

**Staker-Parsons Powerline Relocation Project (a/k/a Populus to Terminal)
and Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment**

*Logan Ranger District
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Box Elder County, Utah*

1. Introduction

The Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest proposes to authorize PacifiCorp to relocate an approximately 0.5-mile-long segment of the existing Populus to Terminal transmission line to National Forest System lands. The segment currently is located on private land immediately west of National Forest System lands. This private land is being mined for gravel, which may reduce the stability of the existing transmission infrastructure.

2. Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the project is to respond to PacifiCorp's request to relocate a portion of transmission line from private land onto National Forest System lands. The need for the federal action stems from the direction in the Multiple-Use, Sustained Yield Act of 1960, as amended, which authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop and administer the renewable resources on the National Forest System lands for multiple use and sustained yield of the products and services the lands offer (16 USC 528 et seq.). The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1974 also provides the Forest Service with discretionary authority to grant use (e.g., rights-of-way and special use authorizations) of land it administers, taking into consideration impacts on natural and cultural resources (including historical resources) (43 USC 1701 et seq.). In doing so, the Forest Service must endeavor "to minimize damage to scenic and esthetic values and fish and wildlife habitat and otherwise protect the environment" through avoidance or mitigation (43 USC 1765(a)(ii)).

3. Alternatives Considered in Detail

No Action

Under this alternative the transmission line would not be relocated from private land onto National Forest System lands. No forest plan amendment would be required.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is outlined in its entirety in section 2.1.1 of the environmental assessment, which is incorporated by reference into this decision notice. What follows herein is a summary of the proposed action.

Under this alternative an approximately 0.5-mile-long segment of transmission line would be relocated from private land onto National Forest System lands. Two new double-circuit 345-kV transmission structures

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would be constructed and two existing structures would be modified but would not need to be relocated. Two existing structures would be replaced by the two new structures, then removed from the site.

The proposed action would require a non-significant forest plan amendment because it would authorize a transmission line outside of an existing utility corridor. The non-significant forest plan amendment is discussed below in section 10.

4. Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Detailed Analysis

Two alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed analysis, one of which proposed underground construction and one of which proposed routing the transmission line through the exhausted area of the Staker Parson mine. These two alternatives and the reasons they were dismissed from detailed study are discussed below.

A. Underground Construction

Under this alternative, the relocated transmission line would be constructed underground on National Forest System lands rather than above ground. This alternative was eliminated from detailed analysis for the following reasons:

- There would be substantially greater surface disturbance during construction.
- Transmission line failures are more difficult to locate, increasing the amount of time that may be required for diagnosing and addressing problems.
- Repairs are more difficult to make on underground transmission lines, often requiring replacement of a portion of conductor. This may take days or even weeks to complete, with the potential for extensive surface disturbance.
- Due to materials and heat involved in extra high voltage underground transmission, the life expectancy is generally considered to be one-third to one-half that of a conventional overhead line.
- The underground transmission line would most likely require a liquid-cooled system to maintain appropriate operating temperatures of the conductor. This requires the installation of pumps and cooling systems that would be noisier than an air-cooled overhead line, as well as a distribution line to power the pumps and cooling system, also increasing disturbance.
- Due to the requirement of continuous support (rather than supported intermittently at points along the line by structures), underground lines are more susceptible to damage from unstable slopes and mining operations.
- Soil does not shield electromagnetic fields. Therefore, electromagnetic field levels adjacent to the line could actually be higher than those from an overhead line because the electromagnetic fields would be coming from ground level rather than from overhead lines that are farther away.

B. Routing through Exhausted Mining Area

This alternative would reroute the Populus to Terminal transmission line through the exhausted Staker Parsons pit mine west along its northern property line, south through the exhausted mine area, and east along its southern property line, rather than to the east on National Forest System lands.

This alternative was eliminated from detailed analysis for the following reasons:

- It would not be feasible for the applicant to safely relocate the Populus to Terminal Transmission Line along Staker Parsons' north and south property lines. Staker Parson is required, under the

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doctrine of subjacent and lateral support in the law of property as well as other State of Utah mine safety requirements, to perform their excavations in such a way as to ensure they remain within their property boundaries. The slopes that remain along Staker Parson's north and south property lines, in the exhausted mined area, are very steep.

- Under the Brigham City Zoning Code Chapter 29.28, there would not be sufficient space to accommodate the relocation of the Populus to Terminal Transmission Line into the exhausted mined area with the minimum buffer distance required for Staker Parson to ensure compliance with its permitting obligations.
- Structure heights would exceed PacifiCorp's standard engineering limitations.
- Large deadend structures would be required.
- Redevelopment of the exhausted mine area would be limited.

5. Scoping and Public Comment

Chapters 1 and 2 of the environmental assessment were posted on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest website on August 7, 2014. Notification of the availability of the preliminary environmental assessment for review and comment was mailed to 75 individuals and organizations that same day. A legal notice was posted in *The Salt Lake Tribune* on August 7, 2014, beginning a 30-day comment period. One comment letter—from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—was received. The public was notified that the proposal would require a non-significant, site-specific forest plan amendment.

Internal Forest Service coordination meetings were held on January 23, 2013; July 29, 2014; and September 10, 2014. These consisted of a kick-off meeting, a meeting to discuss the public scoping process, and a meeting to discuss the comment letter. Based on the results of internal and external scoping and comments, the following issues were identified and analyzed in the environmental assessment:

1. **Air quality.** How would the relocation of the transmission line affect air quality?
2. **Cultural resources.** How would the relocation of the transmission line affect cultural resources?
3. **Socioeconomics.** How would the relocation of the transmission line, including new road construction, affect traffic in nearby residential areas and access to National Forest System lands?
4. **Soils and hydrology.** How would the relocation of the transmission line affect soils and hydrology, such as soil disturbance and potential erosion?
5. **Vegetation.** How would the relocation of the transmission line affect vegetation, such as vegetation removal and the potential for the spread of noxious weeds?
6. **Scenic resources.** How would the relocation of the transmission line affect scenic resources, such as views from nearby residential areas?
7. **Wildlife.** How would the relocation of the transmission line affect wildlife, such as disturbance of wildlife habitat and potential mortality from construction vehicle collisions or avian wildlife collisions with transmission line structures?

Other resources were considered but dismissed from detailed analysis because they are not present in the project area or would not be affected by the proposed action. These included resources such as inventoried roadless areas, wilderness areas, water resources, recreation, livestock grazing, paleontology, geology and minerals, hazardous materials, and fire and fuels management.

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6. Decision and Rationale

I took a hard look at the proposed action (section 2.1.1 of the environmental assessment), the effects of the proposed action as described in resource-specific sections of Chapter 3 of the environmental assessment, and the project record. After balancing short-term impacts and long-term benefits, my decision is to authorize PacifiCorp to relocate an approximate 0.5-mile long segment of transmission line onto National Forest System lands.

7. Finding of No Significant Impact

This finding of no significant impact incorporates by reference the project record, including specialist reports. After carefully considering the environmental effects described in the environmental assessment I have determined that my decision will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. The beneficial effects of the action do not bias my finding of no significant environmental effects. See Table 2-4 in section 2.4 of the environmental assessment for a summary of effects.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety. See Table 2-4 in section 2.4 of the environmental assessment for a summary of effects, as well as effects for each resource listed in Chapter 3 of the environmental assessment.
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area. No unique characteristics were identified during project analysis. A Class I cultural resource survey was conducted and no cultural resources were identified within the project area. There will be no impact on historic or cultural features. There are no permanent effects to parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, ecologically critical areas, or wild and scenic rivers.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of this project.
5. The environmental analysis shows the effects are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risk.
6. The decision will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects.
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant.
8. This decision will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. This action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.
9. The decision will not adversely affect threatened or endangered species or habitats determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
10. The decision will not violate federal, state, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

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8. Mitigation and Design Criteria

My decision incorporates all mitigation and design criteria outlined in the environmental assessment in sections:

1. 3.2.2.1.1 (air quality),
2. 3.3.2.1.1 (cultural resources),
3. 3.5.1.1.5 (soils and hydrology),
4. 3.6.2.1.6 (vegetation),
5. 3.7.2.1.1 (scenic), and
6. 3.8.2.1.5 (wildlife).

In addition, national and regional best management practices listed in section 3.5 of the environmental assessment also are incorporated into my decision.

In addition, the following PacifiCorp best management practices are included in my decision, as summarized in Table C1 of the environmental assessment:

A. Air quality

1. All requirements of those entities having jurisdiction over air quality will be adhered to.
2. Any necessary dust-control plans will be developed by the proponent, and permits for construction testing activities will be obtained.
3. Open burning of trash will not be allowed unless permitted by appropriate authorities.

B. Cultural resources

1. In consultation with the state historic preservation officer, specific mitigation measures for cultural resources will be developed and implemented to avoid effects, monitor construction activities, and conduct data recovery studies where historic properties are affected.

C. Soils and hydrology

1. All vehicle movement will be restricted to pre-designated access.
2. Construction access routes and locations will be selected to minimize travel over open range.
3. In areas where ground disturbance will occur or where re-contouring will be required, surface restoration will normally consist of but not be limited to returning disturbed areas back to rounded contours, with the exception of an approximately 50-by-50-foot area at each structure site, which will be used for long-term maintenance and operations. These sites will be graded for drainage and rake seeded.
4. All other National Forest System lands that will be disturbed will also be rake-seeded with a seed mixture appropriate for those areas.

D. Vegetation

1. In work areas where re-contouring is not required, vegetation will be left in place wherever possible and the original contour will be maintained to avoid excessive root damage and allow for re-sprouting.

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2. In areas where ground disturbance occurs or where re-contouring is required, surface restoration will normally consist of but not be limited to returning disturbed areas back to rounded contours, with the exception of an approximately 50-by-50-foot area at each structure site, which will be used for long-term maintenance and operations. These sites will be graded for drainage and rake seeded. All other National Forest System lands that are disturbed will also be rake seeded with a seed mixture appropriate for those areas.
3. To eliminate the spread of noxious/invasive weeds, equipment and vehicles, including the undercarriage, will be cleaned at a local carwash or with a portable pressure washer (compressed air or water) prior to entering the area.
4. All vehicle movement will be restricted to pre-designated access.

E. Visual resources

1. The spatial limits of construction activities will be predetermined, with activity restricted to and confined within those limits. All vehicle movement will be restricted to pre-designated access.
2. No paint or permanent discoloring agents will be applied to rocks, vegetation, structures, fences, etc. to indicate survey or drilling activity limits.

F. Wildlife

1. If construction activities occur within active raptor nest buffer zones, construction activities will be coordinated with the Forest Service to establish appropriate monitoring and mitigation protocol, which may allow for construction to proceed.
2. If construction activities occur between March 1 and July 31, pre-construction clearance surveys will be conducted for ground-nesting birds no more than seven days prior to mechanical access.

9. Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

With the exception of the need for a non-significant forest plan amendment, which is addressed below in section 10, my decision is consistent with the Revised Forest Plan [for the] Wasatch-Cache National Forest (“forest plan”). The project was designed in conformance with forest plan forest-wide management direction and incorporates appropriate standards and guidelines.

My decision is consistent with the following key laws, regulations, and requirements:

National Environmental Policy Act. The effects of the proposed action and alternatives were analyzed and were disclosed in the environmental assessment, which was available for public review.

National Forest Management Act. Review of the forest plan indicated that the proposed action is consistent with management direction, except as discussed below with regard to the non-specific amendment to the forest plan.

National Historic Preservation Act. No cultural resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places were found within the project area during surveys of the project area. Any previously undiscovered cultural resources that might be uncovered during the project would be addressed using the Forest Service unanticipated discovery requirements (see Forest Service Manual 2364.13). If any cultural materials are discovered during project implementation, work in the vicinity will halt immediately and the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest archaeologist will be contacted. The cultural materials will be evaluated by

the archaeologist or a designated representative. Work will proceed if the archaeologist or a designated representative has provided clearance to do so.

Endangered Species Act of 1973. Implementation of the proposed action would have no negative impacts on threatened or endangered species or their habitat.

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management. Federal agencies should avoid long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains, and to avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain development. This project involves no floodplain occupancy, modification, or development. My decision is consistent with this executive order.

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands. Federal agencies should avoid the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with destruction or modification of wetlands, and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands. This project involves no destruction or modification of wetlands, or new construction in wetlands. My decision is consistent with this executive order.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. Federal agencies should identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. My decision is consistent with this executive order.

Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species. Federal agencies should prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause. Mitigation is included in section 3.6.2.1.6 of the environmental assessment to address invasive species and noxious weeds. My decision is consistent with this executive order.

Executive Order 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds. Federal agencies should develop and implement a memorandum of understanding with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service if they take actions that have, or are likely to have, a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations. The project is expected to have no measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations. My decision is consistent with this executive order.

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10. Non-significant Forest Plan Amendment

A. Proposed action. The Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest proposes a non-significant forest plan amendment to allow approximately 2,000 feet of the relocated segment of transmission line to be constructed outside of a designated utility corridor. The remainder of the approximately 0.5-mile relocated segment will be constructed within the Box Elder Canyon utility corridor, which was established in the forest plan (Forest Plan, pp. 4-54 to 4-55). See Appendix A of this decision notice and finding of no significant impact for a map of the location of the transmission line proposed to be allowed outside an existing utility corridor.

B. Purpose and need. A non-significant forest plan amendment is proposed to allow PacifiCorp to relocate an approximate 0.5-mile-long segment of transmission line from private land, where it currently is located, onto National Forest System lands.

C. Decision. My decision is to amend the Revised Forest Plan [for the] Wasatch-Cache National Forest to allow a one-time waiver from Forestwide Subgoal 12d (Forest Plan, pg. 4-25) for placement of approximately 2,000 feet of transmission line outside a designated utility corridor. The transmission line alignment will not become a designated forest plan utility corridor. Any future transmission line or other utility infrastructure within the right of way will require further analysis prior to a decision being made.

D. Finding of No Significant Impact. This finding of no significant impact incorporates by reference the project record, including specialist reports. After carefully considering the environmental effects described in the environmental assessment I have determined that my decision will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. The beneficial effects of the action do not bias my finding of no significant environmental effects.
2. Allowing approximately 2,000 feet of transmission line to be constructed outside an existing utility corridor will not result in significant effects on public health and safety.
3. As reflected in the environmental analyses that were conducted for the proposal to construct the transmission line itself, there will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area. No unique characteristics were identified during project analysis. A Class I cultural resource survey was conducted and no cultural resources were identified within the project area. There will be no impact on historic or cultural features. There are no permanent effects to parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, ecologically critical areas, or wild and scenic rivers.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of this project.
5. The environmental analysis shows the effects are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risk.
6. The decision will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Approval of this non-significant forest plan amendment is limited to the relocation of approximately 0.5 miles of transmission line onto National Forest System lands, approximately 2,000 feet of which will be constructed outside the existing Box Elder Canyon utility corridor. This non-significant forest plan amendment carries with it no precedent for similar actions in the future.
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant.
8. This decision will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. This action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

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9. The decision will not adversely affect threatened or endangered species or habitats determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
10. The decision will not violate federal, state, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

11. Opportunity to Object

This decision notice and finding of no significant impact is subject to the objection process described in 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. Only persons or organizations who have submitted "specific written comments" during a designated period during which comments were requested are eligible to file an objection (see 36 CFR 218.5). Only one comment was received during the designated period. This comment submitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Because federal agencies may not file objections (36 CFR 218.5(e)), this project may be implemented immediately.

12. Contact Person

For additional information about this decision, contact Pete Gomben (pgomben@fs.fed.us; 801-999-2182).

Sincerely,



DAVID C. WHITTEKIEND
Forest Supervisor
Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest

12 August 2016
Date

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Appendix A: Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment
Allowing Transmission Line Outside Identified Corridor

