providing the infrastructure necessary to support both current and future demand while maintaining safe and reliable service.

The **need** for the proposed action is to:

- Increase electrical transmission capacity
- Provide additional system reliability and redundancy
- Address capacity and reliability deficiencies identified in the QTEP

The **purpose** of the proposed action is to:

- Provide a new, dedicated path for the safe and reliable flow of electricity
- Enhance operational flexibility within Grant PUD's power system
- Strengthen and modernize the regional transmission network

Through the NEPA process, Reclamation will evaluate the potential environmental effects of the Project to determine whether it may significantly affect the quality of the human environment and whether it qualifies for a Finding of No Significant Impact. Based on this review, Reclamation will decide whether to:

- Approve the proposed project,
- Approve the project with modifications, or
- Deny the project.

Proposed Action

Grant PUD is proposing to construct, operate, and maintain a new 230-kV transmission line between the Wanapum Switchyard and the Mountain View Substation in Quincy, Washington (Figure 1). Although the overall Project spans approximately 32 miles, Reclamation's decision and scoping responsibilities apply only to activities proposed on Reclamation-managed lands, which account for approximately 3.2 miles of the alignment across seven separate parcels.

The Project involves installing new transmission structures with relocated distribution lines where needed, building and upgrading access roads, creating material storage areas, and improving existing distribution connections.

The proposed transmission line would consist of a combination of steel monopoles, double pole, three pole, and H-Frame steel structures along different portions of the corridor (Figure 2). Most structures would be placed in excavated holes and backfilled with native soil and gravel. Construction areas would accommodate excavation and equipment access, with work zones and ROW widths determined by tower type and located within existing or new easements. The Project would follow the Grant PUD Avian Protection Plan to minimize impacts on bird species.

Whenever possible, the Project would use existing dirt or gravel roads for access. Improvements or repairs would be limited to previously disturbed, unpaved routes, such as dirt and gravel roads, and may include gravel additions and re-grading. New access roads would require clearing and could be up to 30 feet wide to accommodate terrain and design adjustments. In sensitive areas, such as adjacent to wetlands, road widths may be reduced to a total of 14 feet. Temporary

matting or other mitigation measures may be used as needed. All areas disturbed by construction would be reseeded with native seed mixture to restore habitat functions and values.

Details of Proposed Action on Reclamation Lands

While the larger Grant PUD Project includes additional transmission line construction on private and other non-Reclamation properties, Reclamation's proposed federal action is limited to deciding whether to authorize Grant PUD's requested use of Reclamation lands for the installation of transmission structures, construction and improvement of access roads, removal or replacement of certain distribution facilities, and associated construction activities. Reclamation's NEPA review will evaluate only the environmental effects of these proposed activities on Reclamation-managed parcels.

The Project would require construction activities and long-term maintenance and operation on a total of seven Reclamation parcels. Two of these properties are located immediately north of the Wanapum Switchyard (Parcels *150244000* and *150245000*), one property is located between Rd 13.5 SW and Hwy 26 W (Parcel *150907000*), and the remaining four properties are located adjacent to Beverly Burke Rd SW/Rd R SW (Parcels *210319000*, *201835000*, *201746020*, and *201605000*). Detailed descriptions of the planned actions for each Reclamation property involved in the Project are provided below.

Most project work on Reclamation land would take place just north of the Wanapum Switchyard, in Parcels *150244000* and *150245000* (Figure 3). Proposed activities on these properties include the installation of 15 structures and installation of approximately 2.5 miles of construction/operation/maintenance roads within a 160- to 180-foot-wide ROW. Proposed access roads may require the placement of gravel and would be designed to avoid and minimize potential impacts to cultural and environmental resources. To achieve this, proposed access roads would be designed within a 30-foot-wide corridor. Proposed structures and roads would be located along the western and northern property boundaries. The Project is designed to avoid and reduce impacts on habitat and cultural resources, with the larger area allowing flexibility to adjust project components as needed within the proposed boundary.

Besides irrigation canals and trails (i.e., pedestrian and vehicle), these parcels are relatively undisturbed. Habitat on these parcels is dominated by shrub-steppe vegetation with areas of hydrology and isolated wetlands (Figures 4 and 5). The Project is planned along the edges of the properties, near areas that already have disturbances or run parallel to existing transmission lines, in order to keep the interior sections, which provide a large area of undisturbed habitat, intact. Grant PUD would prepare a detailed mitigation plan that would assess existing habitat conditions and mitigation measures to ensure a no net loss of ecological habitat functions and values. All areas disturbed by the installation of the structures outside of the access roads would be reseeded with native seed mixture to restore habitat functions and values. As part of the NHPA Section 106 process, Reclamation would consult with Tribes to avoid and minimize impacts on cultural and historic properties.

The next affected Reclamation property (Parcel *150907000*) is bordered to the north by Hwy 26 W and to the south by 13.5 SW (Figure 6). There is an existing distribution line located within

the ROW immediately north of Rd 13.5 SW (southern boundary of the property). Activities in this property would include the removal of 11 existing distribution structures and installation of four transmission structures and six skip span structures for distribution within an 80-foot-wide ROW. Access to these structures would be provided via the existing paved road, and all construction activities would take place within the ROW. The property has been historically disturbed, and existing vegetation consists of a mixture of native shrubs-steppe and invasive weedy species (Figure 7). The property provides low quality habitat due to historic disturbances and adjacent land uses.

The remainder of the Project that would occur on Reclamation properties are located adjacent to Beverly Burke Rd SW/Rd R SW. The first property is located approximately 3.5 miles north of the intersection of Hwy 26 W and Beverly Burke Rd SW (Parcel *210319000*) and the other three properties (Parcels *201835000*, *201746020*, and *201605000*) are located approximately 1.5 miles south of I-90.

Parcel *210319000* is located directly west of Beverly Burke Rd SW, and all project activities would take place along the eastern edge of the property, immediately adjacent to the ROW (Figure 8). Proposed activities include installing six structures (i.e., 3 transmission and 3 skip spans). If access from Beverly Burke Rd SW is unavailable, temporary access routes may be created to reach installation sites. The property has been historically disturbed in the past, particularly along its eastern boundary, which is adjacent to a public road and an irrigation canal

Parcels *201835000*, *201746020*, and *201605000* are located on both the east and west side of Rd R SW (Figure 9). The Project would result in the replacement of existing distribution structures and the installation of skip span structures on the east side of the road. Most of this work would occur within the road ROW. Potential impacts would be associated with access and installation of structures. Access to the properties would occur from existing public roads and would not impact existing habitat and cultural resources. There are several wetlands located on these properties; however, all work would occur within existing disturbed areas.

Preliminary Alternative Development

At this early stage in the NEPA process, Reclamation may identify and refine a reasonable range of alternatives that address the Project's purpose and need while considering the specific constraints and opportunities on Reclamation-managed lands. Alternative development includes evaluating potential alignments for the 230-kV transmission line where it crosses Reclamation parcels, exploring variations in structure placement, and identifying options for new or improved access roads that minimize impacts to sensitive resources. Alternatives may also include adjustments to the location or configuration of transmission and distribution structures within the allowable project footprint, as well as consideration of a No Action Alternative, which would deny the applicant's request to use Reclamation lands. These preliminary alternatives will be further developed and refined based on resource information, engineering feasibility, and input received during scoping. Additional alternatives may be developed commensurate with the issues identified throughout the NEPA process.

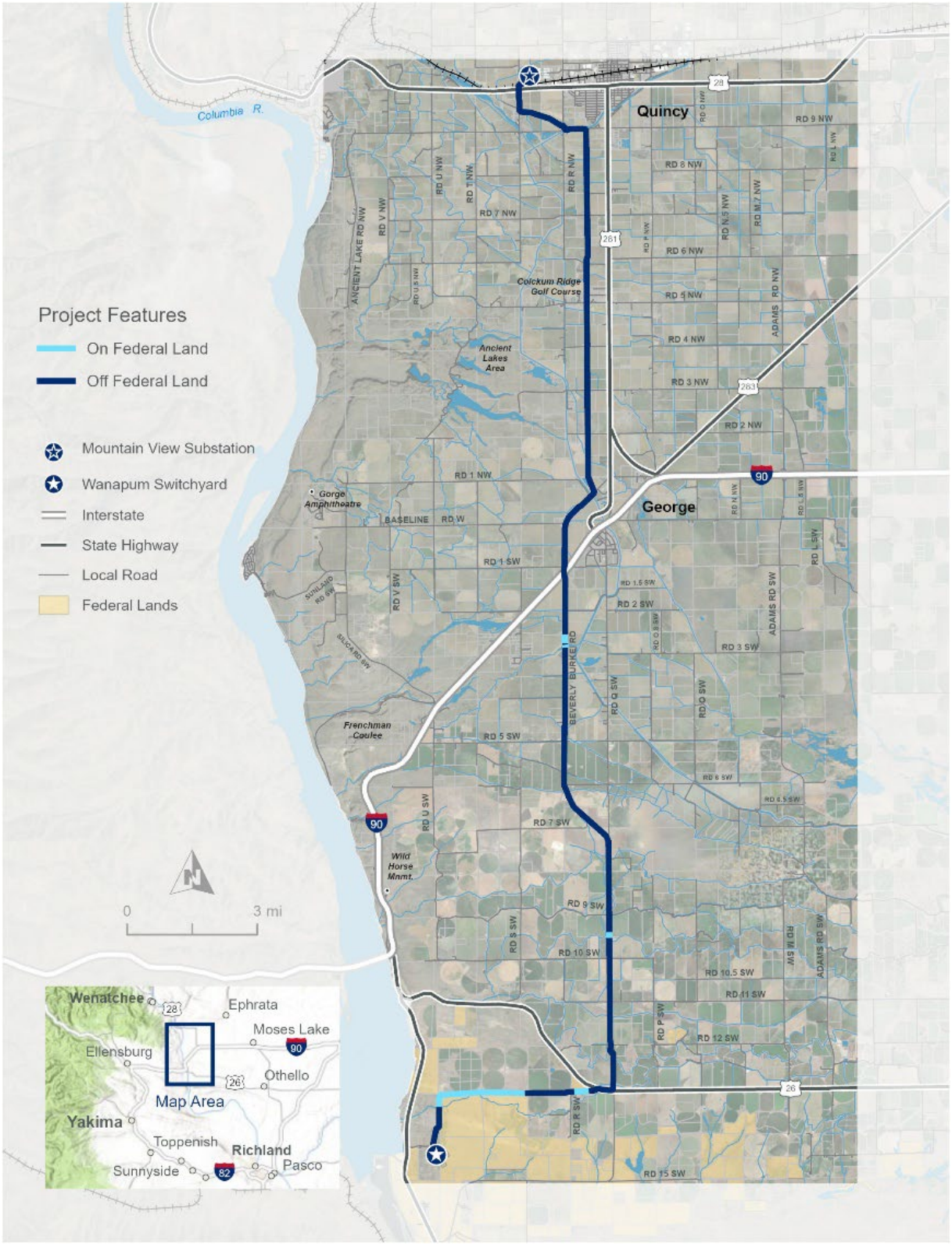

Figure 1. Proposed Wanapum-Mountain View 230 kV Transmission Line project (present land use authorization project area highlighted in blue).

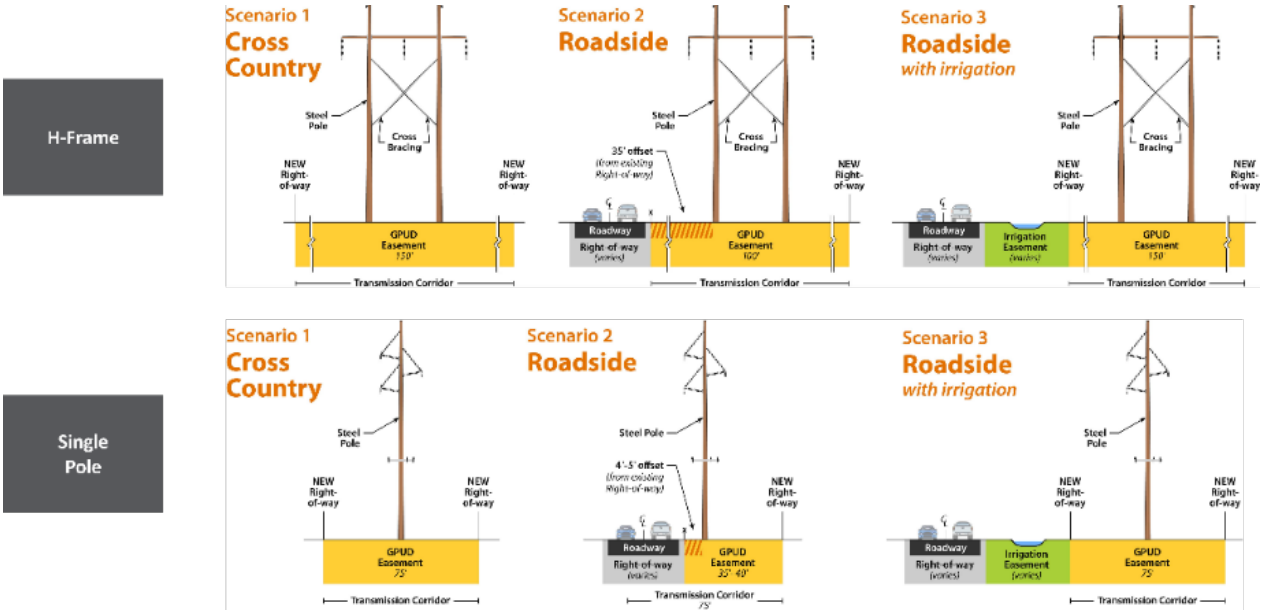

Figure 2. Proposed transmission structures and placement scenarios.

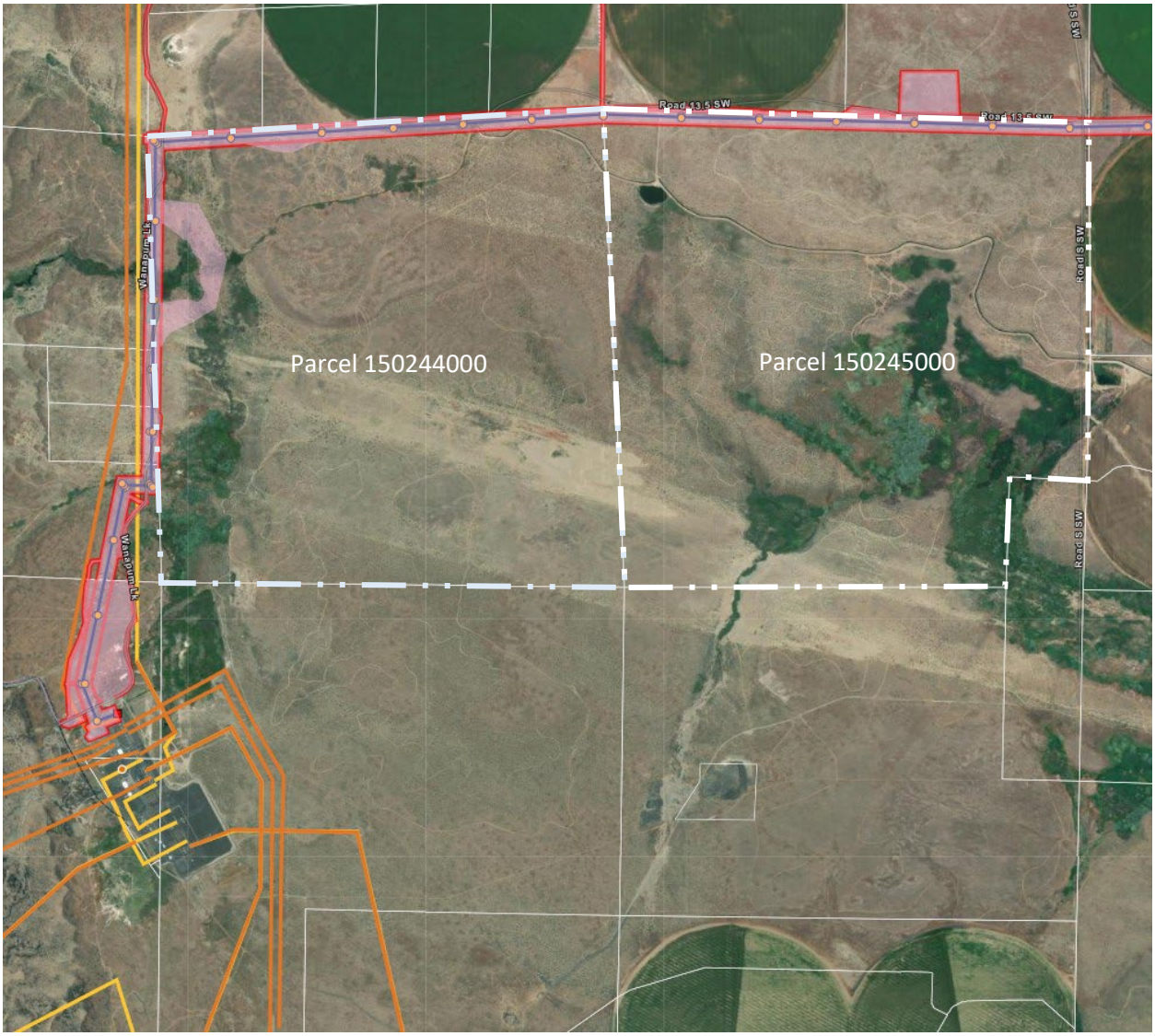

Figure 3. Affected Reclamation parcels *150244000* and *150245000* (dashed white outline) and the proposed land use authorization project area (red outlined pink polygons), potential structure locations (white circles), proposed transmission line (blue line), and existing transmission lines (orange and yellow lines).

Figure 4. Example of characteristic shrub-steppe habitat in the western portion of Reclamation parcel *150244000*.

Figure 5. Example of characteristic shrub-steppe habitat in the northern portion of Reclamation parcels *150244000* and *150245000*.

Figure 6. Affected Reclamation parcel *150907000* (dashed white outline) and the proposed land use authorization project area (red outlined pink polygons), potential structure locations (white circles), and proposed transmission line (blue line).

Figure 7. Example of characteristic roadside habitat and distribution line in the southern portion of Reclamation parcel *150907000*.

Figure 8. Affected Reclamation parcel *210319000* (dashed white outline) and the proposed land use authorization project area (red outlined pink polygons), potential structure locations (white circles), and proposed transmission line (blue line).

Figure 9. Affected Reclamation parcels *201835000*, *201746020*, and *201605000* (dashed white outline) and the proposed land use authorization project area (red outlined pink polygons), potential structure locations (white circles), and proposed transmission line (blue line).