

Chapter 1

Purpose and Need

1.1 Introduction

The construction of new transmission and distribution facilities is required throughout the western United States to meet the increasing demand for power as more people move to many of the fastest growing communities.

According to Executive Order 13212 dated May 18, 2001, “The increased production and transmission of energy in a safe and environmentally sound manner is essential to the well-being of the American people...agencies shall take appropriate actions, to the extent consistent with applicable law, to expedite projects that will increase the production, transmission, or conservation of energy.”

Las Vegas is one of the fastest growing communities in the United States, and the demand for additional power transmission and use continues to increase as more and more people move into the Las Vegas Valley. The population is expected to increase to more than 2 million people in the next 10 years or less, which will put a demand on the existing power transmission system that cannot be met without system upgrades and improvements.

Nevada Power Company (Nevada Power) is proposing to use Federally-administered lands and interconnection requests to the Federal power system. Therefore, the lead agency, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) along with cooperating agencies, Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and Western Area Power Administration (Western), have prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) as part of their decision-making process. Through this decision process, the agencies will meet their obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and respective Department of Interior and Department of Energy implementing regulations. The agencies will use the results of the EA to support a determination of whether or not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

1.2 Applicant’s Underlying Purpose and Need

Nevada Power has a need to increase transmission capacity between its Harry Allen Substation and Western’s Mead Substation. The increased transmission must be obtained at a reasonable cost and within acceptable engineering design standards while minimizing environmental impacts. To meet this need, Nevada Power proposes to construct 48 miles of new 500kV transmission line running east of the greater Las Vegas area. See Figure 1-1 for the general location of the Harry Allen–Mead 500kV Transmission Line (Proposed Action). Of the 48 miles, 32 miles are within lands managed by the BLM, 8 miles are within lands managed by the USBR, 4 miles are within lands managed by Western and 4 miles are on private land. The increased transmission capacity would meet several purposes that include:

- Providing greater reliability and capacity for Nevada Power’s transmission system

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- Increasing the ability to distribute available power to meet existing and future demands
- Meeting Nevada Power’s contractual obligation for transmission with various power producers
- Increasing Nevada Power’s ability to import power to meet growing electrical demand in the Las Vegas area

1.3 Need for Agency Action

The BLM, USBR and Western each have the need to respond to the applications for crossing lands under their jurisdiction. Additionally, Western has a need to respond to two applications for interconnection to the Federal power system and ensure reliability of the Federal power system.

1.4 Conformance with Resource Management Plan

The Proposed Action is subject to the BLM Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved October 5, 1998. The plan has been reviewed and it is determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Las Vegas RMP, specifically decisions RW-1, RW-1-a and RW-1-h, which provide land for rights-of-way for major transmission lines within designated corridors, as well as land outside corridors for rights-of-way at the discretion of the agency. The Proposed Action is also in conformance with all other related Federal, state and local statutes, regulations and plans. Table 1-1 documents the Federal, state and local agencies’ approvals, reviews and permitting requirements for the transmission line.

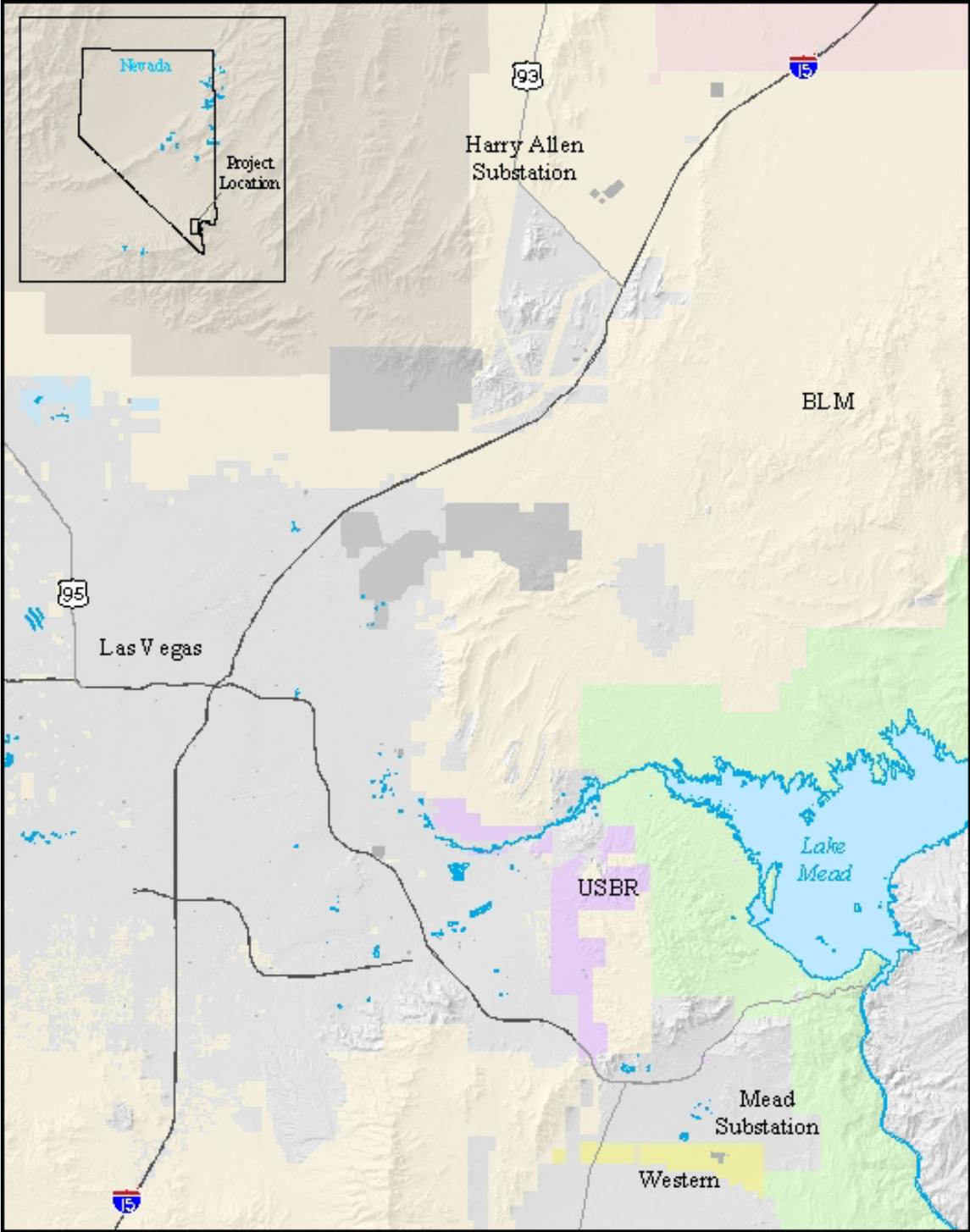


Figure 1-1 General Location of Project Area

1.5 Relationship to Statutes, Regulations & Other Plans

Table 1-1 Authorizations, Permits, Reviews and Approvals

Action Requiring Permit, Approval, or Review	Permit/Approval	Accepting Authority/ Approving Agency	Statutory Reference
FEDERAL			
Right-of-Way over Land Under Federal Management	Right-of-Way Grant	BLM	FLPMA 1976 (PL94-579) USC 1761-1771 and 43 CFR Part 2800
	License	USBR	Acts of June 17, 1902, and August 4, 1939, as amended, and 43 CFR 429
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance to Grant Right-of-Way	Environmental Assessment (EA)	BLM, Western, & USBR	NEPA, CEO 40 CFR Part 1500-et.seq.
Grant of Right-of-Way by BLM Grant of License by USBR Letter of Permission Western	National Historic Preservation Act Compliance (Section 106)	State Historic Preservation Office	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 36 CFR Part 800, 16 USC 47
Grant of Right-of Way by BLM Grant of License by USBR Letter of Permission Western	Endangered Species Act Compliance by BLM and by FWS Biological Assessment Biological Opinion	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)	Endangered Species Act of 1973 Section 7 Consultation, 50 CFR, Part 17, 16 USC 1539, as amended
Tower location and height relative to air traffic	“No Hazard Declaration” required if structure is more than 200 feet in designated airport areas	Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	49 USC 1501 14 CFR Part 77
Dredge or fill activities in waters of the United States	Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit	U.S. Corps of Engineers	33 USC 1344
Crossing Western’s withdrawal lands	Special Use Permit or Right-of-Way Agreement	Western	The Reclamation Act, Act of June 17, 1902, 32 Stat. 388 and Department of Energy Organization Act, Aug.4, 1977, 91 Stat. 565
STATE OF NEVADA			
Construction of Utility Facilities	Utility Environmental Protection Act – Permit to Construct	Nevada Public Utility Commission	NRS704.860 NAC703.420
Conditional permit for disturbance or destruction of critically endangered plants		Nevada Division of Forestry	NAC527. 17
Impacts to water quality associated with discharges of dredged or fill materials in waters of the U.S.	401 Water Quality Certification, Clean Water Act	Nevada Division of Environmental Protection	33 USC 1344
Permits construction activities for the project that would result in the discharge of stormwater to waters of the state	General Discharge Permit for Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity	Nevada Bureau of Water Pollution Control	40 CFR Section 122.26(b)(14)
LOCAL			
Construction and Operation	Special Use	Clark County Board of Commissioners	Clark County Zoning Ordinance

Action Requiring Permit, Approval, or Review	Permit/Approval	Accepting Authority/ Approving Agency	Statutory Reference
Construction and Operation	Special Use	City of Henderson Board of Commissioners	City of Henderson, Development Code
Construction/Fugitive Dust – PM10	Dust Control	Clark County Department of Air Quality Management	Clean Air Act of 1977 and Amendments NRS 321.001, 40 CFR Subpart C, 42 USC 7408, 42 USC 7409