Corridor 126-218

Vernal to Rock Springs Corridor

Corridor Purpose and Rationale

The corridor provides a north-south interstate pathway for energy transport from Utah to Wyoming. The corridor connects multiple Section 368 energy corridors, creating a continuous corridor network across BLM- and USFS-administered lands. Input regarding alignment from Chevron, National Grid, and Western Utility Group during the WEC PEIS suggested following this route. There are no planned transmission or pipeline projects within the corridor and no pending ROWs within the corridor. The corridor is limited to underground-only within a portion of the corridor because of high lightning and wildfire hazards and visual impacts.

Corridor location (Region 4 portion):
Wyoming (Sweetwater Co.)
BLM: Rock Springs Field Office
Regional Review Regions: Region 3 and Region 4

Corridor width, length (Region 4 portion):
Width 3,500 ft
34 miles of designated corridor
48 miles of posted route, including gaps

Designated Use:
- Corridor is underground only MP 71 to MP 108, multi-modal MP 108 to MP 119

Corridor of concern (N)

Corridor history:
- Locally designated prior to 2009 (N)
- Existing infrastructure (Y)
  - A 230-kV transmission line is within and adjacent to a portion of the corridor.
  - Three natural gas pipelines run along a portion of the corridor.
  - Highway 191 runs along a portion of the corridor.
- Energy potential near the corridor (Y)
  - 1 substation is within the corridor and 2 more substations are within 5 mi of the corridor.
- Corridor changes since 2009 (N)

Figure 1. Corridor 126-218
Figure 2. Corridor 126-218 and nearby electric transmission lines and pipelines
Conflict Map Analysis

Figure 3 reflects a comprehensive resource conflict assessment developed to enable the Agencies and stakeholders to visualize a corridor’s proximity to environmentally sensitive areas and to evaluate options for routes with lower potential conflict. The potential conflict assessment (low, medium, high) shown in the figure is based on criteria found on the WWEC Information Center at www.corridoreis.anl.gov. To meet the intent of the Energy Policy Act and the Settlement Agreement siting principles, corridors may be located in areas where there is potentially high resource conflict; however, where feasible, opportunity for corridor revisions should be identified in areas with potentially lower conflict.

Visit the 368 Mapper for a full view of the potential conflict map (https://bogi.evs.anl.gov/section368/portal/)
Figure 4 shows the density of energy use to assist in evaluating corridor utility. ROWs granted prior to the corridor designation (2009) are shown in pink; ROWs granted after corridor designation are shown in blue; and pending ROWs under current review for approval are shown in turquoise. Note the ROW density shown for the corridor is only a snapshot that does not fully illustrate remaining corridor capacity. Not all ROWs have GIS data at the time this abstract was developed. BLM and USFS are currently improving their ROW GIS databases and anticipate more complete data in the near future.
Corridor Review Table

Designated energy corridors are areas of land prioritized for energy transmission infrastructure and are intended to be predominantly managed for multiple energy transmission infrastructure lines. Other compatible uses are allowable as specified or practicable. Resource management goals and objectives should be compatible with the desired future conditions (i.e., responsible linear infrastructure development of the corridor with minimal impacts) of the energy transmission corridor. Land management objectives that do not align with desired future conditions should be avoided. The table below identifies serious concerns or issues and presents potential resolution options to better meet corridor siting principles.

The preliminary information below is provided to facilitate further discussion and input prior to developing potential revisions, deletions, or additions.

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<tr>
<th>CORRIDOR 126-218 REVIEW</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POTENTIAL COMPATIBILITY ISSUES or CONCERNS TO EXAMINE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BLM Jurisdiction:</strong> Rock Springs Field Office</td>
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<td>VRM Class II area and the corridor intersect – The RMP states that management actions for VRM Class II areas must be designed to blend into and retain the existing character of the natural landscape. The objective of VRM Class II designation is to retain the existing character of the landscape.</td>
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<td>Greater Red Creek ACEC and the corridor intersect – The RMP states that the ACEC will, in general, be managed as an avoidance area for ROWs. The management objectives are to improve watershed condition; improve riparian areas; repair, improve, or maintain Colorado River cutthroat habitat; provide opportunities for dispersed recreation; maintain important wildlife habitat; preserve scenic resources; and reduce the amount of sediment to the Green River.</td>
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**CORRIDOR 126-218 REVIEW**

| POTENTIAL COMPATIBILITY ISSUES or CONCERNS TO EXAMINE | MILEPOST (MP) | STAKEHOLDER INPUT and OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION | POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS BASED ON SITING PRINCIPLE ANALYSIS
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<td>Four Trails Feasibility Study and the corridor intersect. The RMP does not include the Four Trails Feasibility Study Trail since it pre-dates the 2009 legislation designating the Study Trail (Public Law 111-11).</td>
<td>MP 94</td>
<td>There is no existing energy infrastructure in the corridor at this location. The Act (Public Law 111-11; 2009) directs the Secretary of the Interior to revise the original feasibility studies of the Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, California, and Pony Express NHTs. BLM Manual 6280 directs the BLM to maintain the values, characteristics, and settings for which the trail is being studied or for which the trail was recommended as suitable. Comment on abstract: relocate the corridor by shifting the corridor 0.5 mi NNW of current location to cross NHT and NST at an angle to minimize impact. Moving the corridor NNW also avoids the GRSG PHMA.</td>
<td>At MP 94 the corridor intersection with the trail is approximately perpendicular (minimizing potential impacts). This portion of the corridor is underground only, so potential visual impacts on the Study Trail from future development would be minimized. The corridor does not cross a NHT. Agencies could consider a new IOP for NSTs and NHTs to enhance BMPs for proposed development within the energy corridor.</td>
</tr>
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| USFS Jurisdiction: Ashley National Forest  
Land Use Plan: Ashley NF LMP (1986) and Plan Amendments |

| 0401018 Roadless Area is adjacent to the corridor – The LMP does not prescribe restrictions for areas adjacent to the roadless area. | MP 82 | The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001) prohibits road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas. | The corridor is not located in the roadless area and development and management inside of the corridor would not be affected. Because management prescriptions prevent new roads in roadless areas, the opportunity to expand or shift the corridor would be limited. |
| 0401021 Roadless Area is adjacent to the corridor - The LMP does not prescribe restrictions for areas adjacent to the roadless area. | MP 87 to MP 89 | The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001) prohibits road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas. | The corridor is not located in the roadless area and development and management inside of the corridor would not be affected. Because management prescriptions prevent new roads in roadless areas, it is possible that the opportunity to expand or shift the corridor would be limited. |
## CORRIDOR 126-218 REVIEW

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<th>POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS BASED ON SITING PRINCIPLE ANALYSIS ²</th>
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<td>Comment on abstract: re-route to the adjacent roadless area at MP 82, MP 87, and MP 89.</td>
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**BLM Jurisdiction:** Rock Springs Field Office  
**Agency Land Use Plan:** Wyoming GRSG ARMPA – March 2019

GRSG GHMA and the corridor intersect – The 2019 ROD/ARMPA indicates that collocating new infrastructure within existing ROWs and maintaining and upgrading ROWs is preferred over the creation of new ROWs or the construction of new facilities in all management areas. Existing designated corridors, including Section 368 energy corridors, will remain open in all habitat management areas.

| MP 71 to 82 and MP 97 to MP 119 | Comment on abstract: re-route to avoid GRSG GHMA wherever possible. | The GHMA encompasses a broad area surrounding the corridor which cannot be avoided and there are no management prescriptions preventing future development within GHMA areas of the corridor |

GRSG PHMA (ROW avoidance area) and the corridor intersect – The 2019 ROD/ARMPA indicates that collocating new infrastructure within existing ROWs and maintaining and upgrading ROWs is preferred over the creation of new ROWs or the construction of new facilities in all management areas. Existing designated corridors, including Section 368 energy corridors, will remain open in all habitat management areas.

| MP 82 to MP 97 | Comment on abstract: re-route to avoid GRSG PHMA wherever possible. | ROW avoidance areas are not compatible with the corridor’s purpose as a preferred location for infrastructure. The Agencies could consider shifting the corridor to the east along an existing pipeline. The corridor would still intersect PHMA but it would intersect at the boundary of the PHMA. This route would also cross an ACEC and would be adjacent to a WSA and lands with wilderness characteristics. |

¹ Mileposts are rounded to the nearest mile  
² Siting Principles include: Corridors are thoughtfully sited to provide maximum utility and minimum impact on the environment; Corridors promote efficient use of landscape for necessary development; Appropriate and acceptable uses are defined for specific corridors; and Corridors provide connectivity to renewable energy generation to the maximum extent possible, while also considering other generation, in order to balance the renewable sources and to ensure the safety and reliability of electricity transmission. Projects proposed in the corridor would be reviewed during their ROW application review process and would adhere to Federal laws, regulations, and policy.
Additional Compatibility Concerns

The issues and concerns listed below are not explicitly addressed through agency land use plans or are too general in nature to be addressed without further clarification. Although difficult to quantify, the concerns listed have potential to affect future use and/or development within this designated corridor. The Agencies have provided a preliminary general analysis. The information below is provided to facilitate further discussion during stakeholder review.

Potential Corridor Revisions:
- Relocate the corridor by shifting the corridor 10 mi east to fall within existing transmission corridor (comment on abstract).

  Analysis: For sections of the corridor that do not follow existing infrastructure, potential adjustments to the corridor could be considered to minimize impacts. The Agencies could consider shifting the corridor to the east along an existing pipeline. This route would cross an ACEC and PHMA and would be adjacent to a WSA and lands with wilderness characteristics.

Corridor Utility:
- There has not been a clearly defined economic need or market that this corridor would serve (comment on abstract).

  Analysis: The corridor provides a north-south interstate pathway for energy transport from Utah to Wyoming and connects multiple Section 368 energy corridors, creating a continuous corridor network across BLM- and USFS-administered land. Demonstrating an economic need for the corridor is beyond the scope of the regional reviews.

Specially Designated Area:
- Flaming Gorge - Green River Basin Scenic Byway intersects corridor at MP 74 to MP 75, MP 108 to MP 112, and MP 118 to MP 119.

  Analysis: The Wyoming Department of Transportation administers the Scenic Byway, and future development in the corridor would require coordination with this agency.

Ecology:
- Large portions of this corridor do not follow existing disturbance, and development in the corridor would lead to unnecessary impacts to undeveloped lands and fragmentation of existing wildlife habitats in a place highly valued for its undeveloped nature. It is imperative the Agencies delete this corridor in order to avoid these impacts (comment on abstract).
- Comment on abstract: Sweetwater County anglers, hunters, wildlife enthusiasts, and statewide conservation groups have expressed their desire for more stringent habitat protection measures for the GLMA in an effort to prevent industrialized levels of energy related development from occurring and negatively impacting this wildlife-rich landscape. The area between Little Mountain and Flaming Gorge Reservoir is a popular area for recreation, fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing. It has been described as the "Yellowstone of Sweetwater County," highlighting its importance among the citizens of not only Sweetwater County, but also Wyoming as a whole (comment on abstract).
- Crucial winter range for the South Rock Springs elk herd unit and the South Rock Springs mule deer herd unit (comment on abstract).
- Demand for big game hunting permits in this area are extremely high, and drawing odds for both South Rock Springs deer (HA I 02) and South Rock Springs elk (HAs 30, 31, and 32) are among the most difficult to draw in Wyoming, further highlighting this area's popularity. More than 15,000 fishing
licenses sold annually in Sweetwater County with anglers spending over $48.4 million in the last 5 years. Big game hunters in GLMA spent over $12.7 million in the last 5 years (comment on abstract).

- The corridor runs directly through the GLMA. This unique high desert habitat region is considered by biologists and resource managers to be some of the most sensitive fish and wildlife habitat in Wyoming (comment on abstract).

**Analysis:** Existing IOPs and BMPs would be required. For sections of the corridor that do not follow existing infrastructure, potential adjustments to the corridor could be considered to minimize impacts. The Agencies could consider an IOP for habitat connectivity so that transmission projects within Section 368 energy corridors are sited and designed in a manner that minimizes impacts on habitat connectivity.

**Ecosystem:**

- Issues related to the watershed could be a concern in the Rock Springs FO.
- Proximity of the corridor to Flaming Gorge, multiple springs and recharge areas associated with this area suggest that deeper regions of shallow groundwater may be encountered with disturbance and development (comment on abstract).
- Issues related to soils could be a concern in the Rock Springs FO.
- The area referred to as the Little Mountain Ecosystem represents a unique set of habitat associations that yield a distribution of species unique to the state of Wyoming, more similar to areas associated with desert and pinyon-juniper habitats in the southwest. In fact, this is the only portion of Wyoming with a pinyon pine-juniper habitat type, and its associated species (comment on abstract).
- Delete corridor. If a pipeline ruptured within MP 71 to MP 108, it could cause irreparable damage to the world class fisheries of the Flaming Gorge Reservoir, valuable wildlife habitat and scenic resources. This could cause an economic loss to the multi-million dollar recreation industry of the region (comment on abstract).
- Increasing demands for energy development and other land uses along the east side of Flaming Gorge Reservoir cumulatively may threaten water quality and physical characteristics in this crucial habitat. Land disturbances can yield heavier sediment and phosphorus loading to Flaming Gorge Reservoir encouraging eutrophic aquatic conditions and/or accelerated sediment deposition that deteriorate habitat quality for aquatic wildlife. Moreover, threats of large-scale industrial chemical or petroleum spills from pipelines constructed in this corridor could negatively affect water quality and fisheries due to its proximity to Flaming Gorge (comment on abstract).

**Analysis:** Adherence to existing IOPs for wildlife, water resources and soils would be required.

**Abstract Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ACEC = area of critical environmental concern; ARMPA = Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; BMP = best management practice; FO = field office; GHMA = general habitat management area; GIS = geographic information system; GLMA = Greater Little Mountain area; GRSG = Greater Sage-grouse; IOP = interagency operating procedure; MP = milepost; NHT = National Historic Trail; NST = National Scenic Trail; PEIS = Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; PHMA = priority habitat management area; RFI = request for information; RMP = resource management plan; ROD = Record of Decision; ROW = right-of-way; USFS = U.S. Forest Service; VRM = visual resource management; WSA = Wilderness Study Area; WWEC = West-wide Energy Corridor.