

FINAL

Environmental Impact Statement

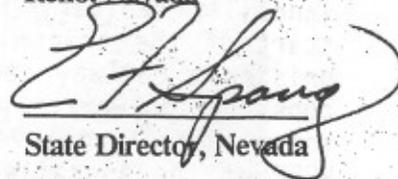
WHITE PINE POWER PROJECT

1500 Megawatt Coal-Fueled Generating Facility

White Pine County, Nevada

Prepared by:

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Nevada State Office
Reno, Nevada


State Director, Nevada

RECORD OF DECISION
WHITE PINE POWER PROJECT

A. Location

The White Pine Power Project (WPPP) consists of four major systems to be located within Clark, Elko, Eureka, Lincoln and White Pine counties. Components of the project will primarily be sited on land currently administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and will extend from Elko District on the north, through the Ely District, and into the Las Vegas District on the south.

B. Introduction

White Pine County, Nevada Power Company, and Sierra Pacific Power Company propose to construct a 1500 megawatt coal-fueled, steam-electric generating facility in White Pine County, Nevada.

The Primary objectives of WPPP are:

- o Provide capacity and energy as an integral part of generation resource planning thereby reducing the dependency on foreign oil and natural gas fuels.
- o Provide economic development and diversification of industry in White Pine County thereby alleviating significant unemployment conditions.

The power transmission system will connect the facility with an existing station in northern Nevada by a 230,000 volt transmission line and with an existing station in southern Nevada by two 500,000 volt transmission lines. The water supply system will deliver water from well fields in White Pine County in buried pipelines to the site. The coal transportation system will deliver coal from mines in Utah, Colorado and/or Wyoming over existing, upgraded, and new railroad to the site. The proposed project was analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) filed with the Environmental Protection Agency and made available to the public on October 20, 1983. The Final EIS was released on August 20, 1984.

C. Decision

The proposed action, as described and analyzed in the Final EIS and displayed on the attached map, is the selected alternative. Components of the selected alternative include the following:

Generating Station -

The North Steptoe Valley Site consists of a 2,250 acre area located in the northern part of Steptoe Valley approximately 48 miles north of the City of Ely. The site is immediately west of US Highway 93. Major components to be located on the site will include steam generators, steam turbine generators, air quality control equipment, plant cooling facilities, evaporation ponds, bottom ash basins, solid waste landfill, sanitary landfill, water supply reservoir, switchyard and start of the transmission system, and coal handling facilities comprising a railway terminus, coal unloading and storage area. Onsite construction worker housing will consist of approximately 55 buildings and a recreational vehicle park. The 2,250 acre site will be sold to WPPP at the appraised value by noncompetitive sale. If necessary to commence construction while the sale is being processed, a right-of-way for the site would be issued to the WPPP.

Borrow Material Sites -

Aggregate from approved borrow material sites would be sold to WPPP at fair market value on a noncompetitive basis, if the maximum allowed by regulation in any one year is not exceeded.

Coal Transportation System -

By exercise of an option agreement between WPPP and Kennecott Corporation, the Nevada Northern Railway can assign its railroad right-of-way to WPPP. If a new railroad bed is prepared within the right-of-way, no authorization for this construction is needed. Borrow material sites, if necessary for new construction, will be determined in a subsequent analysis.

A right-of-way for the 100 to 200 foot-wide railroad spur line corridor from the existing railroad system to the North Steptoe Valley Site, a distance of approximately two (2) miles, will be issued.

Construction Power and Water System Transmission Line -

Low voltage transmission lines will be constructed to provide electrical power for construction at the North Steptoe Valley Site and for the water supply system. A 69,000 volt transmission system right-of-way from the existing Gonder Substation to the North Steptoe Valley Site will provide construction power. Approximately 40 miles of 15,000 volt class circuit rights-of-way will serve the pump and well locations within the water supply system. Whenever possible, the 15,000 volt class circuit will be constructed on the same pole as the 69,000 volt circuit.

Water Supply System (Well Fields and Pipelines) -

A general right-of-way grant will be issued for the five well fields in Steptoe Valley which will supply water to the North Steptoe Valley Site. The well fields will consist of at least two (2) wells per well field with a one-mile to two-mile spacing between wells. No wells will be located within one mile of an existing well. The pipelines and associated access road will be co-located with the power lines to constitute a 100 foot-wide utility corridor.

Highway Relocation -

Relocation of US Highway 93 may be necessary to provide driveway entrances at the North Steptoe Valley Site and/or in McGill if increased traffic volumes overtax the carrying capacity of the highway at this location. If any highway relocation crosses public land, the WPPP will be responsible for having the State of Nevada Department of Transportation apply for highway rights-of-way with BLM.

Microwave Stations -

The microwave system will consist of eight (8) repeater stations and two (2) terminal stations. The northern terminal station will be located on the North Steptoe Valley Site. The southern terminal station will be located at the existing McCullough Switching Station. Rights-of-way will be required at the other eight (8) microwave sites. Three (3) microwave stations will encompass new sites and five (5) stations will be located adjacent to existing microwave sites. One existing station, Cave Mountain microwave station, is located on lands administered by the US Forest Service. The microwave sites are located in White Pine, Lincoln and Clark counties.

Transmission System -

The power transmission system will consist of a Northern Transmission System and a Southern Transmission System, both originating at the North Steptoe Valley Site. The Northern Transmission System will terminate at the Machacek Substation near Eureka, Nevada. The 230,000 volt transmission line will be approximately 87 miles in length over a 150 foot-wide corridor. The Southern Transmission System will terminate at the existing McCullough Switching Station near Boulder City, Nevada. The two 500,000 volt transmission lines will each be 325 mile long and within a 330 foot-wide corridor.

The Delmar route alternative segment of the Southern Transmission System would be an acceptable routing for the transmission system, however, it cannot be approved through the designated Delmar Wilderness Study Area (WSA). If the U.S. Congress decides that the Delmar WSA is not suitable for wilderness designation, then the Delmar route would be the preferred alternative.

D. Summary of Alternatives

The proposed action is the environmentally preferred alternative. Alternatives were considered in two categories, site alternatives and project alternatives.

Site alternatives to the North Steptoe Valley Site include the Butte Valley Site and the Spring Valley Site. Also analyzed with each of these site alternatives were appropriate alternative transmission corridors, well fields and water pipeline corridors, railroad corridors, and borrow material sites.

Project alternatives considered included nongeneration sources, existing resources, developed resources, developing resources, and the no project alternative, where appropriate, system alternatives were also evaluated.

An analysis summary of the site alternatives by both Project Component and Resource Category is included in the attached table. The site alternatives are displayed on the attached map.

E. Decision Rationale

The factors listed in the attached table were considered in the decision to select the North Steptoe Valley Site and associated rights-of-way over the alternative sites and rights-of-way. Major factors are discussed below.

The Spring Valley Site is unacceptable because pumping of the associated well fields would jeopardize habitat for the Pahrump killifish, an endangered species, in the Shoshone Ponds.

The alternate Southern railway corridors are not preferred for any site because it could impact habitat for the Big Springs spinedace in Condor Canyon. In addition, the Southern railway corridor for the North Steptoe Valley Site and an alternate route for the Southern Transmission System would impact portions of wilderness study areas (WSAs). Under current federal policy, neither transmission lines nor railway rights-of-way can be approved through a WSA.

Although the Butte Valley Site is an acceptable alternative, it was not selected due to the need for an extensive new railway system, an extensive new access road, and a two basin water system requirement.

F. Mitigating Measures

Mitigating measures contained in Chapter 4 of the WPPP Final EIS will be developed into stipulations to the appropriate rights-of-way grants for the various components of the project. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted. Monitoring and enforcement programs will be required under the specific rights-of-way grants.

Significant mitigation plans include:

The Nevada State Water Engineer, in issuing a water permit for the project in North Steptoe Valley, required the project to participate in a surface water and groundwater monitoring program to determine the effects of withdrawal of groundwater granted under the permits and to meter and measure water flow on all installed wells. This monitoring program began in December 1982.

An application for the PSD Approval to Construct was submitted to both the Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX and the State of Nevada Division of Environmental Protection in June 1983. The application has been accepted as administratively complete and is currently being reviewed. When issued, the permit will ensure that there will be no significant impact on ambient air quality.

The solid waste landfill and the bottom ash basin on the plant site will be designed for "zero liquid discharge". Leakage detection facilities will be utilized on the site.

Monitoring will be conducted to determine if any impact to wetlands is occurring due to effect of pumping groundwater.

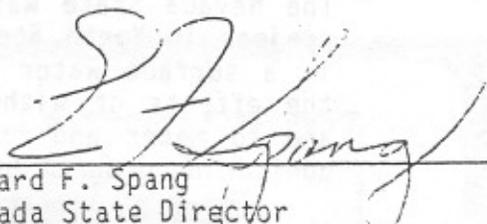
A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between WPPP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, BLM, and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer provides the framework for identifying cultural resources, recommending preservation or mitigation by scientific data recovery, carrying out Native American consultations, and continuing the management of significant cultural resource properties. A comprehensive cultural resources plan will be prepared for the project.

The Impact Alleviation Plan is in the form of an agreement between WPPP and White Pine County, the City of Ely, and the White Pine County School District. The agreement establishes a detailed process which negotiating teams have used to agree on social impacts and will continue to use to negotiate and resolve the issues relating to the existence of socioeconomic needs that result in social impacts in the future. The agreement identifies specific needs, as appropriate, for which a social impact has been identified. In addition, the agreement identifies: 1) socioeconomic needs for which it is known a social impact will exist but for which mitigation methods and resulting social impacts have not yet been determined; 2) socioeconomic needs for which WPPP is solely responsible; and 3) socioeconomic needs for which WPPP has no responsibility for providing any financial assistance. The agreement provides a mechanism for funding and financing of these social impacts identified to date or in the future.

A plan for addressing claims by agricultural participants is being developed in the form of an agreement between WPPP and the agricultural interest in White Pine County. The agreement will be completed prior to issuance of rights-of-way for the project.

G. Decision

Based on the preceding sections, the decision in Section C is approved.



Edward F. Spang
Nevada State Director
Bureau of Land Management
Date: 3/26/85

ANALYSIS SUMMARY BY PROJECT COMPONENT AND RESOURCE CATEGORY

Project Components	North Steptoe Generating Site	Spring Valley Generating Site	Butte Valley Generating Site
Railway System	<p>Southern railway system would impact the Big Springs spinedace habitat in Condor Canyon.</p> <p>Northern railway system would require 2 miles of new right-of-way and 84 miles of upgraded system.</p>	<p>Same</p> <p>Northern railway would require 119 miles of new right-of-way and 38 miles of upgraded system.</p>	<p>Same</p> <p>Northern railway would require 27 miles of new right-of-way and 90 miles of upgraded system.</p>
Transmission System	<p>Requires 87 miles of new right-of-way for the Northern system and 325 miles of new right-of-way for the Southern system.</p>	<p>Requires 36 miles of new right-of-way for the Northern system and 238 miles of new right-of-way for the Southern system.</p>	<p>Requires 52 miles of new right-of-way for the Northern system and 280 miles of new right-of-way for the Southern system.</p>
Road Construction	<p>Plant site immediately adjacent to US 93. Would require entrance realignment at plant site. May require highway realignment around McGill if congestion occurs.</p>	<p>Plant site immediately adjacent to US 93. Would require entrance realignment at plant site and relocation of a county road.</p>	<p>Would require widening, realignment and paving of 15 miles of road from Highway 50 to the plant site. Would require relocation and/or realignment of Highway 50 turnoff.</p>
Plant Site Wastes	<p>The potential for contaminating surface and ground water resources is low for all sites since the plant design requires zero discharge of generated wastes from the site either into aquifers or upon the surface.</p>	<p>Same</p>	<p>Same</p>
Well Fields and Water Systems	<p>Well fields in North Steptoe Valley. Distribution powerlines, pipelines and access roads will be located in a common corridor of about 50 miles. Well field pumping could impact portions of 15,000 acres of wetlands.</p>	<p>Well fields in Spring Valley. Distribution powerlines, pipelines and access roads will be located in a common corridor of about 45 miles. Well field pumping could impact 8,300 acres of critical wetland and could adversely impact the habitat for the Pahrump killifish, an endangered species located in Shoshone Ponds.</p>	<p>Well fields located in both Butte Valley and North Steptoe Valley. Distribution powerlines, pipelines and access roads will be located in a common corridor of about 65 miles. Well field pumping in North Steptoe Valley could impact 15,000 acres of wetlands. No wetlands in Butte Valley.</p>

ANALYSIS SUMMARY BY PROJECT COMPONENT AND RESOURCE CATEGORY

Resource Categories	North Steptoe Generating Site	Spring Valley Generating Site	Butte Valley Generating Site
Water Resources	The amount of groundwater utilized by the project will be essentially the same regardless of the site selected.	Same	Same
Air Resources	The generating plant design would preclude significant air quality impacts, regardless of the site selected, since the project must qualify for permit approval by the Environmental Protection Agency.	Similar	Similar
Social-Economics	The impacts to the communities will be similar in scope for all sites but, depending on the site selected, could affect different groups of individuals or different communities.	Similar	Similar
Cultural Resources	Quantity and variability of cultural resource sites is high due to number of sites, moderate abundance of field and base camp sites, and the number of periods represented.	Cultural resource site density is moderate with special interest in a number of large base camp sites.	Cultural resource site density is low with emphasis on task sites.
Paleontological	Impact potential on the paleontological resources is low for all plant sites.	Same	Same
Wetlands	Well field pumping could impact 15,000 acres of wetlands.	Well field pumping could impact 8,300 acres of critical wetlands.	Well field pumping in the North Steptoe Valley could impact a portion of the 15,000 acres of wetland.

ANALYSIS SUMMARY BY PROJECT COMPONENT AND RESOURCE CATEGORY

Resource Categories	North Steptoe Generating Site	Spring Valley Generating Site	Butte Valley Generating Site
F&E Species	Southern railway system would impact the Big Springs spinedace habitat in Condor Canyon.	Same	Same
Visual Resources	Power project structures would result in a significant visual impact.	Same	Same
Soil Erosion	Potential soil erosion due to wind and water would be similar regardless of the site selected. All identified impacts have been mitigated.	Similar	Similar
Wilderness Study Areas	Goshute Canyon WSA could be heavily impacted by WPPP related population increases.	Mount Grafton WSA would be the most heavily impacted by WPPP related population increases.	Goshute Canyon WSA could be heavily impacted by WPPP related population increases.
Recreation	Alternate transmission corridor and Southern railway corridor through Cave Valley could impact the Mount Grafton WSA or the South Egan Range WSA.	Same	Same
	An alternate transmission corridor would impact the Delamar Mountains WSA.	Similar	Similar
	Increased recreational use will exceed some available community recreational facilities and impact the available non-urban outdoor recreational resources, sites and facilities.		