

Appendix G-1

**Bureau of Land Management
Visual Resource Management Amendments Analysis
Gateway West Transmission Line Project**

Prepared by Tetra Tech Inc.

Submitted To:

Bureau of Land Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION..... G.1-1

2 PROJECT FEATURES AFFECTING VISUAL ENVIRONMENT G.1-3

2.1 Facility Components G.1-3

2.2 Project-wide Visual Mitigation Measures Proposed by the Proponents G.1-4

3 STUDY ASSUMPTIONS..... G.1-4

4 PROJECT-WIDE ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT G.1-5

5 AREAS OF INCONSISTENCY G.1-7

5.1 Casper RMP G.1-10

5.1.1 AOI C-1 Deer Creek (Segment 1E and 1W[c] Proposed and Alternative Route 1E-C) G.1-10

5.1.2 AOI C-2 Dugway Rim (Segment 1 Proposed Route 1E) G.1-12

5.1.3 AOIs C-3.1 through C.3-4 (Segment 1 Proposed and Alternative Routes 1E-C, 1W(a) and 1W(c)) G.1-13

5.2 Rawlins RMP G.1-28

5.2.1 AOI R-1 Laramie North (Proposed Route – Segment 1E and Alternative 1E-B) G.1-29

5.2.2 AOI R-2 Laramie South (Alternative 1E-B)..... G.1-30

5.2.3 AOI R-3 North Platte AOI (Segment 2 Proposed Route)..... G.1-32

5.3 Green River RMP G.1-41

5.3.1 AOI GR-1 Green River (Segment 4 Proposed Route)..... G.1-42

5.4 Kemmerer RMP G.1-47

5.4.1 AOI K-1 Sublette Cutoff (Proposed Route – Segment 4) G.1-47

5.4.2 AOI K-2 Commissary Ridge (Proposed Route – Segment 4)..... G.1-49

5.4.3 AOI K-3 Sublette Range (Proposed Route – Segment 4, Alternative 4F) G.1-51

5.4.4 AOI K-4 Tunp Range (Alternative 4A)..... G.1-52

5.4.5 AOI K-5 Hams Fork (Alternative 4F) G.1-54

5.4.6 AOI K-6 A and B, Fossil Butte (Alternatives 4B/4C and 4D/4E) G.1-56

5.4.7 AOI K-7 Sillem Ridge AOI (Alternatives 4C/4E) G.1-59

5.4.8 AOI K-8 Boulder Ridge (Alternatives 4C and 4E)..... G.1-60

5.4.9 Designated Viewsheds and Trail Segments..... G.1-61

5.5 Malad MFP G.1-87

5.5.1 AOI M-1 Deep Creek (Segment 5 and Segment 7 Proposed Routes)..... G.1-88

5.5.2 AOI M-2 Snake River (Proposed Route – Segment 5)..... G.1-89

5.5.3 AOI M-3 Deep Creek East (Segment 5 and Segment 7 Proposed Routes)..... G.1-89

5.6 Cassia RMP G.1-99

5.6.1 AOI CA-1 Jim Sage (Alternative 7H)..... G.1-100

5.6.2 AOI CA-2 Cottonwood Creek AOI (Alternative 7H) G.1-101

5.6.3 AOI CA-3 Spring Canyon (Alternative 7E) G.1-102

5.6.4	AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Travel Zone (Alternative 7I and Alternative 7J)	G.1-103
5.6.5	AOI CA-5 Goose Creek Travel Zone (Alternative 7I and Alternative 7J)	G.1-104
5.7	Twin Falls MFP	G.1-118
5.7.1	AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek (Proposed Route – Segment 9)	G.1-119
5.7.2	AOI TF-2 Rock Creek (Alternative 7I and Alternative 7J)	G.1-121
5.8	Jarbidge RMP	G.1-128
5.8.1	AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek (Proposed Route – Segment 9)	G.1-129
5.8.2	AOI J-2 Saylor Creek (Proposed Route – Segment 9)	G.1-131
5.8.3	AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail (Alternative 9D/9G)	G.1-132
5.8.4	AOI J-4 Oregon Trail (Alternative 8A, Alternative 9B)	G.1-134
5.8.5	AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail (Proposed Route – Segment 8)	G.1-136
5.9	SRBOP RMP	G.1-152
5.9.1	AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail (Segment 9 Alternative 9D/9G)	G.1-153
5.9.2	AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte (Segment 9 Alternative 9D/9F and Segment 8 Alternative 8E; Segment 9G/9H)	G.1-155
5.9.3	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte (Segment 8 Proposed Route, Alternative 8E, Alternative 9D/9F, and Alternative 9G/9H)	G.1-157
5.10	Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP	G.1-170
5.10.1	AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge (Proposed Route – Segment 8)	G.1-171
5.11	Wells RMP	G.1-176
5.11.1	Segment Alternatives	G.1-176
5.11.2	AOI W-1 Goose Creek (Alternative 7I/7J)	G.1-177
5.12	Bruneau MFP	G.1-182
5.12.1	Segment Alternatives	G.1-182
5.12.2	AOI B-1 Castle Creek (Segment 9 Proposed Route)	G.1-183
5.12.3	Plan Amendment	G.1-184

Attachment A. Existing Conditions and Photographic Simulations

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1-1.	Primary Transmission Structures – Visual Description.....	G.1-4
Table 5-1.	BLM RMP and MFP Areas of Inconsistency	G.1-7
Table 5.4-1.	Historic Trail Segments.....	G.1-63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1.	Project Overview	G.1-2
Figure 5-1.	AOI Overview Map	G.1-9
Figure 5.1-1.	Casper RMP Boundary Map	G.1-15
Figure 5.1-2.	AOI C-1 Deer Creek AOI Visual Analysis.....	G.1-16
Figure 5.1-3.	AOI C-1 Deer Creek AOI Detailed Map	G.1-17
Figure 5.1-4.	AOI C-2 Dugway Rim Visual Analysis.....	G.1-18
Figure 5.1-5.	AOI C-2 Dugway Rim	G.1-19
Figure 5.1-6.	AOI 3.1 Spruce Creek Visual Analysis.....	G.1-20
Figure 5.1-7.	AOI C.31 Spruce Creek Detailed Map	G.1-21
Figure 5.1-8.	AOI 3.2 Bates Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-22
Figure 5.1-9.	AOI 3.2 Bates Creek Detailed Map	G.1-23
Figure 5.1-10.	AOI Bates Creek Visual Analysis.....	G.1-24
Figure 5.1-11.	AOI 3.3 Bates Creek Detailed Map	G.1-25
Figure 5.1-12.	AOI 3.4 Bates Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-26
Figure 5.1-13.	AOI 3.4 Bates Creek Detailed Map	G.1-27
Figure 5.2-1.	Rawlins RMP Boundary Map	G.1-34
Figure 5.2-2.	AOI R-1 Laramie North Visual Analysis	G.1-35
Figure 5.2-3.	AOI R-1 Laramie North Detailed Map	G.1-36
Figure 5.2-4.	AOI R-2 Laramie South Visual Analysis.....	G.1-37
Figure 5.2-5.	AOI R-2 Laramie South Detailed Map.....	G.1-38
Figure 5.2-6.	AOI R-3 North Platte Visual Analysis	G.1-39
Figure 5.2-7.	AOI R-3 North Platte Detailed Map	G.1-40
Figure 5.3-1.	Green River RMP Boundary Map	G.1-44
Figure 5.3-2.	AOI GR-1 Green River AOI Visual Analysis.....	G.1-45
Figure 5.3-3.	AOI GR-1 Green River AOI Detailed Map.....	G.1-46
Figure 5.4-1.	Kemmerer RMP Boundary Map.....	G.1-64
Figure 5.4-2.	AOI K-1 Sublette Cutoff AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-65
Figure 5.4-3.	AOI K1 Sublette Cutoff AOI Detailed Map.....	G.1-66
Figure 5.4-4.	AOI K-2 Commissary Ridge AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-67
Figure 5.4-5.	AOI K-2 Commissary Ridge AOI Detailed Map.....	G.1-68
Figure 5.4-6.	AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 4F)	G.1-69
Figure 5.4-7.	AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4F)	G.1-70
Figure 5.4-8.	AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Visual Analysis (Proposed Route).....	G.1-71
Figure 5.4-9.	AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Detailed Map (Proposed Route).....	G.1-72
Figure 5.4-10.	AOI K-4Tunp Range AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 4A)	G.1-73
Figure 5.4-11.	AOI K-4Tunp Range AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4F)	G.1-74
Figure 5.4-12.	AOI K-5 Hams Fork AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-75
Figure 5.4-13.	AOI K-5 Hams Fork AOI Detailed Map	G.1-76
Figure 5.4-14.	AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternatives 4B/4C).....	G.1-77
Figure 5.4-15.	AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Detailed Map (Alternatives 4B/4C).....	G.1-78
Figure 5.4-16.	AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternatives 4D/4E).....	G.1-79
Figure 5.4-17.	AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4D/4E)	G.1-80

Figure 5.4-18.	AOI K-7 Sillem Ridge Visual Analysis (Alternative 4C/4E)	G.1-81
Figure 5.4-19.	AOI K-7 Sillem Ridge Detailed Map (Alternative 4C/4E)	G.1-82
Figure 5.4-20.	AOI K-8 Boulder Ridge AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 4D/4E).....	G.1-83
Figure 5.4-21.	AOI K-8 Boulder Ridge AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4D/4E).....	G.1-84
Figure 5.4-22.	Designated Viewsheds	G.1-85
Figure 5.4-23.	Historic Trail Segments.....	G.1-86
Figure 5.5-1.	Malad MFP Boundary Map	G.1-92
Figure 5.5-2.	AOI M-1 Malad AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 5)	G.1-93
Figure 5.5-3.	AOI M-1 Malad AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 7)	G.1-94
Figure 5.5-4.	AOI M-1 Malad AOI Detailed Map (Segments 5 and 7).....	G.1-95
Figure 5.5-5.	AOI M-3 Deep Creek East AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 5).....	G.1-96
Figure 5.5-6.	AOI M-3 Deep Creek East AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 7).....	G.1-97
Figure 5.5-7.	AOI M-3 Deep Creek East AOI Detailed Map (Segments 5 and 7)	G.1-98
Figure 5.6-1.	Cassia RMP Boundary Map.....	G.1-106
Figure 5.6-2.	AOI CA-1 Jim Sage Visual Analysis.....	G.1-107
Figure 5.6-3.	AOI CA-1 Jim Sage Detailed Map	G.1-108
Figure 5.6-4.	AOI CA-2 Cottonwood Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-109
Figure 5.6-5.	AOI CA-2 Cottonwood Creek Detailed Map	G.1-110
Figure 5.6-6.	AOI CA-3 Spring Canyon Visual Analysis	G.1-111
Figure 5.6-7.	AOI CA-3 Spring Canyon Detailed Map	G.1-112
Figure 5.6-8.	Spring Canyon AOI Looking South from KOP 311 and KOP 306.....	G.1-113
Figure 5.6-9.	AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-114
Figure 5.6-10.	AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Detailed Map	G.1-115
Figure 5.6-11.	AOI CA-5 Goose Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-116
Figure 5.6-12.	AOI CA-5 Goose Creek Detailed Map	G.1-117
Figure 5.7-1.	Twin Falls MFP Boundary Map.....	G.1-123
Figure 5.7-2.	AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-124
Figure 5.7-3.	AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek Detailed Map	G.1-125
Figure 5.7-4.	AOI TF-2 Rock Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-126
Figure 5.7-5.	AOI TF-2 Rock Creek Detailed Map	G.1-127
Figure 5.8-1.	Jarbidge RMP Boundary Map.....	G.1-138
Figure 5.8-2.	AOI J-1/TF-2 Salmon Falls Creek AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-139
Figure 5.8-3.	AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek AOI Detailed Map	G.1-140
Figure 5.8-4.	AOI J-2 Saylor Creek AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-141
Figure 5.8-5.	View from KOP 816 (AOI J-2).....	G.1-142
Figure 5.8-6.	AOI J-2 Saylor Creek AOI Detailed Map	G.1-143
Figure 5.8-7.	AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-144
Figure 5.8-8.	AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map	G.1-145
Figure 5.8-9.	AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 8A)	G.1-146
Figure 5.8-10.	AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 8A)	G.1-147
Figure 5.8-11.	AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 9B)	G.1-148
Figure 5.8-12.	AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 9B)	G.1-149
Figure 5.8-13.	AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-150
Figure 5.8-14.	AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map	G.1-151
Figure 5.9-1.	SRBOP RMP Boundary Map.....	G.1-159
Figure 5.9-2.	AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis	G.1-160
Figure 5.9-3.	AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map	G.1-161
Figure 5.9-4.	AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternatives 9D/9F/8E)..	G.1-162
Figure 5.9-5.	AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 9G/9H)	G.1-163
Figure 5.9-6.	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Detailed Map	G.1-164
Figure 5.9-7.	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Segment 8	G.1-165

Figure 5.9-8.	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Alternative 8E	G.1-166
Figure 5.9-9.	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Alternative 9D/9F	G.1-167
Figure 5.9-10.	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Alternative 9G/9H	G.1-168
Figure 5.9-11.	AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Detailed Map	G.1-169
Figure 5.10-1.	Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills RMP Boundary Map	G.1-173
Figure 5.10-2.	AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge Visual Analysis.....	G.1-174
Figure 5.10-3.	AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge Detailed Map.....	G.1-175
Figure 5.11-1.	Wells Field Office and Resource Management Plan Area.....	G.1-179
Figure 5.11-2.	AOI Viewshed.....	G.1-180
Figure 5.11-3.	Area of Inconsistency	G.1-181
Figure 5.12-1.	Bruneau Field Office and Resource Management Plan Area	G.1-185
Figure 5.12-2.	AOI B-1 Castle Creek Visual Analysis	G.1-186
Figure 5.12-3.	AOI B-1 Castle Creek Detailed Map	G.1-187
Figure 5.12-4.	View of Lands Adjacent to AOI B-1 from KOP 581	G.1-188

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
AOI	areas of inconsistency
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CR	County Route
EIS	environmental impact statement
FO	Field Office
Forest Service	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
Gateway West	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
GIS	geographic information system
IDANG	Idaho Army National Guard
IDT	Interdisciplinary Team
KOP	key observation point
kV	kilovolt
LRT	Linear Routing Tool
MFP	management framework plans
NF	National Forest
NHT	National Historic Trail
NM	National Monument
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
PMA	Prescriptive Management Area
Project	Gateway West Transmission Line Project
R	Range
RMP	resource management plan
RMPPA	Rawlins Management Plan Planning Area
ROD	Record of Decision
ROW	right-of-way
SMA	Special Management Area
SR	State Route
SRBOP	Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
SRMA	Special Recreation Management Area
T	Township

VRM	Visual Resource Management
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WSA	Wilderness Study Area
WSR	Wild and Scenic River
WWE	West-Wide Energy

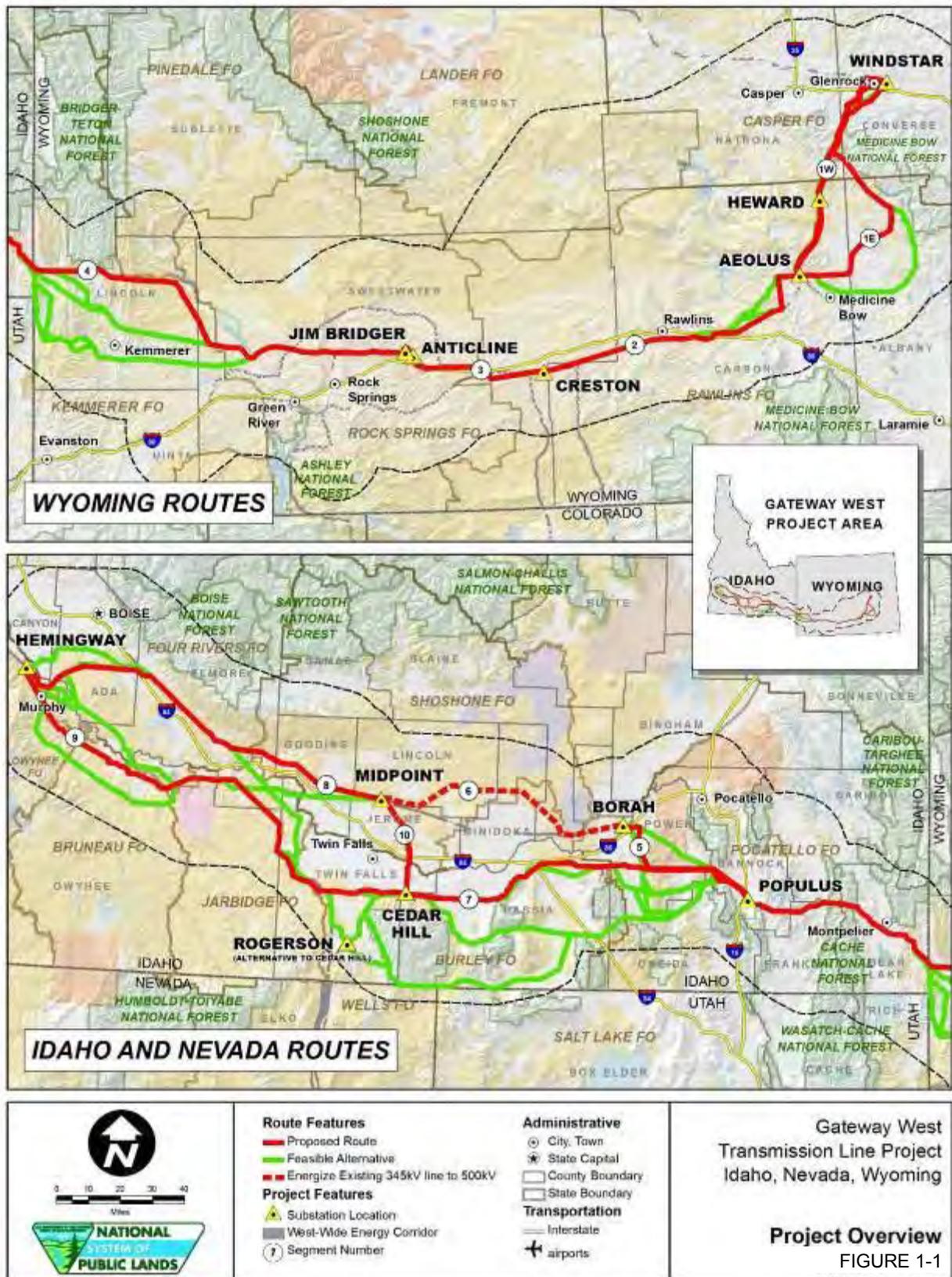
1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides an analysis of locations where visual resource management driven amendments to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource management plans (RMPs) and/or management framework plans (MFPs) may be necessary for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project (Gateway West or Project). Gateway West consists of 10 segments between the Windstar Substation at Glenrock, Wyoming, and the Hemingway Substation approximately 30 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho, a total distance of approximately 1,103 miles (see Figure 1-1).

The transmission line would cross numerous BLM district and field offices. Activities on BLM-managed land are governed by direction found in individual RMPs and MFPs. These lands are subject to visual resource management objectives as developed using the BLM Visual Resource Management (VRM) System (BLM 1984) and are presented in the RMP or MFP. The BLM system identifies four VRM Classes (I through IV) with specific management prescriptions for each class. The system is based on an inventory of the existing scenic quality, viewer sensitivity, and viewing distance zones. The management class for a given area is typically arrived at by comparing the scenic quality, visual sensitivity, and distance zone with the overall goals set forth for the area. The objectives of each VRM classification from the VRM Visual Resource Inventory Manual are stated below:

- VRM Class I. The objective is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
- VRM Class II. The objective is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- VRM Class III. The objective is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate or lower. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- VRM Class IV. The objective is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

1
2



The presence of a transmission line in VRM Classes I and II and, in some special circumstances, Class III areas usually conform with visual management objectives. Areas where this occurs are identified as areas of inconsistency (AOIs).

Best Management Practices for tower design and location were applied to reduce plan inconsistency as much as possible. This report describes each of the AOIs and explains why the VRM Class I, II or, in some cases, III would be crossed and what consideration was given to avoiding the area. The type of amendment required should the proposed or an alternative route be selected is then proposed. Two types of land use plan amendments were considered: 1) changing the VRM classification, or 2) allowing the proposed use to occur without changing the VRM classification. Maps showing the distribution of VRM classes within RMP and MFP boundaries are shown in Section 5.

2 PROJECT FEATURES AFFECTING VISUAL ENVIRONMENT

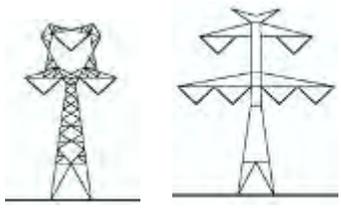
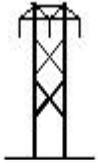
2.1 Facility Components

The Project facility components that affect the visual environment include:

- Approximately 1,103 miles of transmission lines and associated support structures and conductors.
 - Approximately 258 miles (1,905 structures) would be single-circuit 230-kilovolt (kV) or 345-kV steel H-frame structures between 60 and 90 feet tall with a 700-foot average distance between structures.
 - Approximately 501 miles (2,228 structures) would be single-circuit 500-kV lattice steel structures between 145 and 180 feet tall with a 1,200- to 1,300-foot average distance between structures.
 - Approximately 346 miles (1,506 towers) would be double-circuit 500-kV lattice structures between 160 and 190 feet tall for the Proposed Action.
 - For the Design Variation approximately 3,012 single-circuit structures would be used instead of 1,506 double-circuit structures.
- The Project would have 12 substations, including 3 proposed new Project-specific substations; one substation that is planned for construction for other projects and that will be expanded for this Project; and 8 existing substations that would be expanded for this Project;
- Ancillary facilities such as construction roads (up to 16-foot wide) and 8-foot-wide service roads, temporary construction staging areas, regeneration stations, power supply to new substations, and other similar facilities would also be visible in the construction and operations phases of the Project.

Table 2.1-1 describes aspects of the primary proposed structures that would affect the visual environment.

Table 2.1-1. Primary Transmission Structures – Visual Description

Project Facility	Description
Transmission Line Segments	
<p>Transmission Line Features Common to All Proposed 500-kV Segments</p>  <p>Example -single and double-circuit structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conductors: Bundled with three subconductors per phase. Non-specular (dull) finish rather than a shiny finish. • Estimated subconductor diameter: 1.504 inches. • Bundle spacing: Distance between subconductors is 18 inches and 25 inches. • Typical ground clearance: 35 feet. • Structure types: lattice steel single and double circuit structures. Dulled galvanized steel finish. • Structure heights: Single-circuit structure varies between 145 and 180 feet. Average height of 156 feet. • Structure heights: Double-circuit structure varies between 160 and 190 feet. Average height of 170 feet. • Approximate distance between structures: 1,200 to 1,300 feet. • ROW width for double-circuit: 300 feet, ROW width for single-circuit: 250 feet.
<p>Transmission Line Features Common to All Proposed 230-kV Segments</p>  <p>Example -single circuit structure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conductors: Bundled with two subconductors per phase. Non-specular finish. • Estimated subconductor diameter: 1.196 inches. • Bundle spacing: 18 inches vertical. • Typical ground clearance: 28 feet. • Structure types: steel H-frame structures. • Above-ground structure heights: varies between 60 and 90 feet. • Approximate distance between structures: 700 feet. • ROW width: 125 feet.

2.2 Project-wide Visual Mitigation Measures Proposed by the Proponents

The Proponents have incorporated three mitigation measures into the Project to reduce visual impacts:

1. Transmission towers would be constructed of dulled galvanized steel to minimize visual impacts.
2. Non-specular (dull appearance) transmission line conductors would be used.
3. Self-weathering steel pole H-frame structures would be used in Segment 1 and in certain visually sensitive areas.

3 STUDY ASSUMPTIONS

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) assumed that BLM land use plan amendments would be required for AOlS. The IDT also assumed that design elements and/or other mitigation measures that reduce impacts would not always reduce the visual contrast to a level that conformed with an area’s VRM class.

For the purpose of this study, the following approaches were used:

- The location of the Proposed Route or Route Alternatives across VRM Class III is consistent with the class objectives if consideration was given to alternative alignments that would avoid the area and feasible mitigation was applied. However, in special circumstances, crossing VRM Class III would not be consistent with the visual characteristics of the management class. Those areas received visual analysis, as described in Section 5.
- Direction for considering visual resource values stated in RMPs and MFPs were taken into consideration. Where absent or general in nature, the management direction provide in BLM Handbook H-1601-1, *Land Use Planning*, was considered (BLM 2005a).
- The AOI analysis area consisted of up to 15 miles from either side of the centerline of the Proposed Route and Route Alternatives.

4 PROJECT-WIDE ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

During transmission line siting, VRM Class I and Class II lands were avoided where possible. The routes were also sited to avoid historic trails (where possible) and monuments, wildlife refuges, state or federal parks or monuments, prominent peaks, and populated areas and a variety of natural resources including raptor nests, sage-grouse leks, and core areas. The objective was to have the least overall impact.

Constraint analyses have been used for the Project to assist in siting the transmission line routes and alternatives. In the initial phase, the Proponents attempted to locate the routes between required interconnection points (substations) using a comprehensive set of avoidance and opportunity criteria. Using this information, the Proponents initially identified, evaluated, and compared alternative corridors for each of the 10 segments. A Proposed Route was selected and alternative corridors were also evaluated for each segment.

Two general approaches were used to identify and evaluate alternative routes and select the Proposed Route and Route Alternatives carried forward for detailed study for each segment.

1. In proposed and established utility corridors¹ such as the Section 368 Energy Act West-wide Energy (WWE) Corridor (DOE and BLM 2009) or BLM and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Forest Service) designated utility corridors, and/or where existing transmission lines exist, analyses were completed to characterize the resources present in the areas crossed by the corridors and to determine if use of such corridors would result in significant

¹ In order to achieve the capacity rating needed to serve present and future loads within the Proponents' service area, the Western Electricity Coordinating Council requires a minimum separation from existing transmission lines that serve substantially the same load as that served by each of the new Gateway West transmission segments. As described in Chapter 1 of the environmental impact statement, that minimum separation depends on the purpose of the existing line, the load it now serves, and the remaining capacity of the rest of the grid to absorb the load if the several co-located lines fail at once. For the purposes of the initial siting study, the longest span was assumed to be 1,500 feet, thereby dictating the minimum distance between existing and proposed transmission lines serving the same load.

environmental effects. A combination of constraint mapping, stakeholder input, and field reconnaissance was used to confirm the use of existing or planned corridors. In several cases, new routes deviating from the existing or planned corridors were proposed because of adjacent environmental constraints such as sage-grouse leks, historic features, raptor nests, and oil and gas wells.

2. Where no existing or planned corridors existed, a “Greenfield” siting approach was followed.² In those cases, a geographic information system (GIS) computer analysis (Linear Routing Tool [LRT]) was used to identify initial corridors for further evaluation. Using data from numerous public sources, the LRT was used to develop alternative transmission line corridors by considering both routing constraints and opportunities. Constraints are defined as resources or conditions that may be negatively affected by transmission line routing. Opportunities are defined as resources or conditions that are favorable to facility construction or operation because of their characteristics.

Opportunities included, but were not limited to, WWE corridors, BLM or Forest Service designated utility corridors, and existing transmission lines energized to at least 230 kV. Many constraints were considered. These included railroads, pipelines, highways, state and national parks, wildlife refuges, BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), Department of Defense land, Bureau of Indian Affairs land and reservations, prime farmland, irrigated agriculture, confined animal feeding operations, dairies, airports, residences, cities and towns, oil and gas wells, oil and gas leases, surface and underground mining, erodible soils, geologic hazards, steep slopes, paleontological and historical resources, wetlands and floodplains. A wide variety of plant and animal concerns were also considered, including plant and animal species of concern, sage-grouse leks and core areas, raptor nests, crucial big game winter and parturition ranges, wild horse and burro management areas, and sensitive fisheries. Visual considerations included BLM VRM Class I, II, and III areas; scenic overlooks; scenic highways; federally designated scenic areas; and state and local scenic by-ways. Following selection of proposed and alternative routes via the LRT process, the alternatives were further refined by reviewing aerial photography and topographic maps or on the basis of important input received from stakeholders, field reconnaissance, and other sources.

In subsequent phases that have extended over one year, BLM evaluated initial routes, made adjustments and added additional routes to minimize impacts. Later cooperators and other stakeholders identified routes, often to accomplish a dominant objective based on a single resource such as agriculture or historic sites over other resources including VRM classes. Taking all of the various constraints and opportunities into consideration, crossing of VRM sensitive lands could not be avoided throughout the Project. Section 5 describes each AOI and identified proposed land use plan amendments for the Project to conform to the applicable land use plan.

² “Greenfield route” is a route that would be located away from linear corridors, thereby creating a new land use.

5 AREAS OF INCONSISTENCY

This section of the report summarizes the conditions for each AOI. It is organized by RMP or MFP from east to west by route segment and by individual AOI. The description for each AOI includes a summary of the applicable BLM land use plan and any visual considerations described in the plan. The route segments and alternatives are then described by location and the rationale provided for why routes could not avoid VRM Class I, II and, in some cases, III areas. Site maps are included that show VRM classes and a visual analysis conducted for an area within a 15-mile radius of the AOI. The general discussion is followed by a summary of the existing landscape conditions within the study area. The last section of each AOI discussion is a consistency analysis describing the results of the analysis, and the degree to which the AOI conforms or differs from the VRM class objective. The analysis also describes proposed plan amendments for the AOIs that do not conform to existing land use plans.

The proposed and alternative routes for the Gateway Project would require BLM actions to account for visual impacts in areas within 12 different BLM land use plans. Transmission line Segments 1E, 1W, 2, 3, and part of 4 are located in Wyoming (Figure 1-1). The Casper, Rawlins, Green River, and Kemmerer RMPs apply to actions in these segments. Segments 1E, 1W, 2, and the eastern portion of Segment 4 contain a total of 37 AOIs. Segment 3 does not contain any AOIs.

The remainder of Segment 4 and Segments 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are located in Idaho and northern Nevada. Affected land use plans include the Malad MFP, Cassia RMP, Twin Falls MFP, Jarbidge RMP, Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP) RMP, Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, Bruneau MFP and Wells RMP. Segments 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9 contain a total of 37 AOIs. Segment 6 involves energizing an existing transmission to 500 kV and does not contain any AOIs, nor does Segment 10. Table 5-1 lists AOIs by RMP/MFP and VRM class. Figure 5-1 is an overview map showing AOIs Project-wide.

Table 5-1. BLM RMP and MFP Areas of Inconsistency

Land Use Plan	AOI Designation/ Figure Number	Area Name	Route Designation (Tower Height)	VRM Class Crossed
Casper RMP	C-1	Deer Creek	Prop 1E, Prop 1W(a), 1W9c) (90 ft)	II
	C-2	Dugway Rim	Prop 1E (90 ft)	II
	C-3.1	Spruce Creek	Alt 1E-C (90 ft)	II
	C-3.2	Bates Creek	Alt 1E-C, Prop 1W(a), 1W(c) (90 ft)	II
	C-3.3	Bates Creek	Prop 1W(a) (90 ft)	II
	C-3.4	Bates Creek	Alt 1E-C (90 ft)	II
Rawlins RMP	R-1	Laramie North	Prop 1E Magpie (90 ft)	II
	R-2	Laramie South	Alt 1E-B Smith (90 ft)	II
	R-3	North Platte	Prop 2 (190 ft)	III
Green River RMP	GR-1	Green River	Prop 4 (190 ft)	II

Table 5-1. BLM RMP and MFP Areas of Inconsistency (continued)

Land Use Plan	AOI Designation/ Figure Number	Area Name	Route Designation (Tower Height)	VRM Class Crossed
Kemmerer RMP	K-1	Sublette Cutoff	Prop 4 (190 ft)	II
	K-2	Commissary Ridge	Prop 4 (190 ft)	II
	K-3	Sublette Range	Prop 4 (190 ft) Alt 4F (190 ft)	II
	K-4	Tunp Range	Alt 4A (190 ft)	II
	K-5	Hams Fork	Alt 4F (190 ft)	II
	K-6	Fossil Butte	Alt 4B,C, (190 ft) Alt 4D,E (190 ft)	II
	K-7	Sillem Ridge	Alt 4C,E (190 ft)	II
	K-8	Boulder Ridge	Alt 4C,E (190 ft)	II
Malad MFP	M-1	Deep Creek	Prop 5 (180 ft) Prop 7 (180 ft)	II
	M-2	Snake River	Prop 5 (180 ft)	II
	M-3	Deep Creek East	Prop 5 (180 ft) Prop 7 (180 ft)	III
Cassia RMP	CA-1	Jim Sage	Alt 7H (180 ft)	II
	CA-2	Cottonwood Creek	Alt 7H (180 ft)	III
	CA-3	Spring Canyon	Alt 7E (180 ft)	II
	CA-4	Goose Creek A	Alt 7I/7J (180 ft)	II
	CA-5	Goose Creek B	Alt 7I/7J (180 ft)	III
Twin Falls MFP	TF-2	Rock Creek	Alt 7I (180 ft)	II
Jarbidge RMP/Twin Falls MFP	TF-1/J-1	Salmon Falls Creek	Prop 9 (180 ft)	I, II
Jarbidge RMP	J-2	Saylor Creek	Prop 9 (180 ft)	II
	J-4	Oregon Trail	Alt 8A (180 ft) Alt 9B (180 ft)	I
	J-5	North Oregon Trail	Prop 8 (180 ft)	I
SRBOP RMP/Jarbidge RMP	BOP-1/J-3	South Oregon Trail	Alt 9D, 9G (180 ft)	II
SRBOP RMP	BOP-2	Sinker Butte	Alt 9D, 9F, 8E (180 ft) Alt 9G, 9H (180 ft)	II
	BOP-3	Guffey Butte	Prop 8 (180 ft) Alt 9D, 9F, 8E (180 ft) Alt 9G, 9H (180 ft)	II
Bennett Hills/ Timmerman Hills MFP	BH-1	Burnt Ridge	Prop 8 (180 ft)	II
Wells RMP	W-1	Goose Creek	Alt 7I (180 ft)	II
Bruneau MFP	B-1	Castle Creek	Prop 9	II

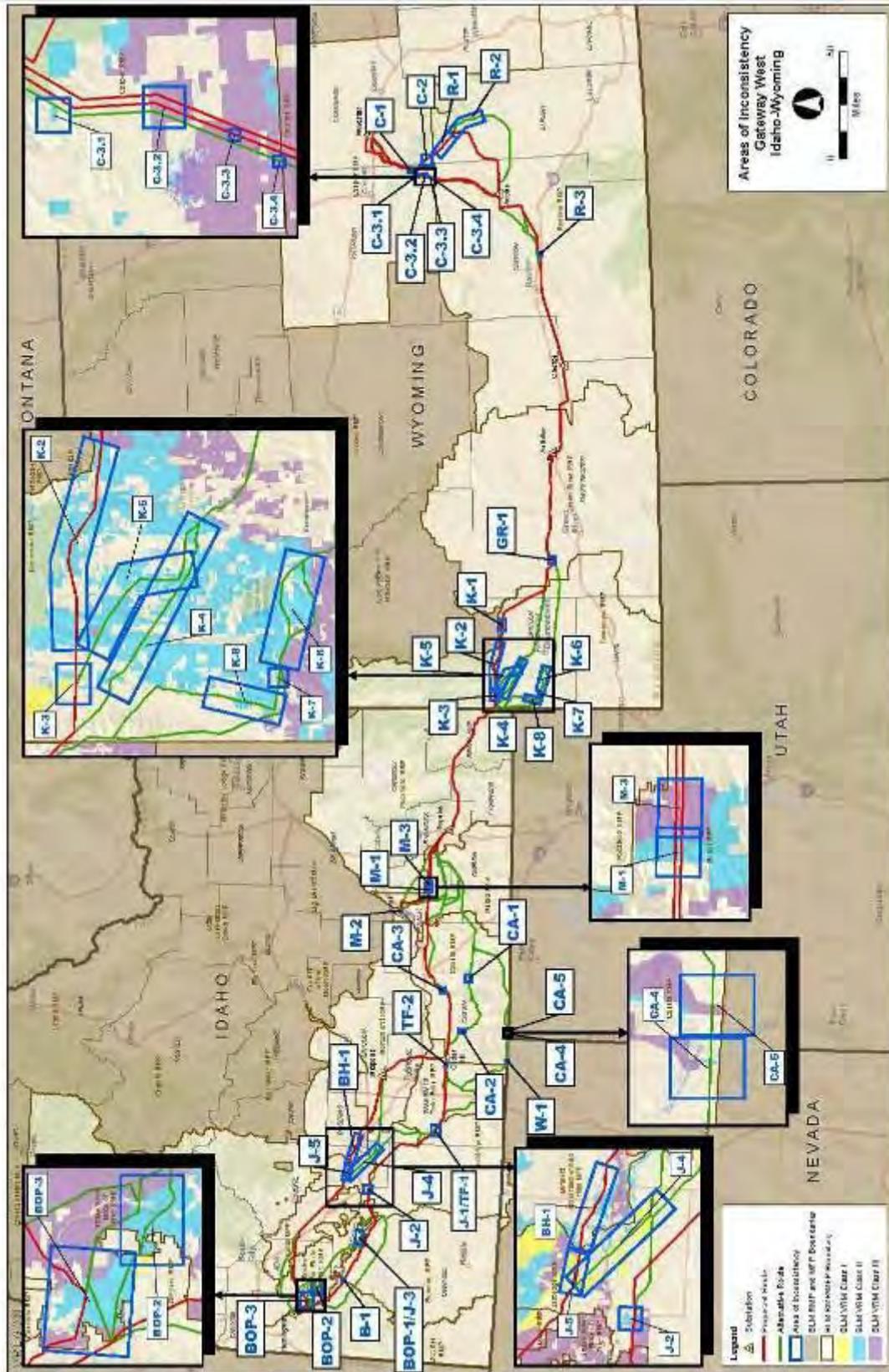


Figure 5-1. AOI Overview Map

5.1 Casper RMP

The Casper RMP (BLM 2007a) provides direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the Casper Field Office (FO) in east-central Wyoming. The Casper RMP planning area encompasses approximately 8,500,000 acres in Natrona, Converse, Platte, and Goshen Counties (see Figure 5.1-1). The Casper RMP discusses VRM visual resource values in Decision 5019 as “being managed under the VRM classes defined as mapped in the Casper FO GIS database. Changes in the number of acres within each VRM class depict a balance between development activities and protection of visual resources. These decisions included managing the foreground/middle ground of National Historic Trails (NHTs) as Class II until inventories are completed. If trail segments contribute to the overall eligibility that has integrity of setting they will be managed as VRM Class II. Where integrity of setting is lacking, the foreground/middle ground of NHTs will be managed as Class III.” While the routes do cross NHTs, they do not do so on BLM-managed land in the Casper FO; however, some trail crossings would be close to BLM VRM Class II managed areas.

The northern portions of Segments 1E and 1W are located within the Casper FO. Segment 1 routes consist of single-circuit 230-kV transmission lines between the existing Windstar Substation near the Dave Johnston Power Plant at Glenrock, Wyoming, and the planned Aeolus Substation near Hanna, Wyoming. The distance between the substations is approximately 75 to 80 miles. Certain factors, such as following the existing WWE corridor, minimizing the length of the lines, avoidance of large population centers, and location within favorable topography, were considerations for all segments. Specific constraints within Segment 1 that affected the route location included big game crucial winter range, NHTs, raptor nest sites, avoidance of VRM Class I and II, sage-grouse leks and sage-grouse core areas, oil and gas wells, large private landholders who placed high values on the natural scenery, and threatened or endangered plants and animals. There is a mosaic of public and private land along the Proposed and Alternative Routes and, as a result, the lines pass through scattered parcels of VRM Class II land, a few miles or less in length.

Visual classifications in the Casper RMP would be affected by this Project. Six VRM Class II management areas are crossed by the Proposed and Alternative Routes (Figure 5.1-1). AOI C-1 was identified as an AOI because it is managed as VRM Class II and is located adjacent to Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests (NF) land managed for an SIO moderate objective. The level of change to the characteristic landscapes in VRM II would typically not allow for presence of a transmission line. BLM action would be necessary to modify the visual classification to be consistent with the RMP. The remaining five AOIs are isolated parcels and are discussed in Sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3.

5.1.1 AOI C-1 Deer Creek (Segment 1E and 1W[c] Proposed and Alternative Route 1E-C)

The Deer Creek AOI consists of two VRM Class II parcels: a large parcel of approximately 630 acres, located approximately 30 miles south of Aeolus Substation, and a smaller 72-acre parcel, located approximately 0.3 mile north of the larger parcel. Segments 1E, 1W(a), 1W(c) and Alternative 1E-C cross this parcel and are located within a common corridor, each separated by approximately 1,500 feet, a distance

selected to ensure reliability. For this portion of its length, Proposed Route 1W(a) is an existing 230-kV transmission line that would be rebuilt similar in appearance to the existing line and in the same right-of-way (ROW) and therefore is consistent with the RMP. Proposed Route 1E crosses 0.8 mile of VRM Class II and Proposed Route 1W(c) crosses 1.2 miles. Alternative 1E-C crosses approximately 0.2 mile of the VRM Class II parcel. Figure 5.1-2 shows the viewshed of the Deer Creek AOI, proposed and alternative routes, and the VRM management classification. Figure 5.1-3 shows the detailed location and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – Several routes between Windstar and Aeolus were considered, including three proposed routes, four alternative routes studied in detail in the environmental impact statement (EIS), and five alternative routes that were not carried forward for detailed analysis due to a variety of constraints (see Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 of the Draft EIS for descriptions of Segments 1E and 1W and their Alternatives). Routes to the east of the Laramie Mountains and near the Thunder Basin National Grassland were considered and eliminated by the Proponents. A considerable amount of public comment was received during siting of the Segment 1E and 1W routes concerning cultural and natural resource features. These included landowners opposing the establishment of multiple transmission lines across their properties, as well as comments on new Greenfield routes, and the establishment of sage-grouse core areas. The Proponents reported that they selected the locations for adjacent Segments 1E and 1W(c) within the same transmission line corridor to minimize the effects to natural resources-including visual resources, and to avoid constructing additional Greenfield routes. The Proponents also reported a need for Segment 1E to be located east of the existing corridor to be more accessible to present and future wind power generators. In selecting a route for the southern portion of 1E they sought to avoid the higher and more visible terrain to the north and east as well as the sage-grouse core area to the south and west. In making a balanced routing decision that led to the proposed and alternative routes VRM Class II areas were unavoidable without causing greater overall effects.

Current BLM policy suggests that WWE corridor routes are often preferred utility routes, although other constraints may take precedence over the WWE corridor. Siting routes within common corridors of existing transmission lines can also be preferred locations, although the environmental consequences from the reliability separation sometimes result in greater effects than would occur if a new route is selected. During the siting process, the Proponents attempted to follow the WWE corridor unless other obvious constraints resulted in fewer impacts by choosing an alternative route.

Because the VRM Class II land in question is already crossed by an existing 230-kV line, the Proponents assumed that the effects of locating the other lines in the common corridor would be less than creating Greenfield corridors just to avoid VRM Class II land that already contains a transmission line.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Much of the 15-mile-radius study area surrounding AOI C-1 is mountainous, including portions of the Casper and Laramie Mountains. However, the southern slopes are less severe, especially in the area surrounding Bates Creek Reservoir. In addition to this reservoir, there are a number of other small waterbodies and drainages. There are extensive forest lands in the Medicine Bow-

Routt NF and other mountainous areas. Very little of the area has been developed and there are no major roads through the area. Attachment A, Figure C-1a shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity of AOI C-1 as viewed from key observation point (KOP) 105. The landscape is flat to rolling and to a large extent sage brush covered with no apparent water elements. The only visible manmade feature is an existing wood-pole H-frame 230-kV transmission line.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.1-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM class. Attachment A, Figure C-1b simulates the proposed transmission facilities on the existing landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route 1W(a) and Alternative 1E-C transmission line routes as viewed from KOP 105.

The views of the undulating to rugged terrain and simple geometric forms exhibit little diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. There would be few sensitive viewers south of Reno Hill in the Medicine Bow-Routt NF due to the remote nature of this VRM managed land. Possible sensitive viewers may be traveling on Highway 487, over 15 miles away; however, at this distance the line may not be visible and no KOP was identified to represent these possible sensitive viewers. The only visible man-made feature is the H-frame transmission line located within this VRM Class II managed area. The simulation and details gathered from pictures taken in the surrounding area confirm that Segments 1E and 1W(a) would be moderately to highly visible paralleling the existing line. The undulating terrain with simple but uniform vegetation would be contrasted by new structures, cleared ROW, and access roads, which would draw the attention of the casual observer and deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture. It was also determined that vegetative and topographic screening and other mitigation would not reduce the level of contrast.

Because this VRM Class II area would be occupied by multiple transmission lines, it is recommended that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action resulting in reclassifying 630 acres of AOI C-1 from VRM Class II to VRM Class III if any of the proposed or alternatives routes are selected (see Figure 5.1-3). During final design, consideration should be given to matching structure placement for 1W(a), where feasible, as an additional mitigation measure.

5.1.2 AOI C-2 Dugway Rim (Segment 1 Proposed Route 1E)

The Dugway Rim AOI comprises three isolated parcels ranging in size from approximately 45 acres to 475 acres spread across approximately 4 miles with a total of 1.1 miles of Segment 1E of the Proposed Route crossing VRM II areas. Proposed Route 1E is sited to balance crossing the higher terrain of the Laramie Range as well as avoiding the Natrona Sage-Grouse Core Area. Figure 5.1-4 shows the viewshed of the Dugway Rim AOI, the Proposed Route, and the VRM management classification. Figure 5.1-5 shows the detailed location and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative considered for this route are described in Section 5.1.1. Alternative 1E-C would avoid crossing this AOI, but would cross VRM Class II areas as described in Section 5.1.3. Alternative routes not studied in detail were eliminated due to crossing

core sage-grouse areas, creating more Greenfield routes, and impacting scenic and historical views.

Existing Landscape Conditions

Much of the 15-mile-radius study area surrounding AOI C-2 is mountainous, including portions of the Casper and Laramie Mountains. Little Medicine Bow Creek runs through the area and a tourist destination includes Little Medicine Bow Falls adjacent to KOPs 1039, 1040, and 1041. There are extensive forest lands in the Medicine Bow-Routt NF and other mountainous areas north of these KOPs. Very little of the area has been developed and there are no major roads through the area besides Baish Road along the Medicine Bow-Routt NF boundary. Attachment A, Figure C-2a shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity of AOI C2 as viewed from KOP 1039. The landscape is rolling to rugged and to a large extent sagebrush-covered.

Conformance Analysis

Figure 5.1-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM class. Attachment A, Figure C-2a shows the existing landscape conditions adjacent to KOP 1039; there are no views of the proposed transmission line from this viewpoint, only adjacent landscapes.

The views of the undulating to rugged terrain and simple geometric forms and rocky outcrops exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. There would be few sensitive viewers due to the remote nature of this VRM managed land. Possible sensitive viewers may be traveling on Little Medicine Road or adjacent two track roads; however, most would be at a distance that the line may not be visible and no KOP was identified to represent these possible sensitive viewers on the VRM managed lands. The undulating terrain with simple but uniform vegetation would be contrasted by new structures, cleared ROW, and access roads, which would draw the attention of the casual observer and deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture. It was also determined that vegetative and topographic screening and other mitigation would not reduce the level of contrast.

If this route is selected, micrositing may reduce the length across VRM Class II areas but would not feasibly avoid all parcels. It is recommended that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in AOI C-2. Proposed Route 1E is sited to balance crossing the higher terrain of the Laramie Range as well as avoiding the Natrona Sage-Grouse Core Area (see Figure 5.1-5). If this route is selected, micrositing may reduce the length across VRM Class II areas but would not feasibly avoid all parcels. It is recommended that the Gateway Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in AOI C-2.

5.1.3 AOIs C-3.1 through C.3-4 (Segment 1 Proposed and Alternative Routes 1E-C, 1W(a) and 1W(c))

These AOIs comprise isolated parcels ranging in size from less than 1 acre to approximately 6 acres spread across approximately 5 miles with a total VRM Class II area crossed of 0.32 miles that would be crossed by either the proposed or alternative routes. Proposed Route 1W(a), 1W(c) and Alternative 1E-C would be within or adjacent

to the WWE corridor and the proposed rebuild of the existing transmission line for much of this AOI. Propose Route 1W(a) is a rebuild of an existing powerline from MP 30 to MP 39, while 1W(c) is a rebuild from the Dave Johnston Power Plant to MP 25 and again from MP 34 to the end of the route. Portions of both 1W(a) and 1W(b) are new construction and rebuild within this AOI.

Alternatives Considered

Alternatives considered for this route are described in 5.1.1. Proposed Route 1E would avoid crossing the AOIs crossed by 1E-C; however, additional AOIs would be crossed. There are no alternative routes studied in detail for 1W(a) and 1W(b) through this area. See Chapter 2 for more detailed descriptions of Proposed and Alternative routes.

Existing Landscape Conditions

The existing landscape conditions vary by parcel locations. AOI 3.1 is in the Foothills Shrubland and Low Mountains ecoregion, with rocky outcrops creating some diversity in terrain. While AOI 3.2 is in a transitional area between this and the Wyoming Basin, AOIs 3.3 and 3.4 are in the Wyoming Basin; the surrounding landscape is undulating with few distinguishing features, and covered in dense, low-lying sagebrush. KOP 86 is located southwest of AOI C-3.4 and demonstrates the undulating, and remote characteristics of the landscape, while KOP 305, just north of 3.1 shows the rolling hills and rugged terrain of the foothills area. AOI 3.2 is fairly close to Ice Cave Mountain which has cultural importance related to early settlers. AOIs 3.2 through 3.4 are near Bates Creek Reservoir. The Fort Fetterman to Medicine Bow historic trail crosses north to south/southwest through the eastern part of the 15-mile radius study area for all of the viewsheds. The northern portion of the viewsheds is mountainous while the southern half is consists of undulating, sagebrush-dominated Wyoming Basin terrain. Bates Creek flows from the northwest into Bates Creek Reservoir, in the center of the viewsheds, while the N. Fork Medicine Bow River flow through the southern part of the study area and Stinking Creek flows along the western side, paralleling Highway 487.

Conformance Analysis

Figures 5.1-9, -11,-13, and -15 show the locations of the AOIs, the Proposed Routes and Route Alternatives, and the VRM management classification. The existing line is also visible within these figures as well as the viewshed analysis figures (Figures 5.1-10, -12, -14, and -16). The area is remote with very little access to many of the isolated parcels. VRM Class II designation is likely a result of proximity to Bates Creek Reservoir and Ice Cave Mountain for AOIs 3.2 through 3.4. AOI 3.1 VRM Class II designation is likely due to proximity to the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests. The presence of the high-voltage transmission lines would contrast with the surrounding landscape and represent a break in form, line, and texture.

Proposed Route 1W(a), 1W(c) and Alternative 1E-C would be within or adjacent to the WWE corridor and the proposed rebuild of the existing transmission line (south to MP 39 of 1W[a] and south from MP 34 of 1W[c]). Crossing these isolated parcels would be preferred over creating a new Greenfield route. It is recommended that the Gateway Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in AOIs C-3.1 through C-3.4.

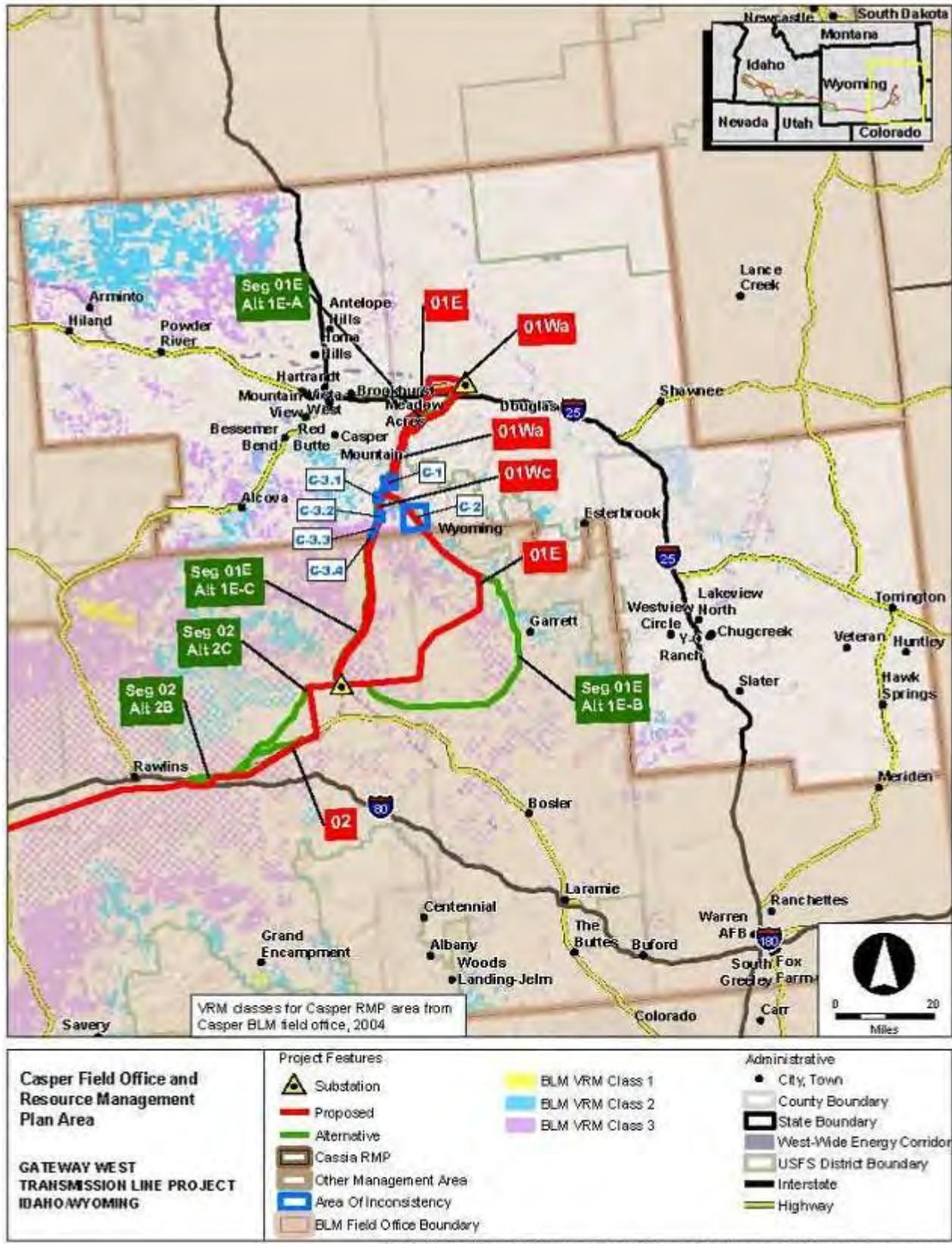


Figure 5.1-1. Casper RMP Boundary Map

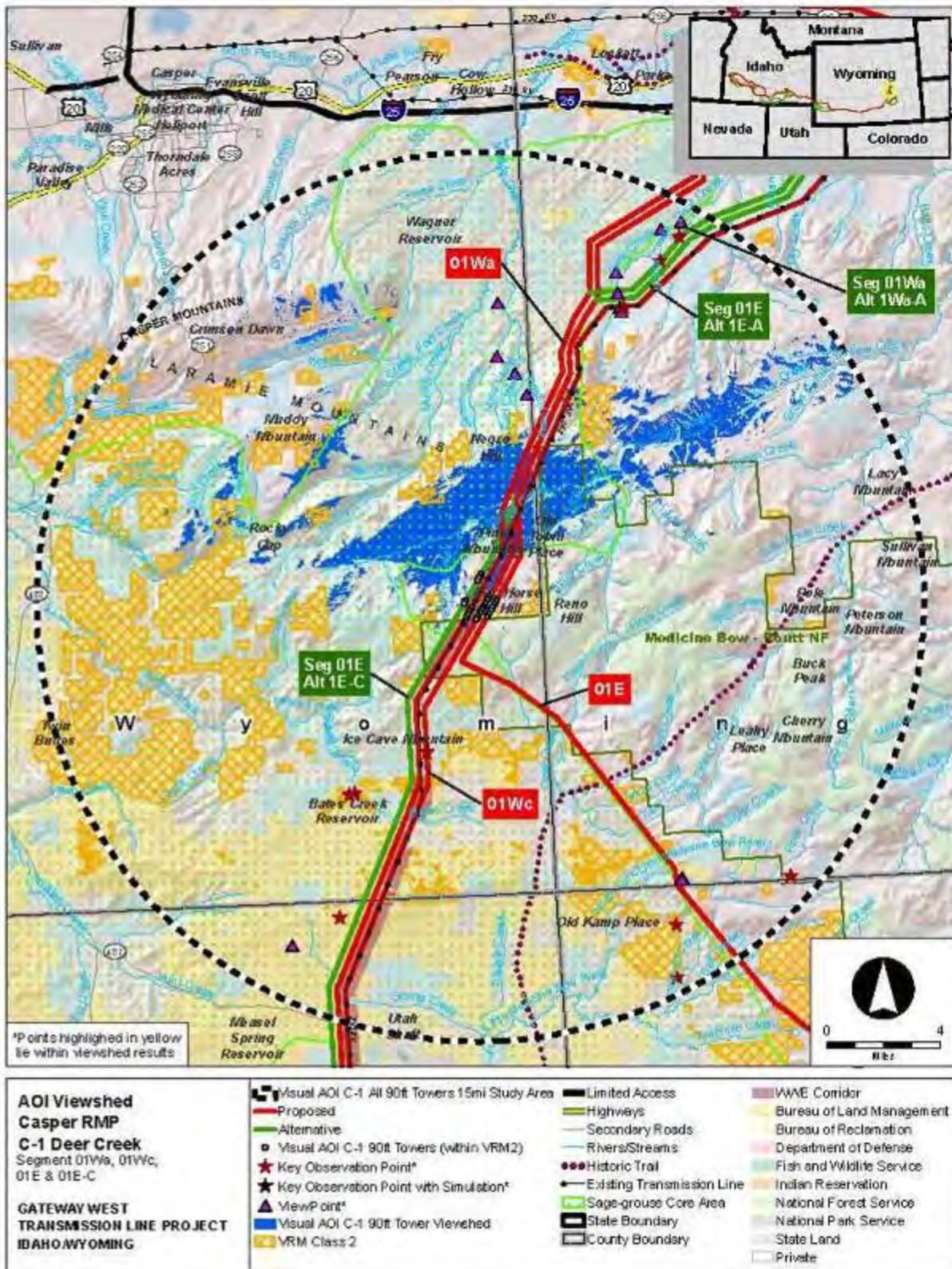


Figure 5.1-2. AOI C-1 Deer Creek AOI Visual Analysis

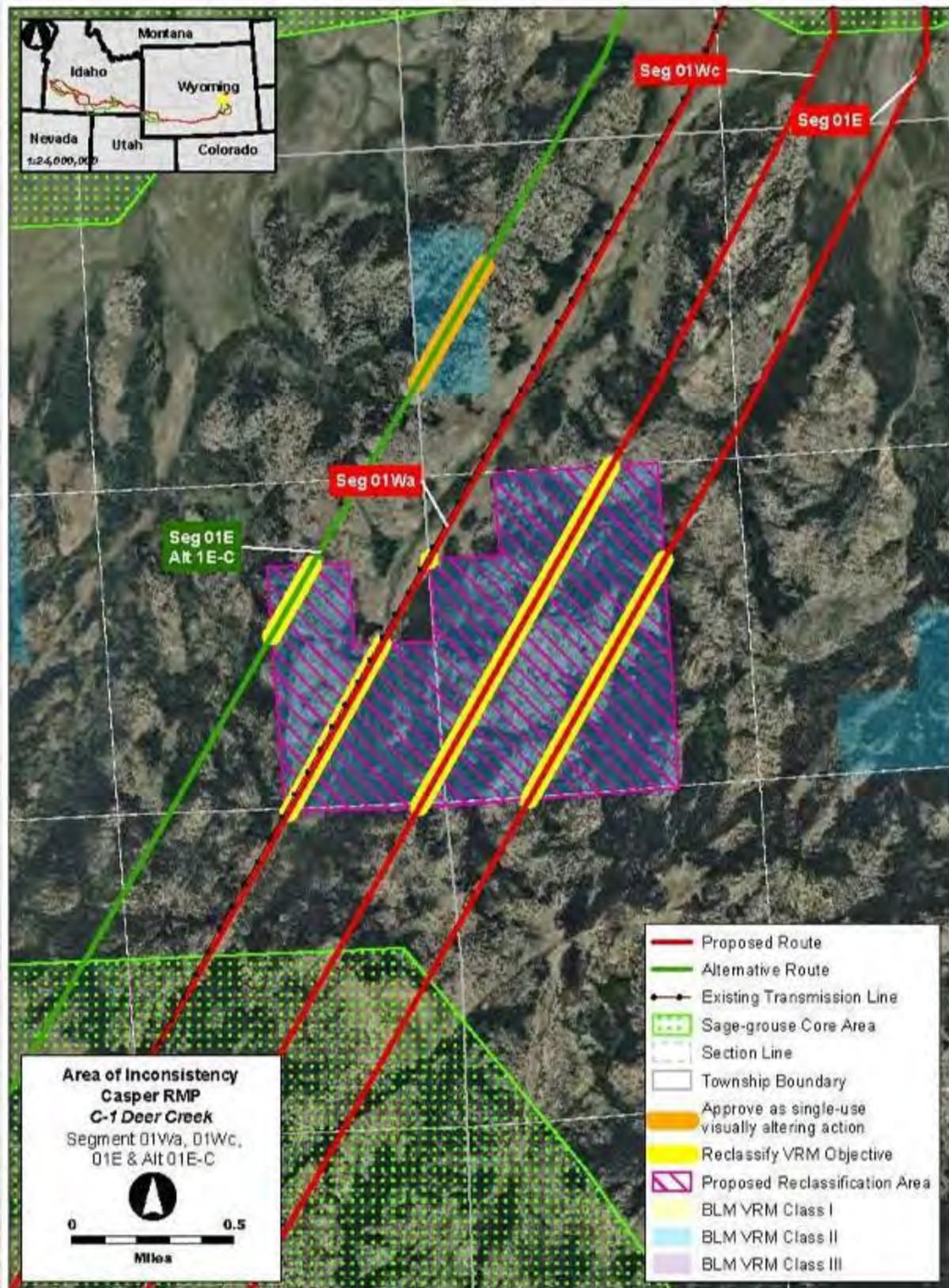


Figure 5.1-3. AOI C-1 Deer Creek AOI Detailed Map

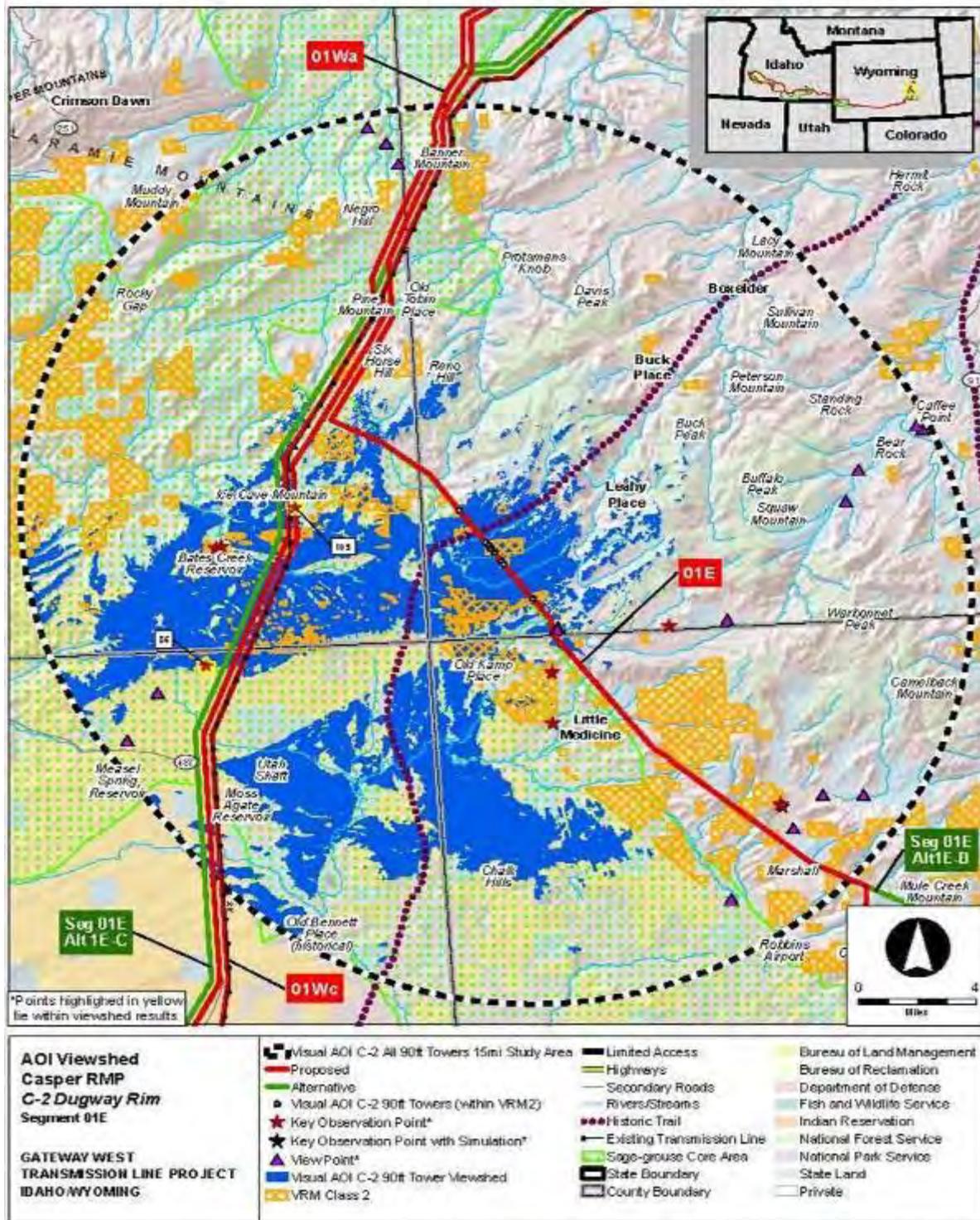


Figure 5.1-4. AOI C-2 Dugway Rim Visual Analysis

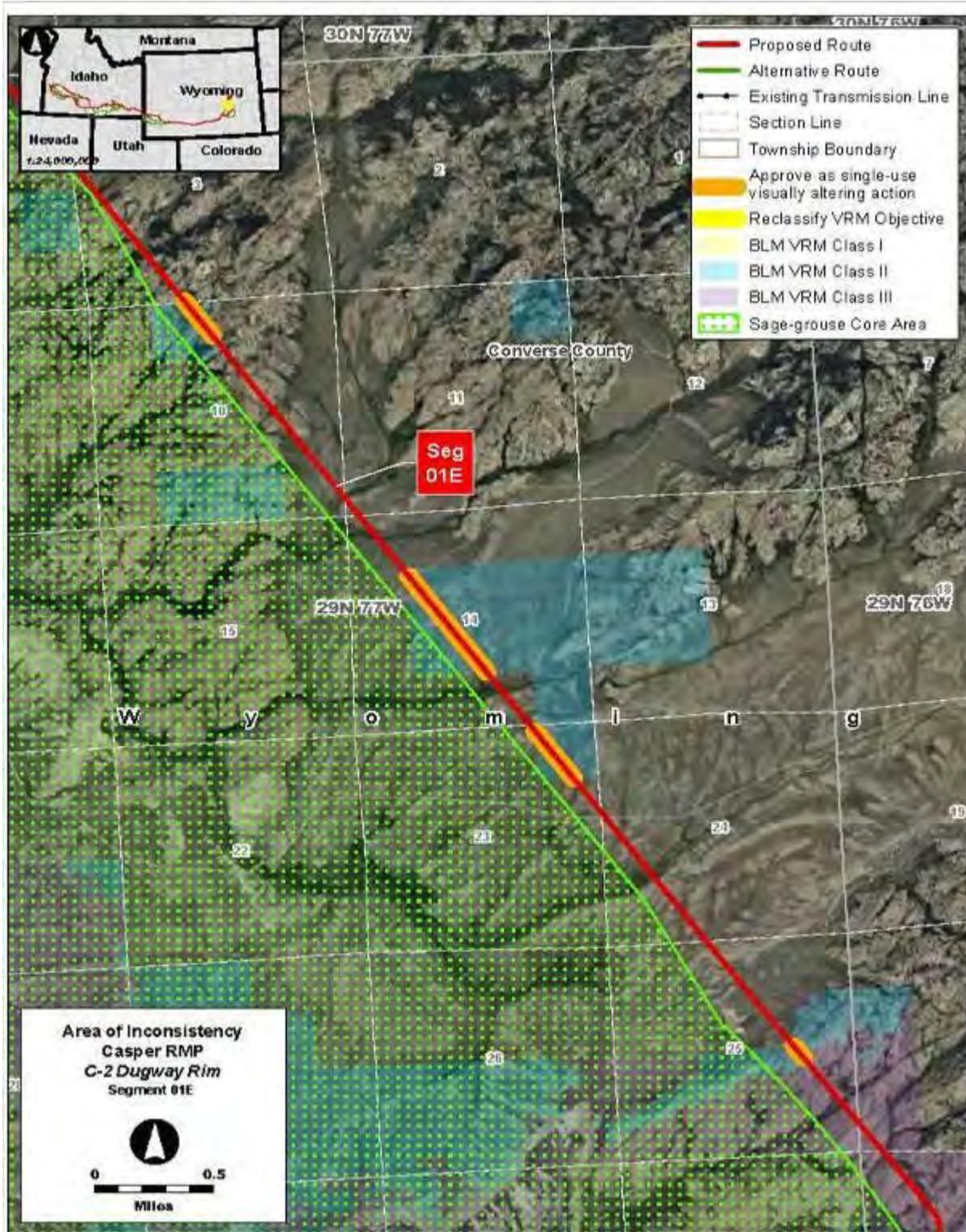


Figure 5.1-5. AOI C-2 Dugway Rim

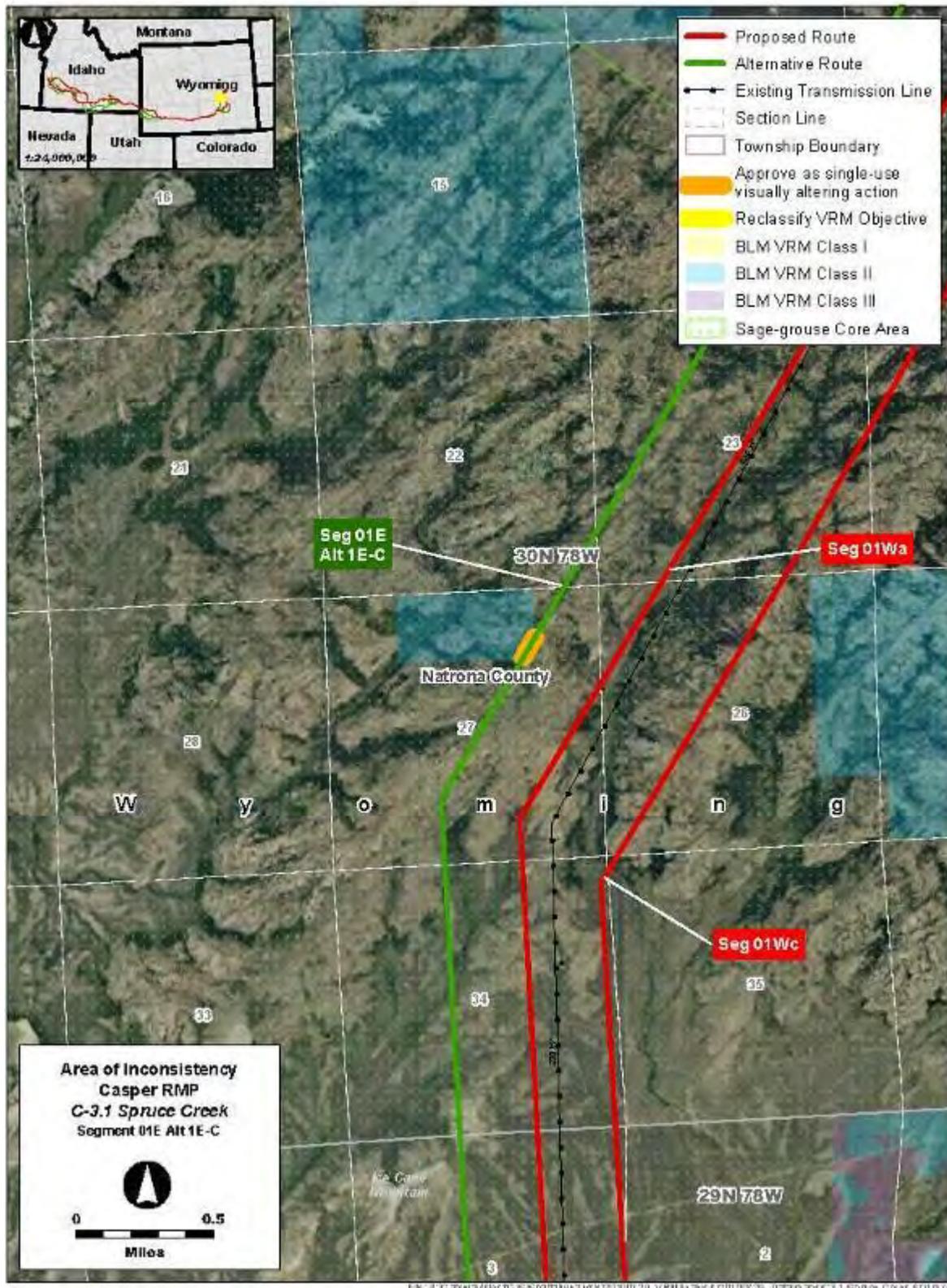


Figure 5.1-7. AOI C.31 Spruce Creek Detailed Map

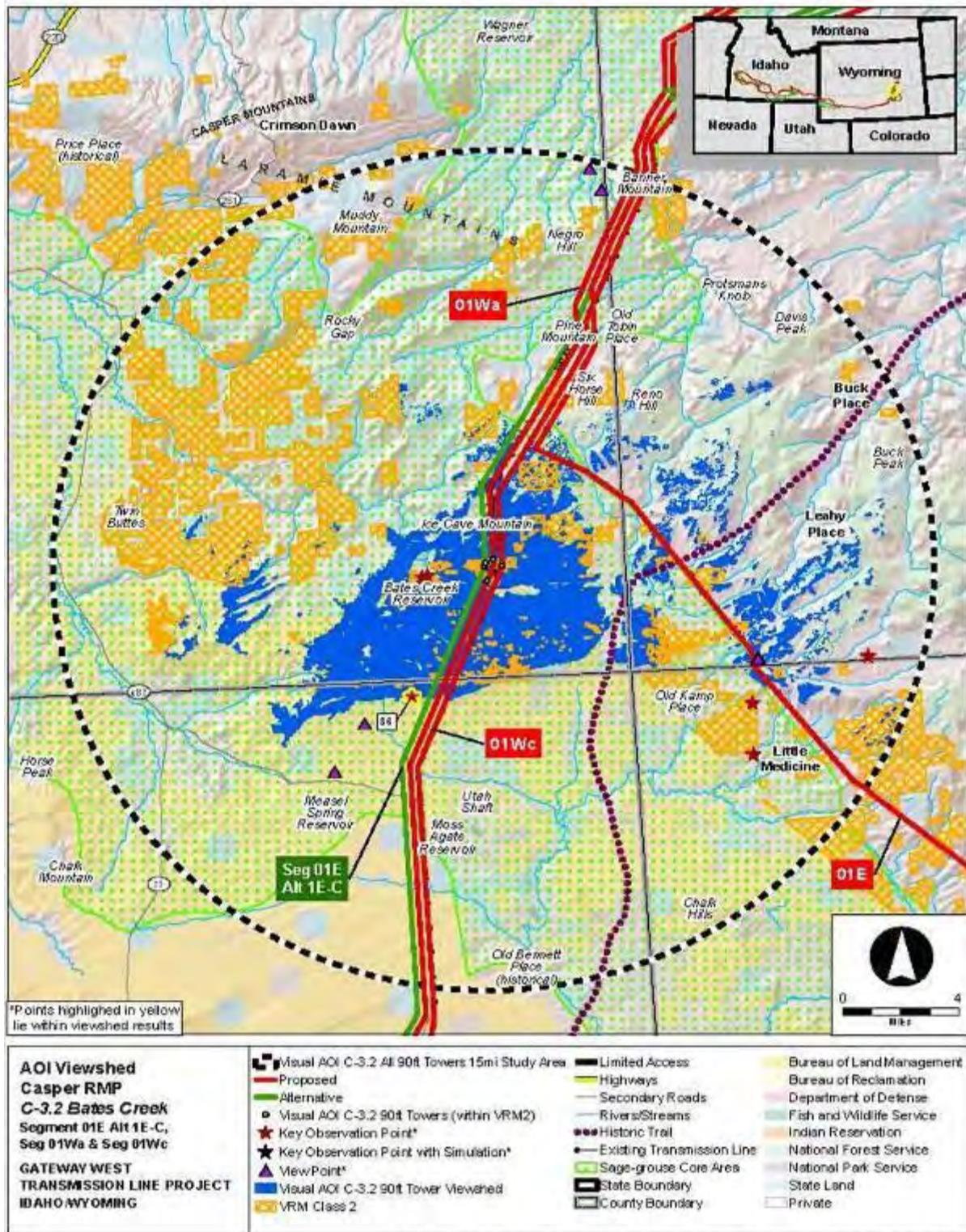


Figure 5.1-8. AOI 3.2 Bates Creek Visual Analysis

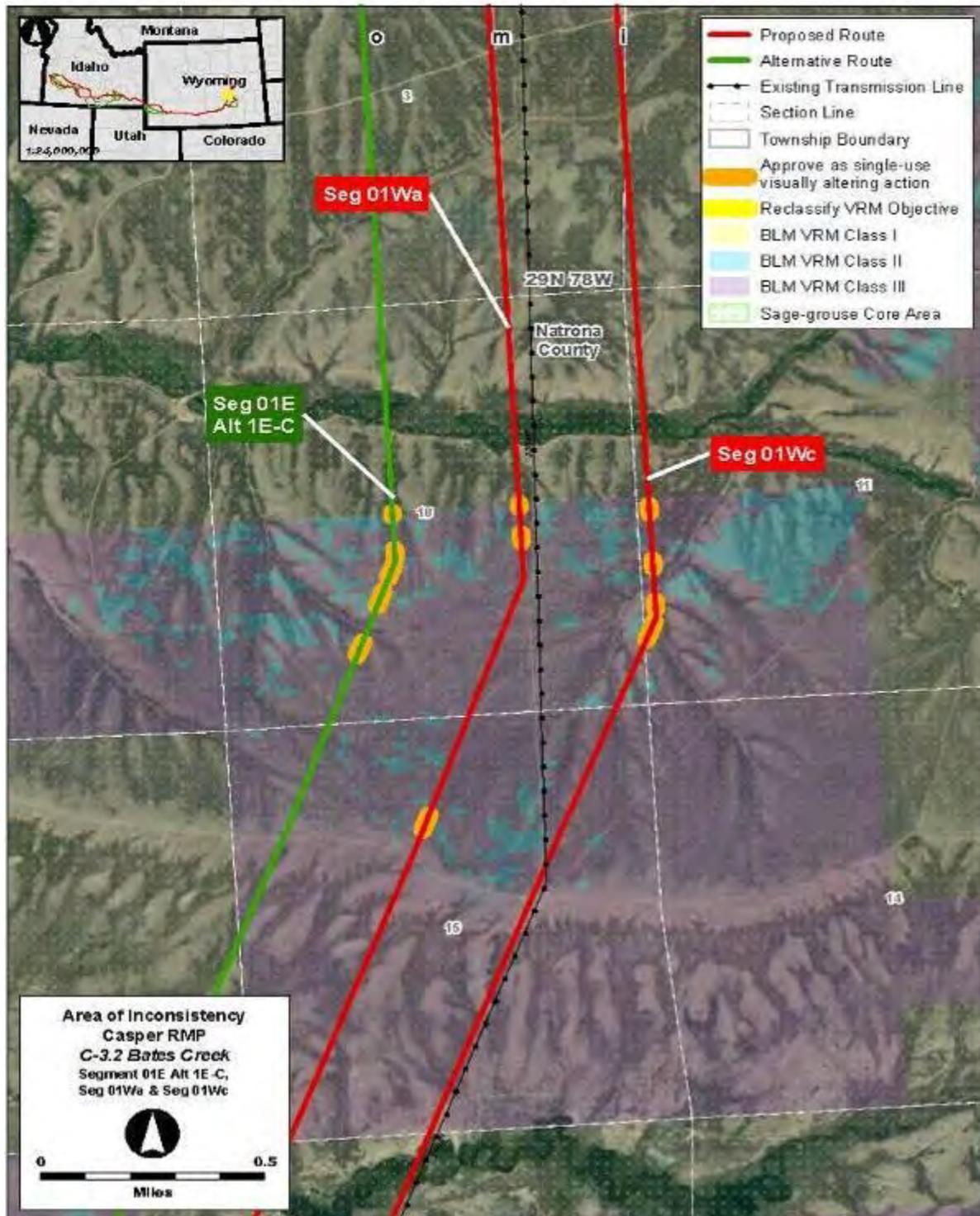


Figure 5.1-9. AOI 3.2 Bates Creek Detailed Map

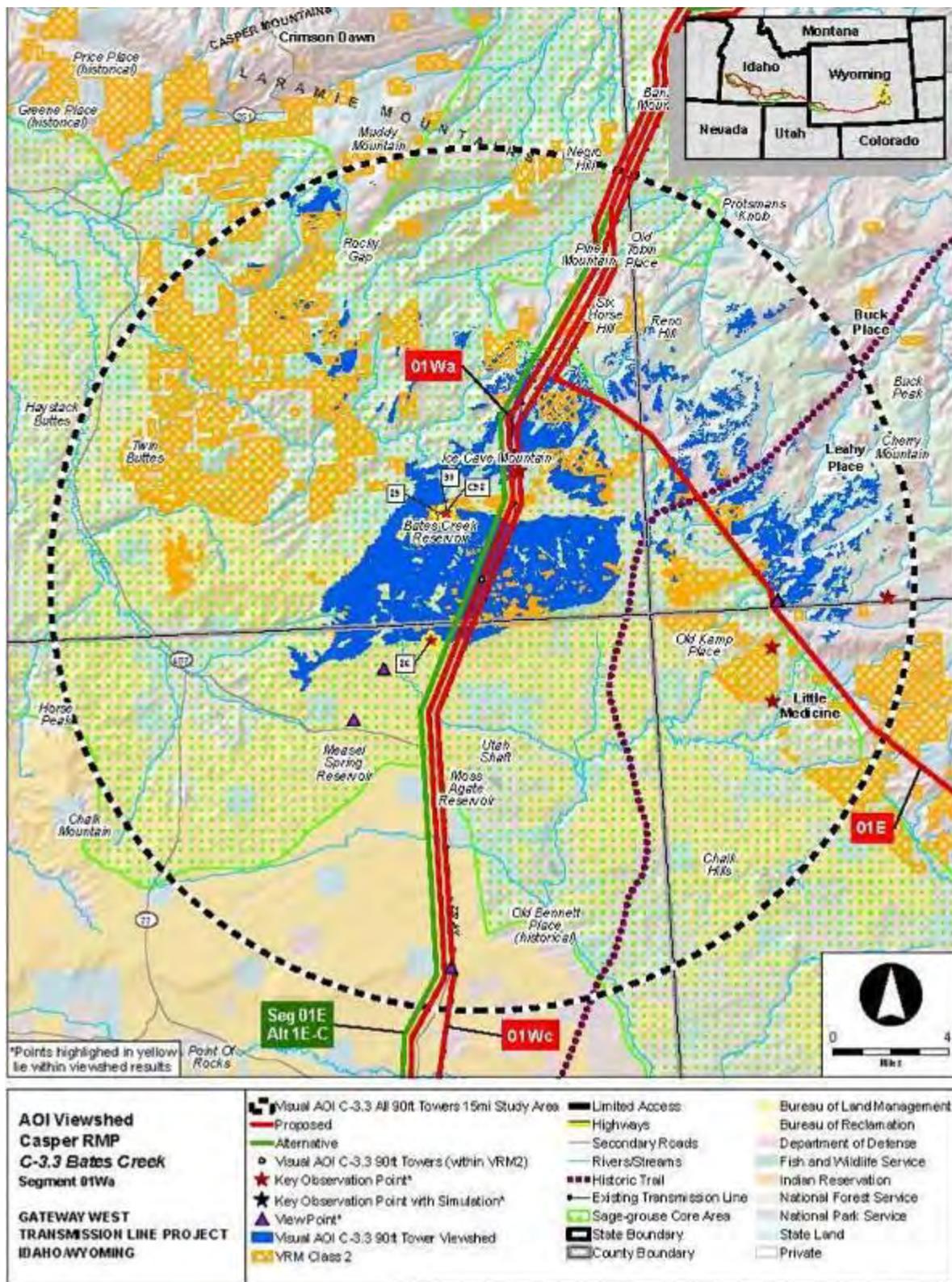


Figure 5.1-10. AOI Bates Creek Visual Analysis



Figure 5.1-11. AOI 3.3 Bates Creek Detailed Map

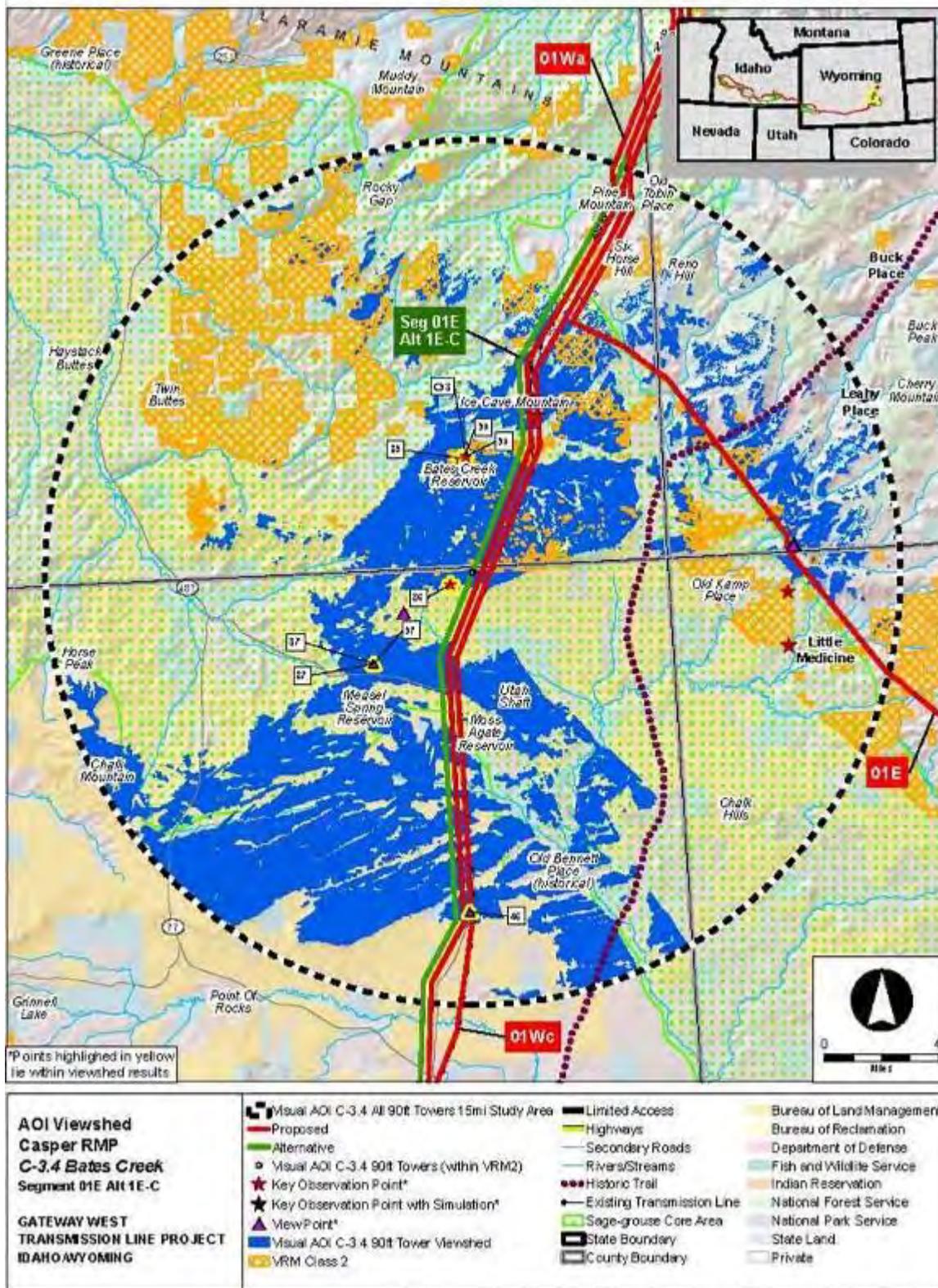


Figure 5.1-12. AOI 3.4 Bates Creek Visual Analysis

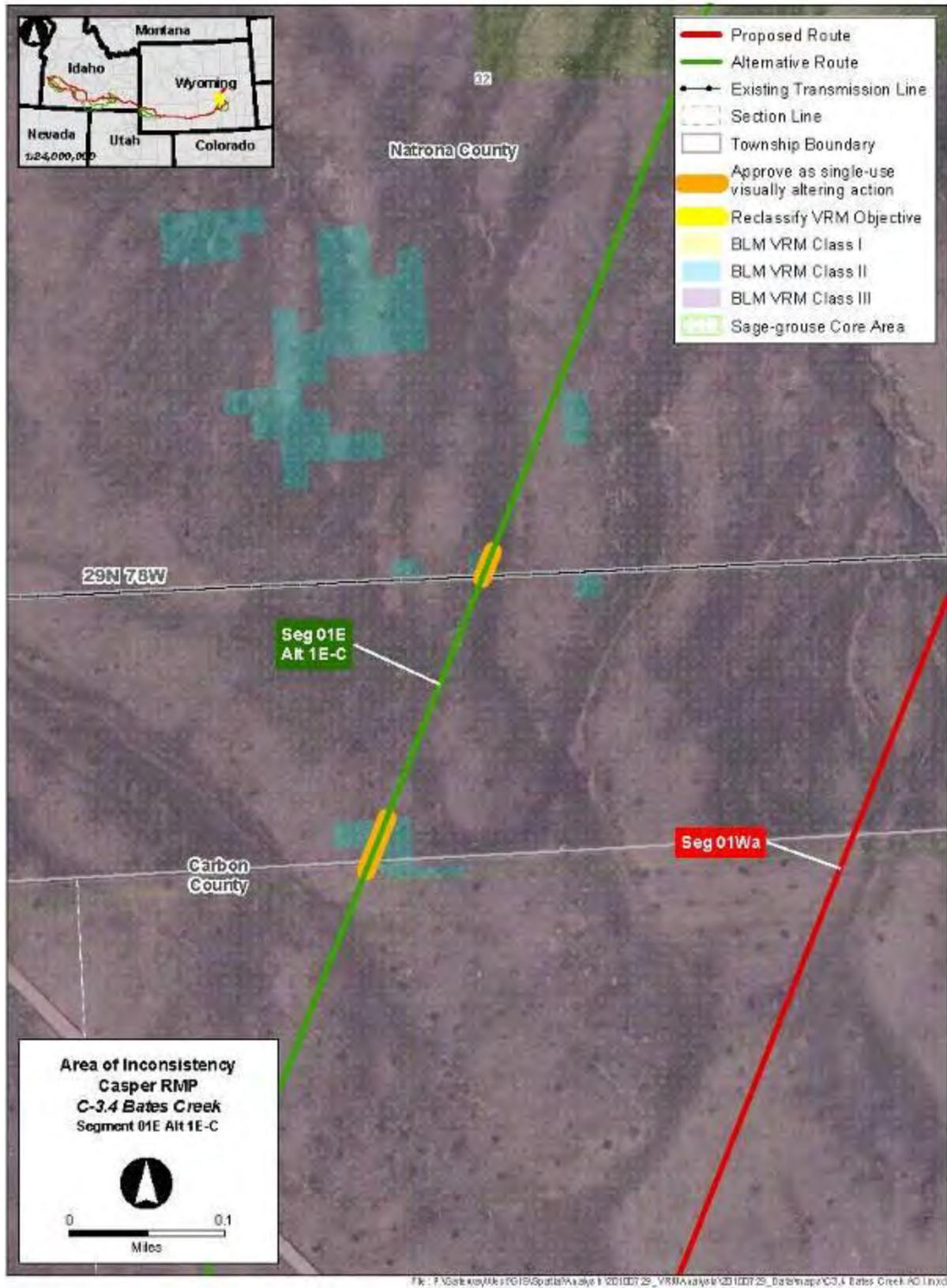


Figure 5.1-13. AOI 3.4 Bates Creek Detailed Map

5.2 Rawlins RMP

The Rawlins RMP (BLM 2008a) provides direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the Rawlins FO in southeastern Wyoming. The Rawlins RMP planning area covers approximately 11,200,000 acres in Sweetwater, Carbon, Albany, and Laramie Counties, Wyoming (see Figure 5.2-1). The current objective of visual resource management within the Rawlins Management Plan Planning Area (RMPPA) is to minimize adverse effects on visual resources while maintaining the effectiveness of other land use allocations. Visual resources in the RMPPA are managed according to the VRM classes to which they are assigned. The Rawlins RMP also states that visual resources should be managed to meet the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. The RMP states, “VRM classes are designated as shown on Map 2-50 (Table 2-9 and Appendix 25).”

The southern portion of Segments 1E and 1W, Segment 2, and the eastern portion of Segment 3 cross the RMPPA. Single-circuit 230-kV lines would enter Aeolus Substation in Segment 1 from the north and east. A double-circuit 500-kV line is proposed from Aeolus west to Creston Substation, and continuing west to Anticline Substation. There is also a Design Variation that would replace the double-circuit 500-kV line with two adjacent 500-kV single-circuit lines. Constraints and opportunities within the RMPPA are very similar to those found along the northern Segment 1 routes. A high priority was placed on following the WWE corridor, minimizing the length of the lines, and locating within favorable topography. Specific constraints within the RMPPA that affected route location included big game crucial winter range, national historic trails, raptor nest sites, VRM Class I and II areas, sage-grouse leks and sage-grouse core areas, mining claims, oil and gas wells, landowner concerns, and threatened or endangered plants and animals. The number of oil and gas wells to be avoided was also an important routing concern. Additional considerations specific to Segment 2 included the Fort Fred Steele State Historic site and nearby residences, the existing Seven Mile Hill Wind Energy Project, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), the North Platte SRMA, and historic trails. Use of the WWE corridor was not always feasible due to existing energy developments, thus attempts were also made to locate the routes within the Interstate 80 corridor, where other constraints did not preclude this location. There is a mosaic of public and private land within the northern part of the RMPPA and a very distinct checkerboard pattern in the western part. The land use pattern and consideration cited above resulted in proposed and alternative routes that cross scattered VRM Class II parcels and one area of VRM III where the Project would not be consistent with the RMP objectives and thus would require plan amendments if selected.

Three AOIs were identified where the Project would be inconsistent with current VRM objectives. Laramie North (AOI-R1) and Laramie South (AOI-R2) contain land managed as VRM Class II. The North Platte AOI (AOI-R3) is located where the Proposed Route crosses an area managed as VRM Class III, but the transmission line would dominate the view of the casual observer.

5.2.1 AOI R-1 Laramie North (Proposed Route – Segment 1E and Alternative 1E-B)

The combined Proposed 1E and Alternative 1E-B route leaves the WWE corridor and the Segment 1W routes and turns to southeast for about 16 miles before crossing the northernmost parcel of VRM II in AOI R-1. This AOI includes four parcels classified as VRM Class II, ranging in size from 123 acres to 5,747 acres. These parcels extend over 8 miles. These routes cross a total of 2.8 miles of VRM Class II area. Figure 5.2-2 shows the viewshed analysis and location within the landscape. Figure 5.2-3 shows the detail of the location of the Laramie North AOI, Proposed and Alternative Routes, VRM management classifications, and proposed amendment actions.

Alternatives Considered – The Proponents reported a need for Segment 1E to be located east of the existing transmission line and WWE corridor to be more accessible to present and future wind power generators. Based on this objective, they sited the Proposed Route 1E and Alternative 1E-B to avoid the higher and more visible terrain to the north and east as well as the sage-grouse core area to the south and west.

The Proponents reported that when they selected the route for Segment 1E, they attempted to minimize VRM Class II or cross smaller parcels where possible. They contend that a direct route that avoided all of the VRM Class II could not be found without multiple turns adding considerable length and cost.

Alternative 1E-C would avoid this area and would parallel an existing powerline to the west. This alternative does not accommodate the need reported by the proponents for an accessible line for present and future wind power generators east of the existing line. Additional alternate routes not studied in detail were removed from consideration due to increased environmental and cultural impacts.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The majority of the 15-mile-radius area surrounding AOI R-1 is undeveloped. Access is provided by county and local roads such as County Routes (CRs) 24 and 62 in the northwest and CRs 61 and 91 farther to the east. The northeast half of this area is occupied by the Laramie Mountains and Medicine Bow-Routt NFs, consisting of rugged topography and extensive forest lands. The southwest half has flat to rolling topography, especially in the Shirley Basin, and is vegetated with mostly sagebrush. There are numerous drainages, including the North Fork of the Little Medicine Bow River, Deer Creek, and Three Mile Creek. Historic trails run north to south through the east and west sides of the study area. Attachment A, Figure R-1a shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity of AOI R-1 as viewed from KOP 860. As shown in this figure the landscape is gently sloping to flat rangeland bordered by rolling hills with fences and other minor developments.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.2-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM classes. The location selected is considered representative of all the parcels. Attachment A, Figure R-1b simulates the proposed transmission line for the combined Proposed 1E and Alternative 1E-B routes on the landscape as viewed from KOP 860.

Scenic views between Forty-mile Peak and Smith Mountain are important to sensitive viewers such as local residents. These sensitive viewers are represented by KOP 860 (see Section 3.2 of the Draft EIS). The viewed landscape ranges from undulating to almost flat terrain and more dramatic dendritic terrain adjacent to the KOP as shown on Figures R-1a and R-1b. Figure 5.2-2 shows the KOP and adjacent locations with views that exhibit diversity in form, line, and texture with few developments. From KOP 860 and the other viewpoints shown on Figure 5.2-2, it is apparent that the Segment 1E Proposed Route and Alternative 1E-B would be highly visible and that screening and other mitigation efforts would only slightly lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. With little or no development, the structures would result in moderate to high contrast. However, there are few viewers or sensitive viewing points from which a transmission line along this route would be seen.

While not stated in the RMP, it appears that the intent of the VRM Class II classification was to protect the interface between the flatter land to the south and the mountains to the north. The Final EIS also states that; “Class II lands are primarily associated with areas around the Pathfinder and Seminoe Reservoirs and with the close range viewsheds of the Medicine Bow National Forest” (Rawlins RMP, p.3-121). Because this VRM Class II parcel would be seldom seen, it is recommended that if this route is approved, the Project be allowed as a single use visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in AOI R-1. Should either the proposed or alternative route be selected, it is recommended that the Proponents microsite the alignment to minimize the amount of VRM Class II areas crossed.

5.2.2 AOI R-2 Laramie South (Alternative 1E-B)

The Laramie South AOI would be crossed by Alternative 1E-B beginning approximately 2.4 miles southeast of the point where Segment 1E turns south heading into the Natrona Sage-Grouse Core Area. This AOI includes six parcels classified as VRM Class II ranging in size from 121 acres to 745 acres, and extending approximately 12 miles with a total VRM Class II area crossed of 2.6 miles. Figure 5.2-4 shows the viewshed for AOI R-2 and the location within the landscape. Figure 5.2-5 shows the detailed location of the Laramie South AOI, alternative route, and VRM management classification.

Alternatives Considered – Similar to the alignment through AOI R-1, the Proponents sited this alternative to be more accessible to current and future wind power generators. The other major factor reported by the Proponents was to avoid the Natrona Sage-Grouse Core Area. Based on this objective, they sited Alternative 1E-B to avoid the higher and more visible terrain to the north and east as well as the sage-grouse core area to the south and west. Taking these two factors into account, a direct route that avoids all of the VRM Class II could not be found without adding turns and considerable added length and cost. However, the Proponents reported that they attempted to minimize VRM Class II crossings or cross smaller parcels where possible.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Within the 15-mile-radius study area surrounding AOI R-2 there is very little development, with access provided by state and local roads such as State Route (SR) 91. Attachment A, Figure R-2a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 991. The northeast half of this area is occupied by the

Laramie Mountains and Medicine Bow-Routt NFs with very rugged topography and extensive forest lands. The southwest half has flat to rolling topography, especially in the Shirley Basin, and is vegetated with mostly sage brush. In the western half of the study area there are areas of surface mining. Numerous drainages, such as the North Fork of the Little Medicine Bow River, Davidson Creek, and Three Mile Creek, are found throughout the area. Sensitive viewing areas include local roads, residences, and historic trails running north to south through the east and west sides of the study area.

Attachment A, Figure R-2a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 991. The foreground comprises generally flat rangeland bordered by hills with a local dirt road being the only visible manmade modification.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.2-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM classes. Attachment A, Figure R-2b simulates landscape conditions showing for Alternative 1E-B as viewed from KOP 991.

Scenic views west of Sugarloaf Mountain are important to sensitive viewers such as the residential and recreational viewers. These sensitive viewers are represented by KOP 991, a residence on Hay Creek Road and KOP 993, recreational viewers at the reservoir adjacent to Fetterman Road (see Section 3.2 of the Draft EIS). The views range from the undulating valley to more dramatic rocky terrain with numerous mountain silhouettes adjacent to the two viewpoints. The views from these KOPs exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. From these two low elevation vantage points, it is apparent that Alternative 1E-B would be highly visible and that screening and other mitigation efforts would not lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area, especially along CR 91. The Project structures would have moderate to high contrast with the existing landscape due to the variation in backdropping effects offered by the high-relief terrain. Many of the views from the surrounding area exhibit a high level of variety in form line, color, and texture; these would be contrasted by the addition of new man-made structures and access roads, which would draw the attention of the casual observer and thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

While not stated in the RMP, it appears that the intent of the VRM Class II designation is to protect the interface between the flatter land to the south and the mountains to the north, as well as scenic resources for viewers along historic Fetterman Road. The Final EIS also states: “Class II lands are primarily associated with areas around the Pathfinder and Seminoe Reservoirs and with the close range viewsheds of the Medicine Bow National Forest” (Rawlins RMP, p.3-121). Some parcels in this AOI would be seldom seen while others would be visible from CR 91. Because of the mixed viewing conditions, it is recommended that if Alternative 1E-B is approved, three parcels totaling 177 acres be reclassified from VRM Class II to VRM Class III and a single use visually altering action for the three other parcels be allowed (see Figure 5.2-5). If the Proposed Route is selected, it is recommended that the Proponents microsite the alignment to minimize the amount of VRM Class II land crossed.

5.2.3 AOI R-3 North Platte AOI (Segment 2 Proposed Route)

The North Platte AOI is located approximately 2 miles southeast of Fort Steele, Wyoming, and the Fort Fred Steele State Historic Site in Segment 2. This portion of the Project would comprise a double-circuit 500-kV line or a Design Variation with two single-circuit lines. The Proposed Route leaves the WWE corridor and turns southwest for approximately 1.5 miles before crossing Interstate 80, and angling more to the west and crossing the North Platte River and associated North Platte SRMA beginning 0.25 mile east of the river to west edge of the AOI. The AOI is a single BLM parcel of approximately 951 acres. The route would cross 1.2 miles of land classified as VRM Class III. Figure 5.2-6 is the viewshed analysis for this AOI and its location within the landscape. Figure 5.2-7 shows the detailed location of the North Platte AOI, Proposed Route, and VRM management classification.

Alternatives Considered – The Proponents report that the prime reason that led them identify the Proposed Route in this area was to respond to residents and stakeholders including the Governor’s Office and State Department of Parks and Recreation to avoid the area in the vicinity of Fort Fred Steele Historic Site. In doing so, the alignment was pushed south of Interstate 80 due to a combination of constraints including the community of Fort Steele, the Fort Fred Steele Historic Site, raptor nests, an SRMA, sage-grouse leks, and oil and gas wells and buffers. The original proposed route, now Alternative 2B, followed an existing transmission line closer to the historic fort.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Within the 15-mile-radius study area surrounding AOI R-3, topography is highly irregular with many steep slopes such as the Fort Steele Breaks, Saint Mary’s Ridge, and Edson Ridge as well as larger areas of flat to rolling terrain such as Overland Flats and Severson Flats. The most significant waterbodies are the Seminoe Reservoir and the North Platte River; however, a number of ponds and drainages occur throughout the area. Attachment A, Figure R-3a shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity of AOI R-3 as viewed from KOP 822. There are agricultural lands along Pass Creek, Rattlesnake Creek, and the North Platte River and an area of strip mining in the northeast. Interstate 80 is the primary road crossing the center of the area from east to west. Around Interstate 80 a utility corridor has developed including railroads, pipelines, and transmission lines. Other roads in the area include U.S. Routes 30 and 287 and SR 130. Communities include Sinclair on the north side of Interstate 80 in the western portion of the study area and Rawlins on the western boundary of this area. Sensitive viewing areas include the towns and highways, historic sites like Fort Steele, historic trails, and recreation areas like Sinclair Recreation Park.

Attachment A, Figure R-3a shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity of AOI R-3 as viewed from KOP 822. The landscape in this area is a mix of riparian vegetation and water bordered by steep hillsides in the foreground and mountains in the background.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.2-6 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of conformance with the existing VRM class. Attachment A, Figure R-3b simulates the proposed transmission line, consisting of a single double-circuit line, on the existing landscape

conditions for the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 822. Attachment A, Figure R-3c simulates the Design Variation of using two single-circuit lines in place of the proposed design. The two single-circuit lines would require more ground disturbance but would be designed and constructed to the same standards as the Proposed Action. The Design Variation would use towers of reduced structure height; however, it would introduce more towers to the landscape than the double-circuit option. Visual impacts between the two options would be similar, but higher in the Design Variation than for the Proposed Action, with a rating of High, instead of Medium to High.

Scenic views of the North Platte River adjacent to the Hogback are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers such as recreational users of the Rochelle Public Access Area at KOP 822. The Fort Steele Breaks are visible and create a layered silhouette background. These riparian and mountain terrain views exhibit a diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features visible from this particular location. From low valley vantage points it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts would be only moderately successful at lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area when compared to other portions of this alignment. The various undulating forms and ridgelines, curvilinear water features, and strong horizon would be directly contrasted by the structures of Segment 2, which would be visible and dominant, thus not conforming to VRM Class III objectives. Although not stated in the RMP, it appears that VRM Class III objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the viewshed of this scenic riparian terrain which exhibits moderate to high scenic quality in proximity to the North Platte River. The Rawlins RMP states for the North Platte SRMA that “Surface disturbing and disruptive activities will be restricted to maintain the quality of the visual resource.”

As this VRM Class III parcel is part of the SRMA, it is recommended that if this route is approved, an amendment would be needed to permit the Project as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in AOI R-3 (See Figure 5.2-7). Mitigation and micrositing will be used to reduce the visual impact of the transmission line in this area. These actions will maintain the current level of VRM management and provide protection of the scenic resources important for the SRMA objectives.

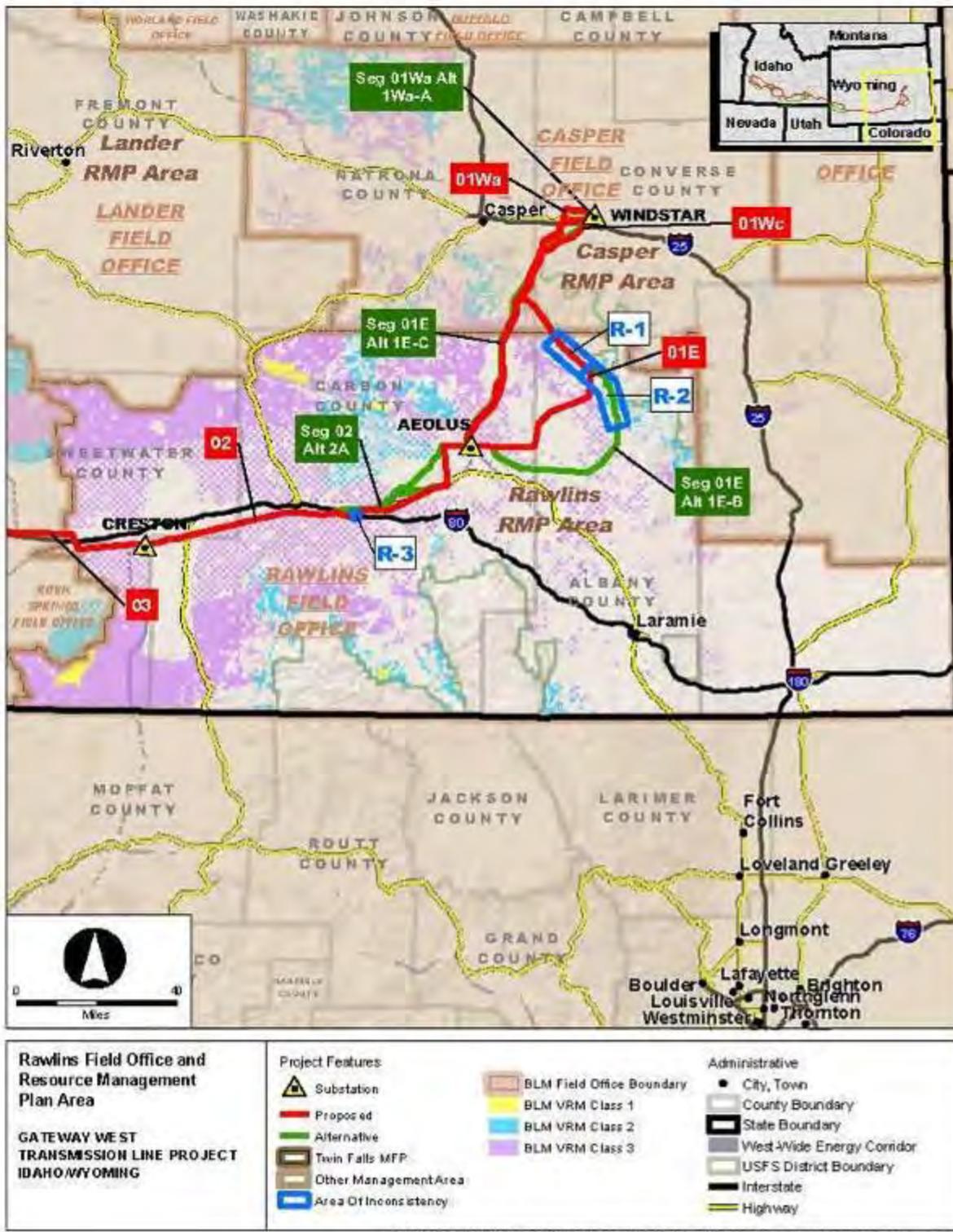


Figure 5.2-1. Rawlins RMP Boundary Map

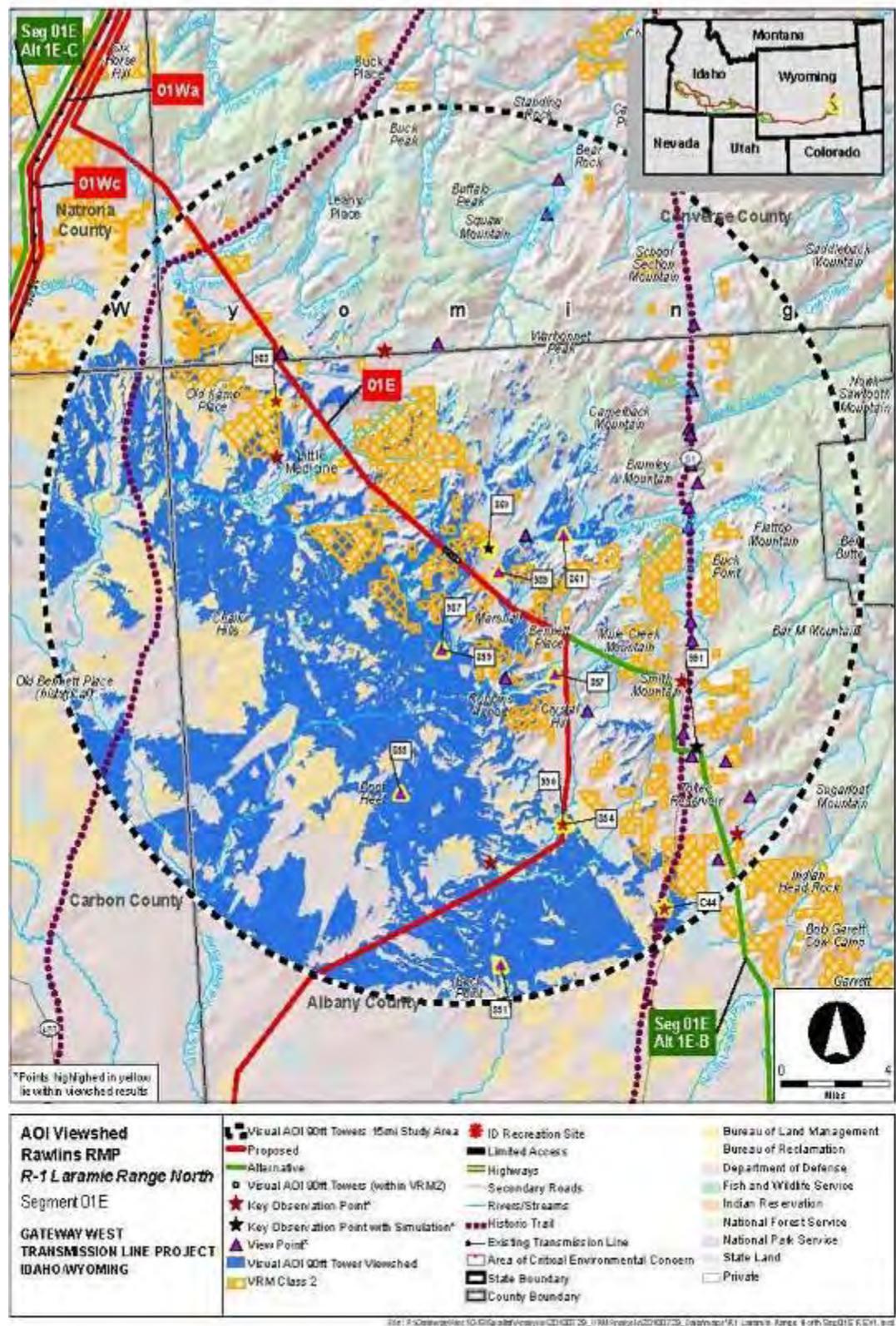


Figure 5.2-2. AOI R-1 Laramie North Visual Analysis

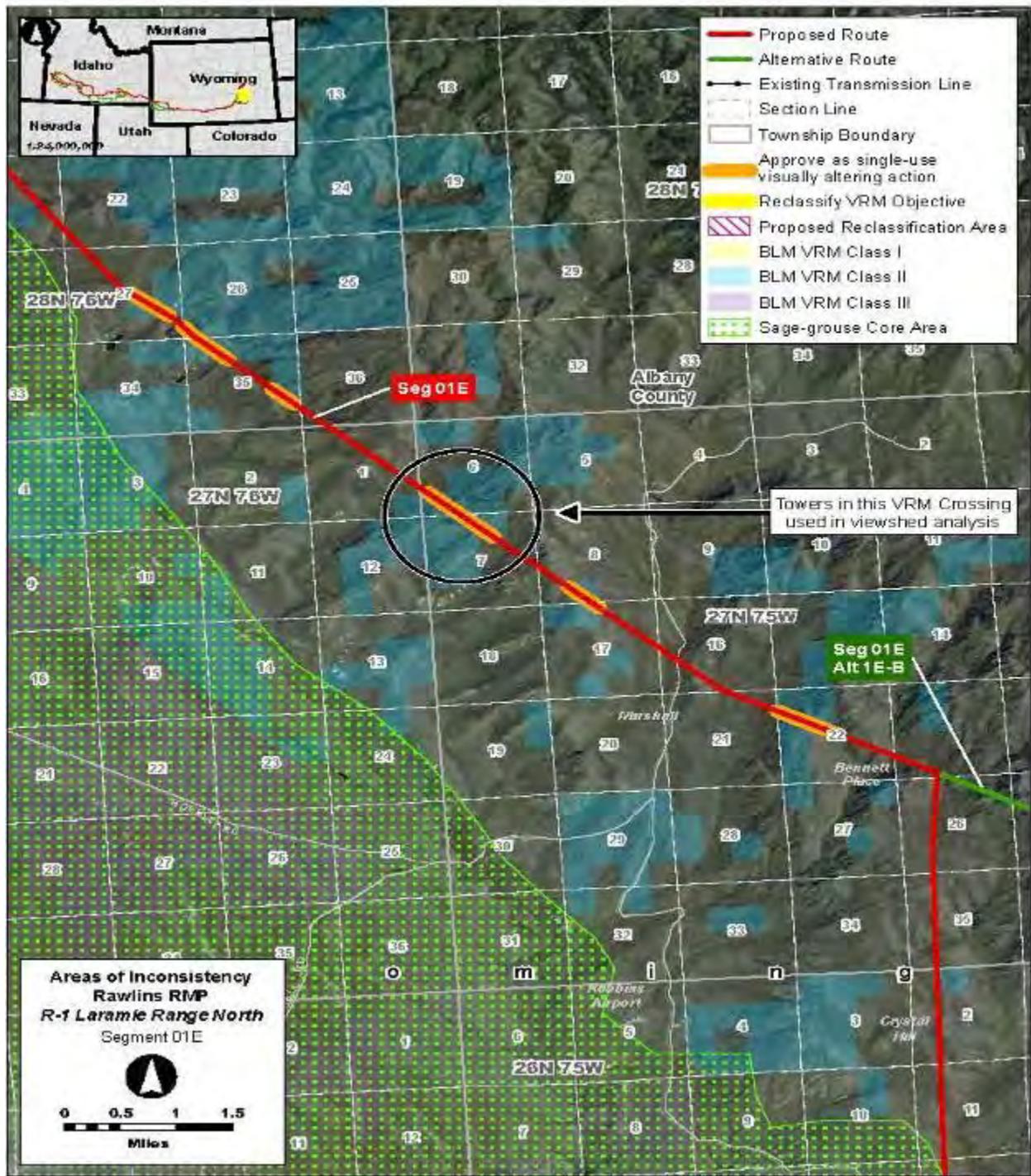


Figure 5.2-3. AOI R-1 Laramie North Detailed Map

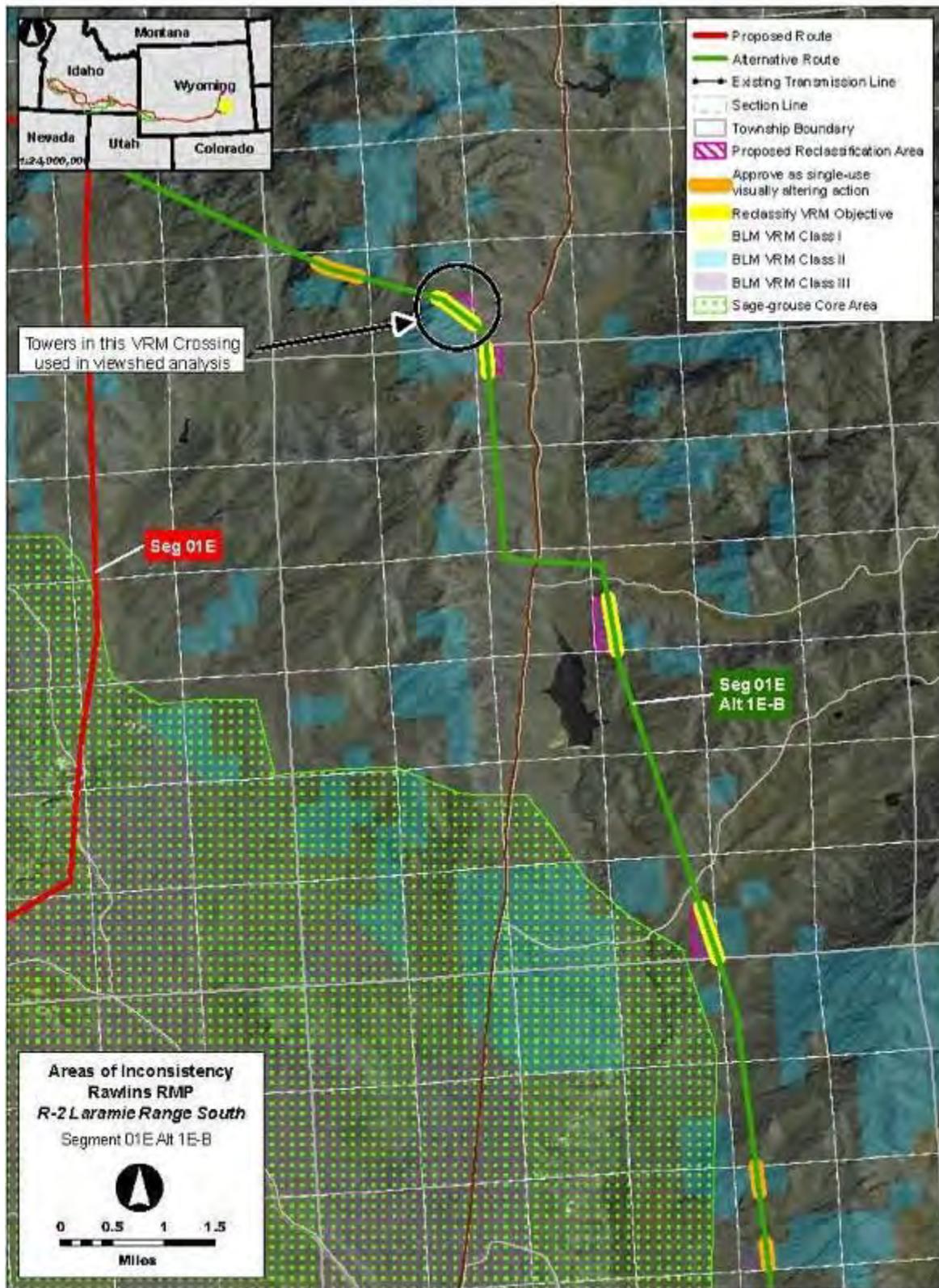


Figure 5.2-5. AOI R-2 Laramie South Detailed Map

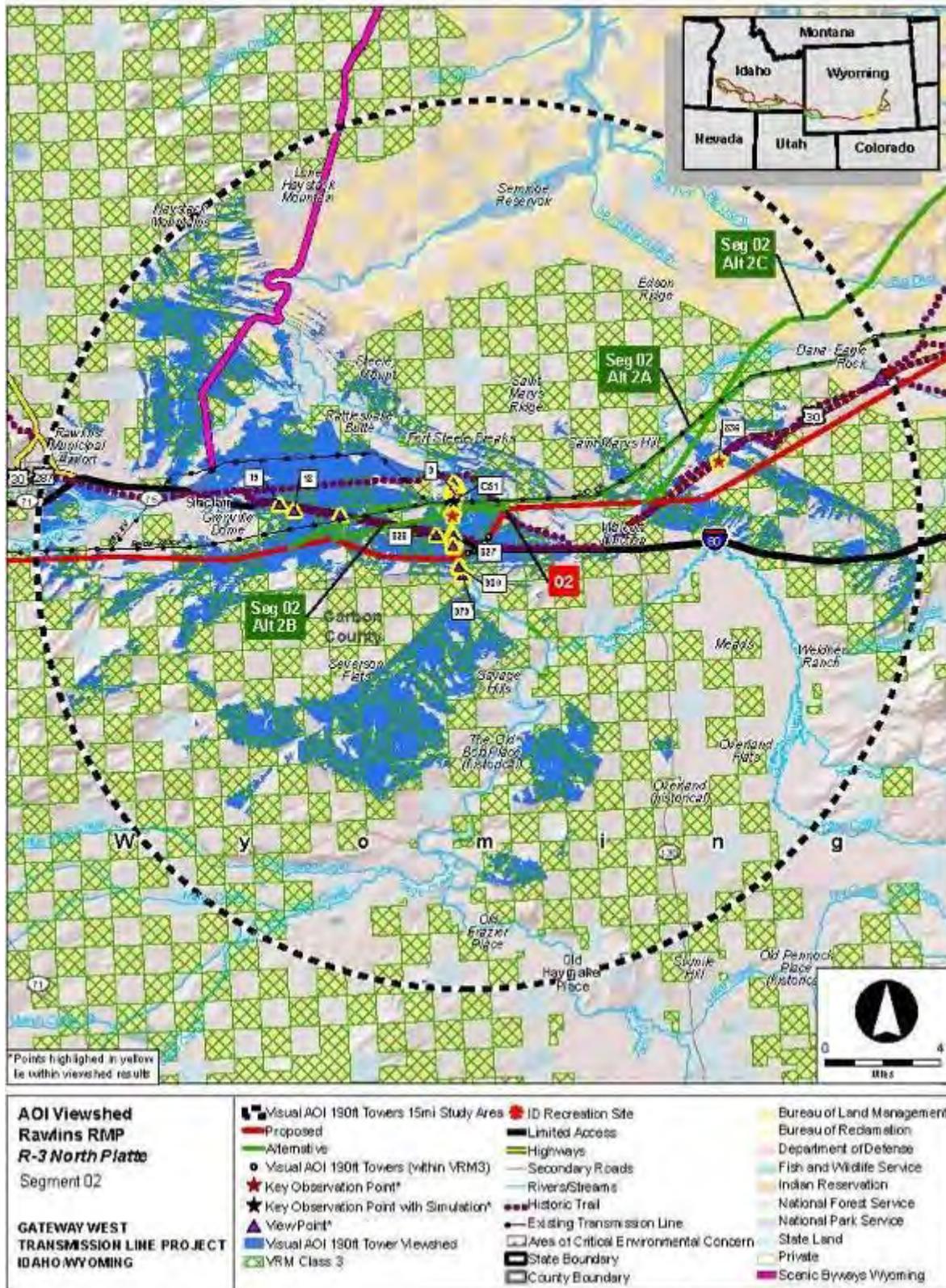


Figure 5.2-6. AOI R-3 North Platte Visual Analysis

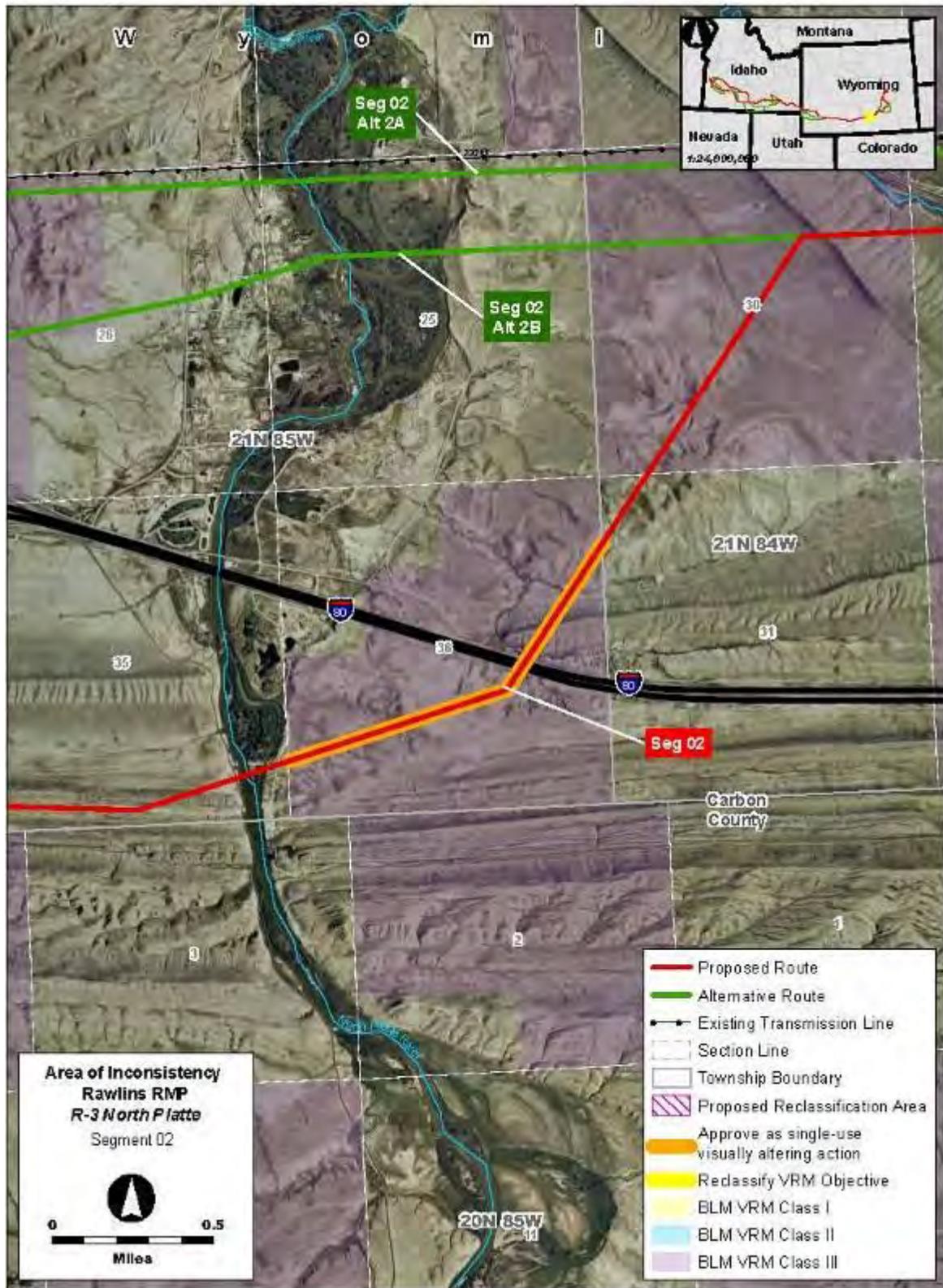


Figure 5.2-7. AOI R-3 North Platte Detailed Map

5.3 Green River RMP

The Green River RMP (1997) provides management direction for approximately 3.6 million acres of public land surface and 3.5 million acres of federal mineral estate administered by the BLM in the Green River Resource Area under the jurisdiction of the Rock Springs FO. The resource area administrative boundary includes parts of Sweetwater, Lincoln, Sublette, Fremont, and Uinta Counties, in southwestern Wyoming (see Figure 5.3-1). The objectives for management of visual resources are to: 1) maintain or improve scenic values and visual quality and 2) establish priorities for managing the visual resources in conjunction with other resource values.

The Green River RMP contains several visual management action goals to protect visual resources, including the following:

- Visual resource classes will be retained or modified to enhance other resource objectives such as those for cultural resource and recreation management, wild horse viewing, and special management areas.
- Projects and facilities will be designed to meet the objectives of the established visual classifications and appropriate mitigation will be included.
- Management actions on public lands with a Class II visual resource management classification must be designed to blend into and retain the existing character of the natural landscape.
- Management actions on public lands with a Class III visual resource management classification must be designed to partially retain the existing character of the landscape.
- Management actions on public lands with a Class IV visual resource management classification could result in major modification of the character of the landscape.
- All surface-disturbing actions, regardless of the visual resource management class, are required to be mitigated to reduce visual impacts.
- All activities that could be viewed from the Fontenelle Reservoir will be designed to be subordinate to the landscape.

In all, the Green River RMP designates 681,560 acres as VRM Class II, 632,370 acres in VRM Class III, and 2,251,810 acres in VRM Class IV. None of the lands managed under the Green River RMP have been designated as VRM Class I.

The Proposed Route for Segment 4 is 203 miles long and generally follows existing transmission lines. It consists of a double 500-kV circuit between Anticline Substation in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, and Populus Substation in Power County, Idaho. The Proponents are also considering a design variation for Segment 4 that would replace the double circuit with two parallel and adjacent single-circuit 500-kV lines. Within the Green River RMP boundary, the WWE corridor extends in a southwest direction and does not provide a feasible option for an east-west connection between the Anticline and Populus Substations.

Visual resources in the Green River RMP area would be affected by this Project. One VRM Class II management area is crossed by the Proposed Route. The presence of a transmission line in this landscape would not meet VRM Class II objectives. As a result, if the Proposed Route is approved, it would be necessary to amend the VRM management requirements to allow the Project to be consistent with the RMP. The AOI is described in Section 5.3.1 below.

5.3.1 AOI GR-1 Green River (Segment 4 Proposed Route)

Much of the eastern portion of Segment 4 of the Proposed Route follows existing 345-kV transmission lines. However, about 4 miles east of the Green River, the Proposed Route leaves the existing transmission line corridor and turns southwest, then west to pass south of the Seedskafee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Routing in this area is further constrained by the OCI Wyoming LP Trona Mine, which is located just east of the river and south of the Proposed Route. Within this confined area, the route would pass through about 0.8 mile of VRM Class II as it crosses the Green River. Following the river crossing, the Segment 4 of the Proposed Route would proceed back to the northwest to re-join the 345-kV corridor just west of the NWR. Figure 5.3-2 shows the viewshed of the Green River AOI, the location of the Proposed Route, and the VRM Class II lands. Figure 5.3-3 shows the AOI and Proposed Route with the amendment management recommendation. This AOI includes one 410-acre parcel designated VRM II.

Alternatives Considered – In this area the existing 345-kV transmission corridor offered the best routing opportunity for the proposed 500-kV transmission line; however, the existing transmission lines cross the Seedskafee NWR. As a result, the Proponents evaluated potential routes avoiding the NWR. Because the NWR extends for at least 15 miles to the north, no alternative routes were evaluated north of the WWE corridor. Options to the south are severely constrained due to the presence of the trona mine, BLM parcels designated as VRM Class II extending close to 20 miles to the south, and additional mines. The Proponents determined that the Proposed Route just to the south of the NWR boundary would have less impact to all resources but would cross one parcel of land managed for VRM Class II objectives (Figure 5.3-3).

Existing Landscape Conditions – The topography in the 15-mile-radius study area surrounding AOI GR-1 is mostly flat to rolling except for the steep slopes cut by the rivers and streams traversing the area. The Green River runs northwest to southeast across the central portion of the study area and Blacks Fork is located in the southwest quadrant. The area is without forests and is very sparsely developed except along the I-80/U.S. Route 30 corridor. The community of Granger is located along this corridor, just west of the 15-mile area and Jamestown and Riovista are located just outside the southeast portion of the area. Other development is sparse and scattered. There is a 345-kV transmission corridor extending east to west across the center portion of the area and many lower-voltage lines in the southern half. Numerous historic trails cross the area mostly from northeast to southwest. The Seedskafee NWR is situated along the Green River in the northwest quadrant. Sensitive viewers include motorists on the interstate, local residents and visitors to the NWR, and historic resources in the area.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.3-2 shows the viewshed, AOI, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used in evaluating the conformance of the proposed facilities with the existing landscape conditions and VRM Class II management requirements. Figure 5.3-3 shows the existing landscape in proximity to this AOI, the VRM classification. Scenic views of the Green River west of the Blue Rim in the Seedskafee NWR are important to recreational viewers on the Green River, motorists traveling on SR 372, approximately 2.0 miles to the west, and local viewers on minor arterial roads. These views are represented by KOP 1353. Attachment A, Figure GR-1a shows the existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1353. The views of the undulating terrain and simple geometric forms show little diversity in form, line, color, and texture with numerous man-made features. The visible developments include transmission lines and the trona plant located adjacent to this VRM Class II managed area. Attachment A, Figure GR-1b presents a simulation of the proposed Project structures within the existing view of KOP 1353. It is apparent from KOP 1353 that the Proposed Route would be highly visible in the surrounding landscape and that screening and other mitigation efforts would most likely not lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The Proposed Route would be somewhat co-dominant with many of the man-made features, including the three high-voltage transmission lines in the middleground of the view, to the north. The proposed transmission line would contrast with the undulating terrain with simple vegetative patterns and draw the attention of the casual observer. There are high-contrasting industrial structures nearby, such as the trona plant; however, it has been present within the landscape for many years, thus additional new industrial structures are still likely to create a heightened sense of awareness among viewers for structural contrast. The Project would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture of the landscape and would thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives. For the transmission line to be allowed, the Green River RMP would need to be amended to permit the project as a one-time visually altering action without changing the VRM classification and continuing to protect the visual quality of the Green River corridor.

Once the Project is allowed it may become difficult to manage this particular area to meet VRM Class II objectives because it will create a new linear element and lower scenic quality, making it an attractive location to site future linear projects. This situation will likely result in incremental visual impacts to the area over time and eventually the area may not meet the visual quality criteria required by managing the area to meet VRM Class II objectives. A visual resource inventory was recently conducted for the area prior to the proposal of the Project. This inventory found the area to still meet the criteria described for VRM Class II objectives; however, if the project is approved the next inventory may not find sufficient evidence for the continuation of management using VRM Class II objective.

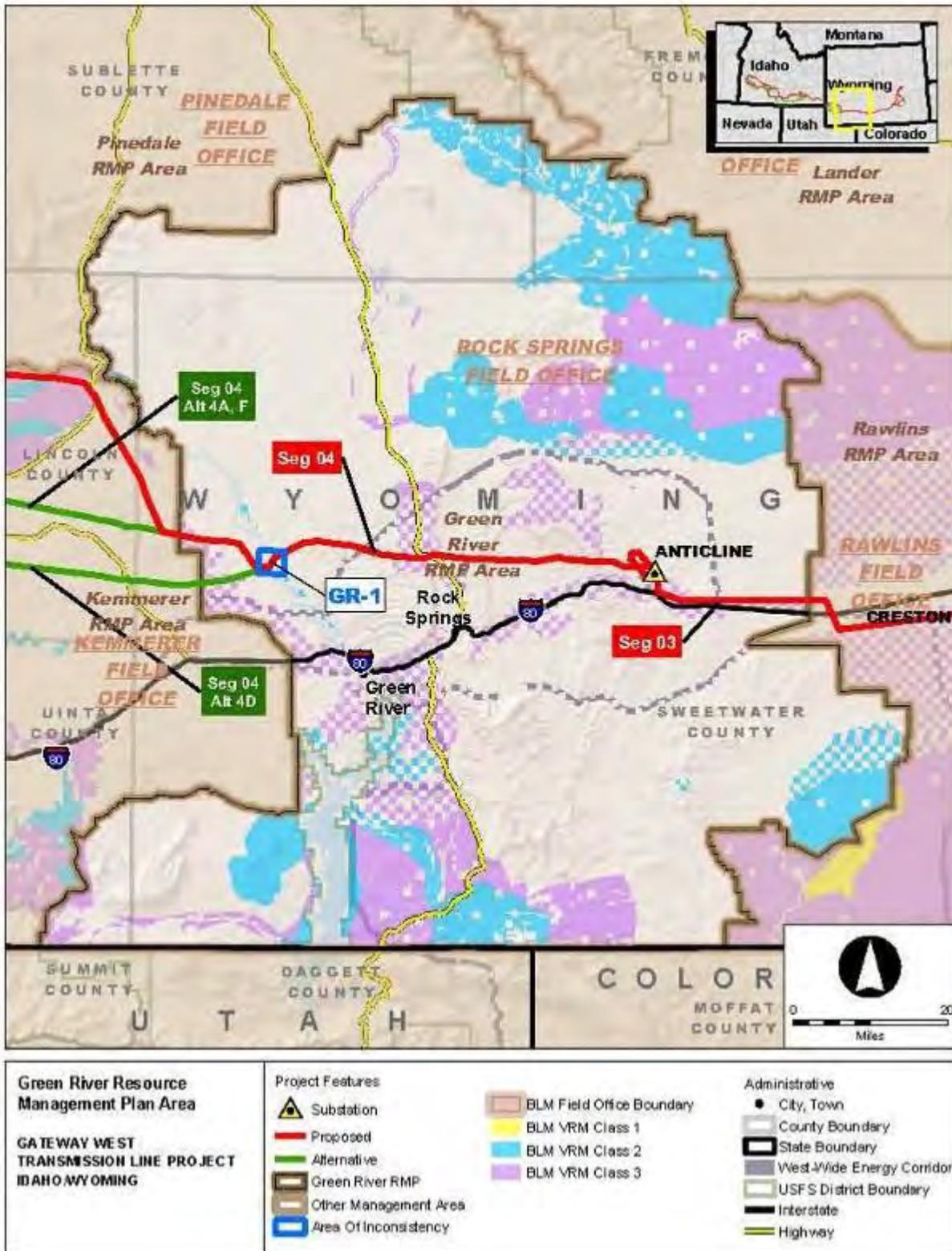


Figure 5.3-1. Green River RMP Boundary Map

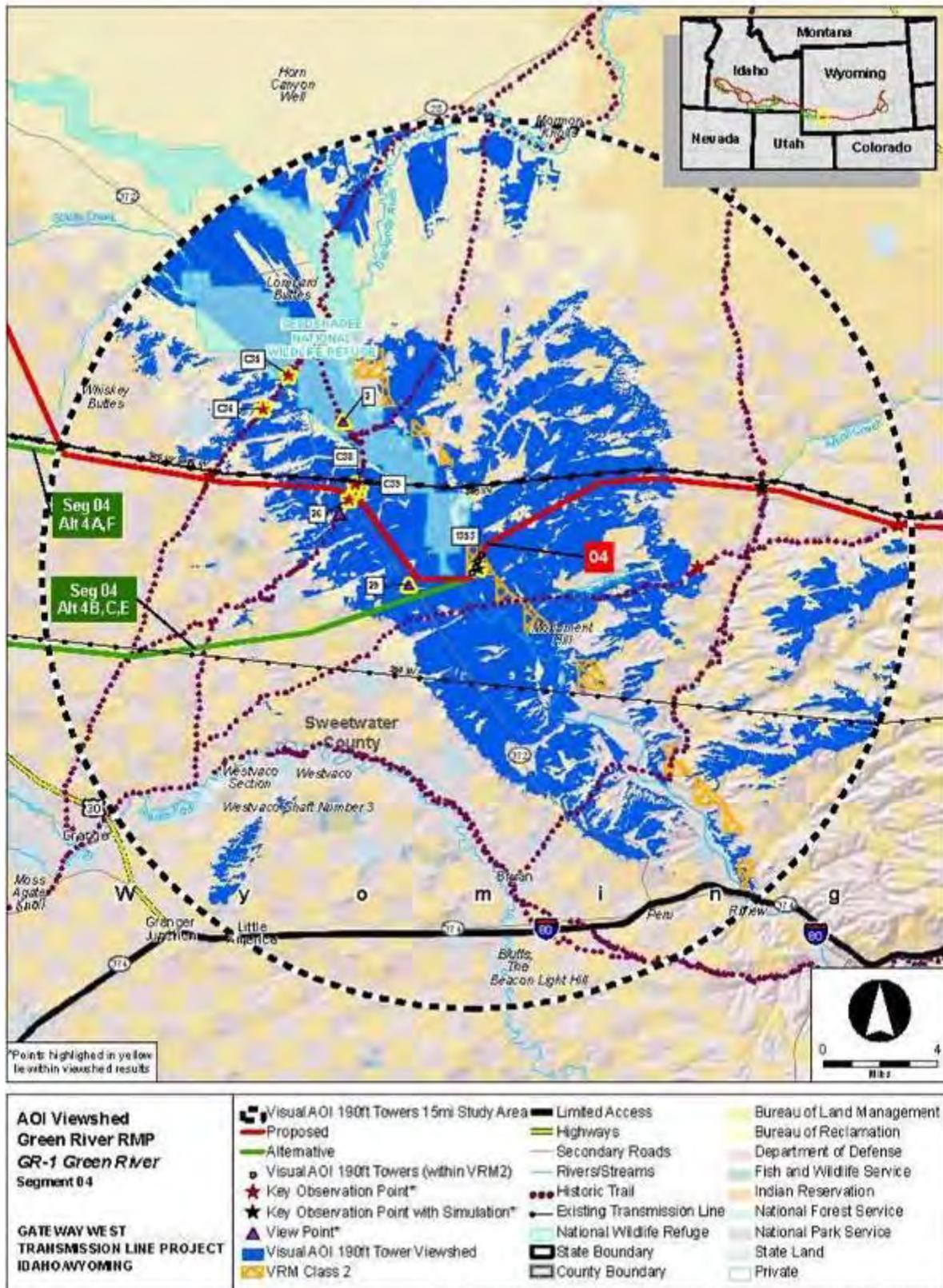


Figure 5.3-2. AOI GR-1 Green River AOI Visual Analysis

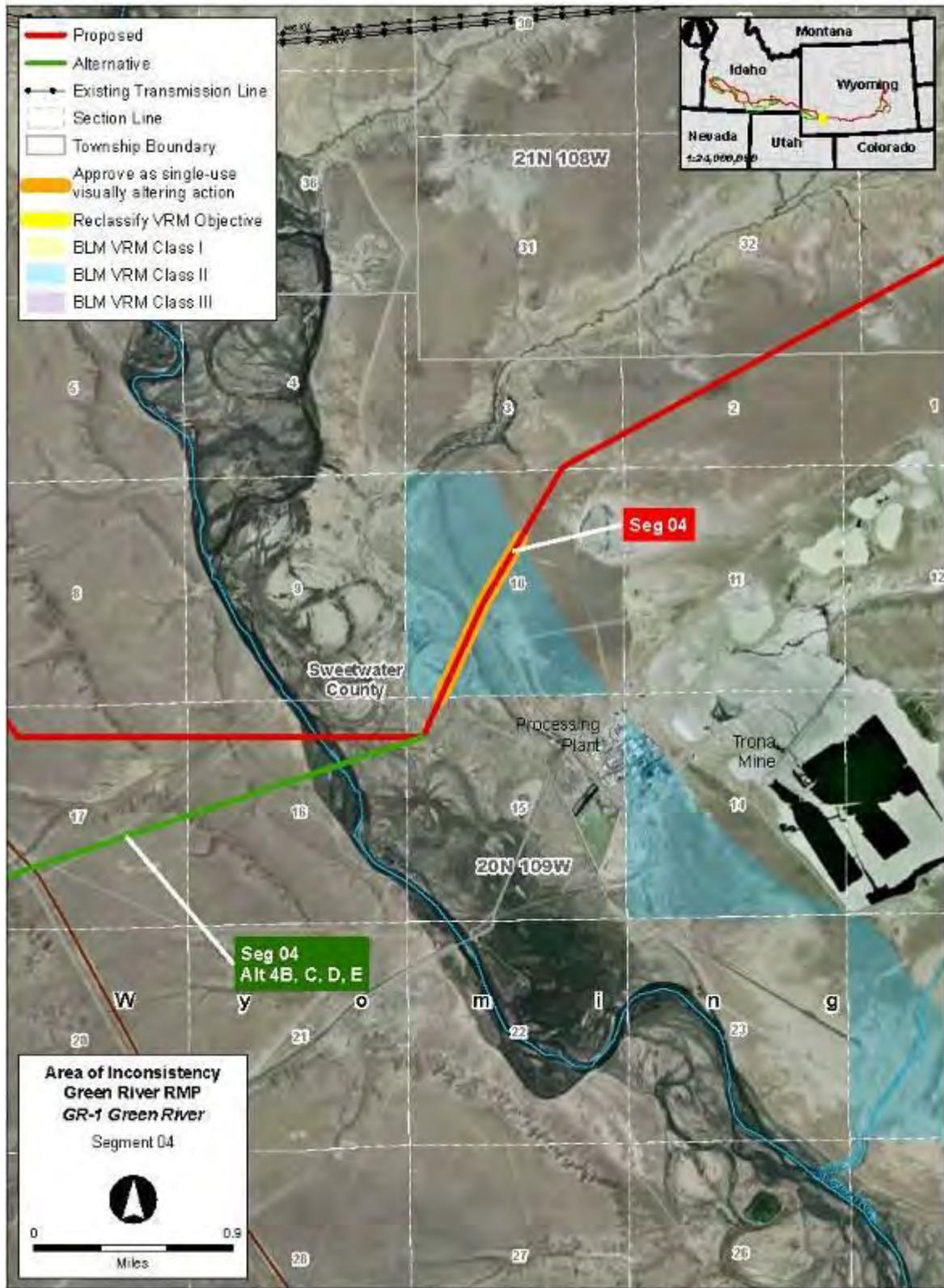


Figure 5.3-3. AOI GR-1 Green River AOI Detailed Map

5.4 Kemmerer RMP

On June 1, 2010, the Record of Decision (ROD) was signed for the revised Kemmerer RMP (BLM 2010b), providing direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the Kemmerer FO in west-central Wyoming. The RMP planning area encompasses approximately 1,630,000 acres in Lincoln, Sweetwater, and Uinta Counties (see Figure 5.4-1). The Kemmerer RMP contains detailed descriptions of visually sensitive areas by VRM Class. In all, the Kemmerer RMP designates 32,807 acres as VRM Class I, 392,719 acres as VRM Class II, 347,214 acres as VRM Class III, and 654,724 acres as VRM Class IV.

In addition, there are eight designated sites where viewsheds within 3 miles are designated to be preserved to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not dominate the visible area and detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the site. The RMP also sets the goal to manage the viewsheds of NHT segments. Section 5.4.10 describes the conformance of the Project for these resources.

The proposed Segment 4 is 203 miles long and generally follows existing transmission lines. It consists of a double-circuit 500-kV line between Anticline Substation in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, and Populus Substation in Power County, Idaho. The Proponents are also considering a design alternative for Segment 4 that would replace the double-circuit line with two parallel and adjacent single-circuit 500-kV lines.

Segment 4 within the RMP planning area contains the Proposed Route and six feasible alternatives. The northern Proposed Route is largely Greenfield within the Kemmerer RMP area. The two central alternatives (Alternatives 4A and 4F) follow existing transmission lines for much of their length, and the four southern alternatives (Alternatives 4B through 4E) avoid some of the major historic trails, portions of sage-grouse core areas, and crucial big game winter range but pass near the Fossil Butte National Monument (NM). Several alternatives are proposed to avoid specific constraints such as NWRs (Cokeville Meadows, Seedska-dee, and Bear Lake), Fossil Butte NM, sage-grouse leks and core areas, historic trails, raptor nest buffers, crucial big game range, oil and gas wells, and coal and trona mining.

VRM management objectives could be affected by the proposed and alternative routes in nine separate areas; depending on the route selected. The presence of a transmission line in these landscapes would be inconsistent with VRM Class II objectives. As a result, BLM action would be necessary to modify visual classifications to conform with the RMP or to permit a one-time allowance. The AOIs are described in Sections 5.4.1 through 5.4.9 below.

5.4.1 AOI K-1 Sublette Cutoff (Proposed Route – Segment 4)

The Sublette Cutoff AOI is located on an east-west portion of the Proposed Route approximately 5 miles west of Fontenelle Reservoir in Lincoln County, Wyoming. The Proposed Route proceeds from southeast to west, crossing Highway 189, just southwest of Fontenelle Reservoir and then angling almost due west for the remainder of this segment. The Sublette Cutoff AOI crosses approximately 3.1 miles of VRM Class II management area on the south edge of Fontenelle Creek and includes a

portion of the Sublette Cutoff NHT. Figure 5.4-2 shows the viewshed of the Sublette Cutoff AOI, the location of the Proposed Route, and the VRM management classifications. Figure 5.4-3 shows the AOI and route with the amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – The location of the Proposed Route was initially identified by BLM and the State of Wyoming and later adopted by the Proponents. This segment was routed to avoid areas with a higher density of historic trail crossings and to avoid crossing crucial big game range located further south. The nearest Segment 4 alternatives (Alternatives 4A and 4F) are located about 10 miles south of the Sublette Cutoff AOI and also cross VRM Class II lands. The Sublette Cutoff AOI is located within a large area, roughly 20 miles by 40 miles (512,000 acres), of land predominantly managed as VRM Class II. The only proposed alternatives that would avoid the VRM Class II lands would be portions of the southern alternatives (Alternatives 4B through 4E).

Existing Landscape Conditions – The topography in the area within 15 miles of AOI K-1 comprises a series of north-south ridges and valleys, including Oyster Ridge and Mammoth Hollow located in the western portion of the study area. The central portion of the area has a series of drainages and ridges running east to west while the area south and west of the Green River is flat to rolling. The northeast quadrant is comprised of rugged topography with severe slopes. The ridges in the far west portion of the area are forested. Gas and oil wells are found in the north. The Green River and the Fontenelle Reservoir are the two principal water bodies and are located on the east side of the study area but there are many other drainages throughout the area. Farms and farmland occur along La Barge Creek, Fontenelle Creek, and the Green River. La Barge, the largest community in the area, is located in the north of the Fontenelle Reservoir on the west side of the Green River. U.S. Route 189 crosses the area from northeast to southwest, and SR 235 is located in the northeast. Two transmission lines cross north to south through the area. Sensitive viewing areas include several historic trails, the Fontenelle Recreation area, U.S. Route 189, and residences in La Barge. The Sublett Cutoff NHT runs southwest through the center of the western two-thirds of the study area.

Attachment A, Figure K-1a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP C56, looking northeast along the trail towards the Proposed Route. The landscape in the foreground is flat to gently sloping and covered with grasses and sage brush and rolling hills are seen in the background. There are no visible water elements and a subtle road is the only man-made modification in view. Attachment A, Figure K-1c shows the existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1288 looking south from the county road crossing of the Sublette Cutoff NHT crossing. The view shows a flat to rolling topography with the horizon silhouetted by mesas in the distance. Vegetation is uniform, consisting of low shrubs and sparse grasses, and undulating with the topography

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.4-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to assess the consistency of the Project with existing landscape conditions. Scenic views of Sullivan Hollow and Fontenelle Creek are important to sensitive viewers visiting portions of the Oregon NHT. These sensitive

viewers are represented by KOP C56. KOP C56 is located on a segment of the California NHT – Dempsey-Hockaday Cutoff 0.5 mile south of Sullivan Hollow and located 0.4 miles south of Segment 4 of the Proposed Route on a broad east-to-west trending ridge. Attachment A, Figure K-1b simulates landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP C56. The views of the flat to undulating terrain and background mountain silhouettes with mottled vegetation exhibits diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. The setting at this KOP is undisturbed in all directions, except for a roadway that is visible in the middleground of the view. From this KOP, the proposed Project would be partially backdropped by the mountainous terrain. The distance of the Project from KOP C56 results in high visual contrast. The Proposed Route would introduce new structural elements to this view to the north. It would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture; therefore it would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. Views of the Sublette Cutoff NHT setting looking south are represented by KOP 1288. High-sensitivity recreational viewers at KOP 1288 would have a high level of Project visibility, being 300 feet from the Proposed Route. The surrounding terrain is flat with mesa silhouettes on the horizon. Existing visible man-made features include the road and fencepost. The Project would introduce new structural elements to this view. Proximity (300 feet) to the project and lack of backdropping elements in the foreground would result in high visual contrast that would draw the attention of the casual observer; deviating from the natural form, line, color, and texture and would thus not conform to the VRM Class II objectives (see Attachment A, K-1d). It is assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area in order to protect the Oregon NHT corridor, particularly the Sublette Cutoff, as well as adjacent scenic resources. In order to locate the proposed alignment at this location it would be necessary for the Project to be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. This would provide the most protection for adjacent visual resource management goals. The following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: “In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated” (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.2 AOI K-2 Commissary Ridge (Proposed Route – Segment 4)

The Commissary Ridge AOI is located on Proposed Segment 4, approximately six miles west of the Sublette Cutoff AOI. Commissary Ridge runs north to south and would be crossed from east to west by the Proposed Segment 4. This would result in the Project crossing approximately 21 continuous miles of VRM Class II managed lands. Figure 5.4-4 shows the viewshed of the Commissary Ridge AOI, the location of Segment 4, and the VRM classifications. Figure 5.4-5 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – As stated earlier, the location of the Proposed Route was initially identified by BLM and Wyoming and later adopted by the Proponents. However, a route passing east to west through this area cannot avoid VRM II classified land. There are many constraints in this area including historic trails and scenic areas on Commissary Ridge, in the nearby Raymond Mountain WSA, and in the Rock

Creek/Tunp Prescriptive Management Area (PMA) to the west. The area managed as VRM Class II extends about 24 miles to the south and 23 miles to the north of the Proposed Route. None of the proposed alternatives entirely avoid the VRM Class II lands. Alternatives 4B and 4E, however, are approximately 24 miles to the south and cross through VRM Class II managed lands for portions of their routes south of Fossil Butte National monument, thus avoiding the Commissary Ridge AOI and other areas managed to conform to VRM Class II objectives.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The terrain in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding this AOI is very rugged with steep slopes. Numerous north-south oriented features such as the Sublette Range, Tunp Range, Rock Creek Ridge, Dempsey Ridge and Commissary Ridge and valleys following the Bear River, Hams Fork River, and other drainages. The Naughton and Kemmerer Reservoirs are located along the Hams Fork River. There is some agriculture along the valleys; however, the vast majority of the area is undeveloped. The small community of Cokeville is situated in the western part of the area along U.S. Route 30. There are three 345-kV transmission lines that pass southeast to northwest through the study area and several other lower voltage transmission lines in the southwest. Forest land increases to the north of the study area immediately, south of the Bridger NF. Potentially sensitive viewing areas include the highways, communities, historic trails, the Cokeville Meadows NWR, and other historic, recreational, and natural areas.

Attachment A, Figure K-2a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1359. The topography is mountainous with numerous peaks and silhouette lines. Attachment B, Figure K-2c shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1363. The topography is rocky and rugged with a gradual transition from relatively smooth to rough.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.4-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to assess the consistency of the proposed transmission line with the existing VRM II classification. Attachment A, Figure K-2b simulates landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1359 and Attachment B, Figure K-2d simulates landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1363.

Scenic views in the southern portion of the Sublette Range are important to sensitive viewers on Commissary Ridge, represented by KOP 1359. Scenic views adjacent to Commissary Ridge are important to sensitive viewers along Oyster Ridge as resented by KOP 1363 on Sublet-Pomeroy Road. The views of the undulating terrain and background mountain silhouettes and simple geometric forms create diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. While trees in the foreground offer partial screening opportunities for KOP 1359, it is apparent from both KOP 1359 and KOP 1363 that the proposed Project would be highly visible and that screening and other mitigation efforts would not effectively lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The new structures, cleared ROW, and access roads would be in contrast to the terrain with its simple geometric forms created by the mottled vegetation and clusters of trees. The contrast would draw the attention of the casual observer and would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It is assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor and

adjacent scenic resources. It is recommended that if the Proposed Route 4 is selected, the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. This would provide the most protection for adjacent visual resource management goals.

Mitigation would include microspacing towers to lower visual impacts. Additionally the following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: “In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated” (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.3 AOI K-3 Sublette Range (Proposed Route – Segment 4, Alternative 4F)

The Sublette Range runs north to south and is located to the west of the Tunp Range and north of the community of Cokeville. The Sublette Range AOI is located at the southern end of the Sublette Range just north of Rocky Point at the junction of the Proposed Segment 4 and Alternative 4F. Both routes cross approximately 1 mile of VRM Class II lands. Figures 5.4-6 and 5.4-8 show the viewsheds of the Sublette Range AOI for the Alternative 4F and the Proposed Route, and the VRM classifications. Figures 5.4-7 and 5.4-9 show the AOI, routes and the amendment management recommendation. The Proposed Route crosses one 1,342-acre VRM II parcel for 0.7 mile; Alternative 4F AOI crosses two segments of the same parcel for approximately the same distance.

Alternatives Considered – As described in the EIS, many alternatives have been evaluated to avoid constraints in and adjacent to the northern border of the Kemmerer FO. These include the Bear River Valley, the community of Cokeville, VRM Class II lands, and a Raymond Mountain WSA. The Proposed Route and Alternative 4F are described in Section 5.4.2. Alternative 4F follows an existing transmission corridor for much of its length and would require significantly less Greenfield ROW compared to the Proposed Route. However, this alternative crosses more high quality trails. Because of the extent of VRM Class II lands, they cannot be avoided.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The terrain in the 15-mile area surrounding this AOI is very rugged with many steep slopes along north-south oriented topographic features, including the Sublette Range, Tunp Range, Rock Creek Ridge, Dempsey Ridge, and Commissary Ridge; and valleys following the Bear River, Hams Fork River, and other drainages. The Naughton and Kemmerer Reservoirs are located along Hams Fork River. The vast majority of the area is undeveloped, with some agriculture along the valleys. The small community of Cokeville is situated along U.S. Route 30, the primary highway through the area. There are three 345-kV transmission lines passing southeast to northwest through the study area and several other lower voltage transmission lines in the southwest. Forest land increases proceeding north towards and into the Bridger NF. Potentially sensitive viewing areas include the highways, communities, historic trails, the Cokeville Meadows NWR, and other recreational and natural areas.

Attachment A, Figure K-3a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 635. The topography is rolling to steep, covered with sage brush with a small lake in the

foreground. Other than a local dirt road and a fence, no other man-made features are apparent in the view.

Conformance Analysis – Figures 5.4-6 and 5.4-8 show the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study areas for the Alternative 4F and the Proposed Route used to evaluate the consistency of the proposed transmission facilities with the existing landscape and VRM Class II objectives. Attachment A, Figures K-3b and K-3c simulate landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route and Alternative 4F as viewed from KOP 635.

KOP 635 represents scenic views in the southern portion of the Sublette Range across Quealy Reservoir and toward Coke Mountain that are important to sensitive viewers. The views of the undulating terrain and background mountain silhouettes and simple geometric water forms create diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. From this KOP, it is apparent that the Proposed Route and Alternative 4F would be highly visible on the ridge and that screening and other mitigation efforts would not effectively lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. Transmission line structures and access roads would contrast with the undulating terrain, simple geometric forms and mottled vegetation. As a result, both the Proposed Segment 4 and Alternative 4F would draw the attention of the casual observer and would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It appears that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor as well as adjacent scenic resources. The landscape surrounding Segment 4 of the Proposed Route and Alternative 4F should remain lands managed to achieve VRM Class II objectives. Should either the Proposed Route or Alternative 4F be selected, an amendment would be needed to permit a one-time visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. This would allow the Project but would maintain the underlying protective VRM classification to preserve historic trail and scenic resources. Mitigation measures and BMPs should be used to lower potential impacts to trails and the scenic qualities of the surrounding landscape.

Mitigation would include moving the towers further south to lower visual impacts due to noncompliance with VRM objectives. Additionally the following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: “In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated” (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.4 AOI K-4 Tunp Range (Alternative 4A)

Alternative 4A follows a corridor with three existing single-circuit 345-kV transmission lines and proceeds to the northwest to rejoin the Proposed Route at the Idaho-Wyoming border. The Tunp Range AOI begins at the southern end of Commissary Ridge, proceeds west across the Hams Fork Plateau and Rock Creek Ridge in the Tunp Range, and ends at the Bear River Valley just southeast of Cokeville. In this area, Alternative 4A crosses approximately 16 miles of land managed as VRM Class II. This area also includes a portion of the Rock Creek/Tunp Range SRMA, an administrative area with multiple restrictions on development due to its unspoiled character. Figure 5.4-10 shows the viewshed of the Tunp Range AOI, the location of Alternative 4A, and

the VRM classification. Figure 5.4-11 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation. Two parcels designated as VRM Class II ranging in size from 1,872 acres to approximately 280,000 acres are crossed.

Alternatives Considered – Alternative 4A follows three existing 345-kV transmission lines, passing southeast to northwest. Because Alternative 4A follows an existing transmission corridor, it was considered a feasible alternative. However, following this existing corridor results in crossing an expanse of scenic topography designated as VRM Class II, high-quality historic trails, and two preservation viewsheds (see Section 5.4-10). To avoid these resource areas would require selection of one of the southern alternatives (Alternatives 4B through 4E). The Kemmerer RMP states in Decision 6054 to preserve the viewshed within 3 miles of Class 1 segments north and east of U.S. Highway 30 and west of the Hams Fork River (Tunp/Dempsey Trail area), where the visual characteristics of the setting contribute to the eligibility of the site, by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not dominate the visible area to detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the trail setting. Design ROW to preserve the visual integrity of the settings consistent with the BLM visual resources handbook and manual.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The vast majority of the area around AOI K-4 is undeveloped with some agriculture along the valleys. The terrain in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding this AOI is very rugged with many steep slopes. Numerous north-south oriented features present include the Sublette Range, Tunp Range, Rock Creek Ridge, Dempsey Ridge, and Commissary Ridge; and valleys following the Bear River, Hams Fork River, and other drainages. Naughton and Kemmerer Reservoirs are located along Hams Fork River. The small community of Cokeville is situated along U.S. Route 30, which runs north to east through the area, and Kemmerer and Diamondville off U.S. Route 189 on the east side of the area. There is an existing transmission corridor with three 345-kV lines passing southeast to northwest through the study area and several other lines in the southwest. Forest land increases proceeding north approaching and entering the Bridger NF. Potentially sensitive viewing areas include the highways, communities, historic trails, the Cokeville Meadows NWR, Fossil Butte NM, and other recreational and natural areas.

As can be seen in Attachment A, Figures K-4a and K-4c, the topography in the vicinity of AOI K-4 as viewed from KOPs 642 and C8 varies from flat to steep-sloping to mountainous. Much of the area is covered with sage brush with some agriculture. From KOP 642, there are also glimpses of Hams Fork River. The existing transmission lines are the primary manmade feature in both views.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.4-10 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius area used to evaluate the consistency of the proposed transmission facilities located along Alternative 4A with the existing landscape and the VRM Class II objectives.

Scenic views from the Nancy Hill grave site, located along the Sublette Cutoff on a finger ridge between several deep canyons, and views from the White Hill Trail Monument east of the Nancy Hill grave site are important to sensitive recreational viewers on the Oregon NHT. These sensitive viewers are represented by KOPs 642

and C8. Attachment A, Figures K-4b and K-4d simulate landscape conditions showing Alternative 4A as viewed from KOPs 642 and C8.

KOP C8 is located on a flat ridge top that overlooks Robinson Creek to the north, Shuster Basin (North Fork Twin Creek) to the south, and the head of Quakenasp Canyon to the east. KOP 642 is located on the Hams Fork Plateau on the north rim of Quakenasp Canyon, approximately 1.5 miles west of the Hams Fork River. The White Hill Trail Monument overlooks the Hams Fork River and provides sweeping views of the Uinta Mountains, the Wind River Mountains, and Ham's Plateau. Views of the undulating terrain, background pyramidal mountainous silhouettes, and mottled vegetation exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features.

From these KOPs, visibility of Alternative 4A would be low to moderate because of the similarity of the Project's design with the existing structures in the area and the distance from the KOPs to the Route Alternative. As a result, the visual contrast rating from these KOPs would be weak to moderate in the undulating terrain with mottled vegetation. The addition of 500-kV facilities to the three existing sets of structures and access roads would increase their prominence within the view but may not draw the attention of the casual observer.

It has been assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this area to protect the landscape quality of the Nancy Hill grave site, White Hill Trail Monument, and the Oregon NHT corridor and scenic quality of the area in general. It is recommended that if Alternative 4A is selected, the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. This would provide the most protection for visual resource management goals.

Mitigation may include moving the alignment closer to the existing alignment to lower contrast and replant grasses to lower contrast from the tower pads. Additionally the following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: "In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated" (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.5 AOI K-5 Hams Fork (Alternative 4F)

The Hams Fork AOI is located on Alternative 4F where it proceeds northwest across Commissary Ridge and the Tunp Range, between the Proposed Route to the north and Alternative 4A to the south. The Hams Fork AOI crosses approximately 16 miles of VRM Class II land within Dempsey Basin, and Dempsey Ridge and Rock Creek Ridge within the Tunp Range. Figure 5.4-12 shows the viewshed of the Hams Fork AOI, the location of Alternative 4F, and the VRM classifications. Figure 5.4-13 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation. The crossing of this AOI includes one parcel designated as VRM Class II comprising approximately 280,000 acres.

Alternatives Considered – Alternative 4F was the Proponents' original Proposed Route through the Kemmerer area. It was sited to avoid as much as possible resource issues including sage-grouse leks and core areas, historic trails, VRM Class II lands,

Special Management Areas (SMAs), the Cokeville Meadows NWR, and big game wintering and parturition areas. Later, the northerly route was adopted as the Proposed Route to further minimize impact to high-quality trails. However, no alternative has been identified that minimizes to acceptable levels impacts to all the resources that occur along this segment. To minimize crossing of VRM Class II lands would require selection of one of the southern alternatives (Alternatives 4B through 4E).

Existing Landscape Conditions – The vast majority of the 15-mile-radius area surrounding this AOI is undeveloped with some agriculture along the valleys. The terrain is very rugged with many steep slopes. The numerous north-south oriented features include the Sublette Range, Tunp Range, Boundary Ridge, Dempsey Ridge, Commissary Ridge; and valleys following the Bear River, Hams Fork River, and other drainages. Naughton and Kemmerer Reservoirs are located along Hams Fork River. The small community of Cokeville is situated along U.S. Route 30, which runs north to east through the area. Kemmerer, Frontier, and Diamondville are located off U.S. Route 189 on the east side of the area. There is an existing transmission corridor with three 345-kV lines passing southeast to northwest through the study area and several other lines in the southwest. Forest land increases proceeding north; approaching and entering the Bridger National Forest. Potentially sensitive viewing areas include the highways, communities, historic trails, the Cokeville Meadows NWR, Fossil Butte NM, and other recreational and natural areas.

Attachment A, Figure K-5a shows the landscape in the vicinity of AOI K-5 as viewed from KOP 620. In this view, the topography varies from flat to steep-sloping and is covered in grasses and sage brush. The only man-made feature is a two-track road. Figure K-5c provides a view of AOI K-5 from KOP 636 showing grass covered rolling topography with a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs in the middle ground. The only man-made features in this view are a two-track road and a fence.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.4-12 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to evaluate the consistency of the proposed 500-kV facilities with the existing VRM Class II objectives.

Scenic views from Dempsey Ridge north of Coke Mountain are important to recreational viewers on the Oregon NHT. The area of inconsistency generally spans between Rock Creek Ridge and the Tunp Range to Commissary Ridge across Dempsey Basin. Sensitive viewers are represented by KOPs 620, 637, 636, and C110. Attachment A, Figures K-5b and K-5d simulate landscape conditions showing Alternative 4A as viewed from KOPs 620 and 636 respectively. Scenic views of Pink Hill are important to recreational viewers on the Dempsey Hockaday Cutoff of the Oregon NHT. These sensitive viewers are represented by KOP 620. From KOP 620, there are sweeping views of the Dempsey Basin, Hams Fork Plateau, and Pink Hill. The views of the undulating terrain, background mountainous silhouettes, and mottled vegetation exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features and simple geometric patterns. From KOP 636, located on Dempsey Ridge, there are sweeping views of the Dempsey Basin, Rock Creek Ridge, and Coke Mountain. The views of the undulating terrain with pyramidal mountainous silhouettes in the background, and contrasting vegetation exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features and simple geometric patterns.

From these KOPs it is apparent that Alternative 4F of the Proposed Project would be highly visible. The proposed Project facilities would draw the attention of the casual observer, with skylined structures dominating the views from KOP 636 and to a lesser extent from KOP 620. While micro-siting of structures may lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area, the proposed double-circuit structures would remain dominant in the view and not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

It appears that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor and scenic undeveloped character of the area. It is recommended that if Alternative 4F is selected, the project be allowed as a one-time visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. Appropriate mitigation measures and BMPs to lower potential impacts to visual resources would be followed. This would allow the continuation of VRM Class II objectives to protect the sensitive scenic resources associated with the Oregon NHT and other nearby historic locations.

Mitigation may include clearing tower pads in a shape that is less geometric and contrasting, modifying the color of the towers to blend in better with backdrop landscape and vegetation, and move towers farther from the KOP to reduce skylining effects. From KOP 636 an additional mitigation measure may include moving towers below the ridgeline to take advantage of the topography's ability partially hide towers and conductors. Additionally the following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: "In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated" (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.6 AOI K-6 A and B, Fossil Butte (Alternatives 4B/4C and 4D/4E)

The Fossil Butte AOI is located near the southern boundary of Fossil Butte NM. This AOI relates to the four southern Segment 4 Route Alternatives (Alternatives 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E). All four Route Alternatives follow a combination of 2 routes, proceeding from southeast to northwest in southern Lincoln County, Wyoming. Alternatives 4B and 4C follow a joint route to the northwest until they reach US Highway 30. Just south of this highway, joint Alternatives 4B/4C turn to the west and continue for approximately 3 miles paralleling the south side of U.S. Highway 30 and an existing low-voltage transmission line, then angle southwest and west. Fossil Butte NM is located on the north side of U.S. Highway 30. A siting goal was to preserve the views from the visitor center and surrounding trails. Alternatives 4D and 4E follow a more southern joint route farther from U.S. Highway 30 and Fossil Butte NM. Figures 5.4-14 and 5.4-16 show the viewshed of the Fossil Butte AOI, the location of Alternatives 4B/4C and 4D/E, and VRM classifications. Figures 5.4-15 and 5.4-17 show the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation. Alternative 4B/4C crosses in and out (7.5 miles) of one large irregularly-shaped parcel designated as VRM Class II comprising approximately 280,000 acres. Alternative 4D/4E crosses the same large VRM Class II lands in two locations for a total of 4.5 miles.

Alternatives Considered – In this area south of U.S. Highway 30 there were a variety of constraints considered in routing the proposed transmission line, including sage-grouse leks and buffers, wetlands, raptor nests, VRM Class II land, and potential

visibility from Fossil Butte NM. Alternatives 4B/4C and 4D/4E were attempts to minimize impacts to these resources and meet the needs of Wyoming and federal agencies. The major feature of these routes is avoidance of high-quality trail crossings and fewer miles of VRM Class II lands crossed.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The majority of topography in the 15-mile area surrounding this AOI is very rugged with many steep slopes. Exceptions to this include the Bear River Valley, running north to south through the western half of the area, the valley along Hams Fork River, and Cumberland Flat in the east. There are many north-south oriented ridges, including Dempsey Ridge and Tunp Ridge, and several well-defined drainages. The vast majority of the area is undeveloped with farms and farmland mostly in the Bear River Valley and along Hams Fork River. Other development includes coal-mining, as well as the communities of Kemmerer and Diamondville located in the southeast near the intersection of U.S. Highways 30 and 189. SRs 89 and 30 provide access from western Wyoming into northeastern Utah and intersect with U.S. Highway 30 in the western portion of the area. There are several transmission lines entering and exiting the Naughton Substation and a generally east to west 345-kV corridor in the north. Forest land occurs in scattered locations, mostly in the central part of this area. Potentially sensitive viewing areas include the highways, communities, historic trails, Cokeville Meadows NWR, Fossil Butte NM, and other recreational and natural areas.

Attachment A, Figure K-6a shows existing landscape conditions crossed by Alternatives 4B/4C viewed from KOP 655. The topography is flat to steep sloping with sage brush in the foreground and little in the way of man-made features. Figure K-6c shows existing landscape conditions crossed by Alternatives 4D/4E as viewed from KOP 652; the land is undulating with evenly dispersed sage brush in the foreground and there is little in the way of man-made features seen in this view.

Conformance Analysis – Figures 5.4-14 and 5.4-16 show the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area for Alternatives 4B/4C and Alternatives 4D/4E used in evaluating the degree of consistency of the proposed 500-kV transmission facilities with the existing VRM Class II objectives.

Alternatives 4B/4C extend across Fossil Ridge and an area of federal lands south of the NM. Scenic views across Twin Creek toward Fossil Ridge from the Fossil Butte NM visitor's center are important to sensitive recreational viewers represented by KOPs 654, 655, and 676. Attachment A, Figure K-6b simulates landscape conditions showing Alternatives 4B/4C as viewed from KOP 655. The views of the undulating terrain, sweeping mesas, and mottled vegetation exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture with man-made features including the Union Pacific railroad and existing wood-pole transmission lines in the middleground. From KOP 655, Alternatives 4B/4C of the proposed Project would be moderately visible but seen in the context of the existing railroad and transmission lines. The proposed Project elements would draw the attention of the casual observer but would not dominate the setting. Screening and other mitigation efforts, such as micrositing, may reduce impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. Because the transmission facilities along this alternative route would be backdropped and located 1.5 miles or more from this KOP, the line would blend with the landscape. However, it would represent a deviation from the natural form,

line, color, and texture of the landscape and would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It has been assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the historic resources adjacent to the Fossil Butte NM. It is recommended that if either Alternatives 4B or 4C are selected, that the following area be reclassified to VRM Class III: the portion of the planning area south and west of U.S. highway 30 (the highway) beginning on a north-south line along the high ridgeline approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west of the current active coal leases (west of the town of Kemmerer); south along the high ridgeline to the ridgeline behind the active coal leases in Township (T)21N, Range (R)117W, Section 25; then west following the high points of the topography approximately 3 miles south of the highway to T21N, R118W, Section 28; then north-west following the high points of the topography within approximately 3 miles of the highway to T21N, R118 W, Section 18; then north-west following the high points to within approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the highway in T21N, R118W, Section 12; then west to the junction of U.S. Highway 30/State Highway 89 (see Figure 5.4-15).

Scenic views toward Fossil Ridge from Twin Creek Road are important to sensitive recreational viewers south of Fossil Butte NM. This AOI includes a portion of Fossil Ridge adjacent to the historic Susanna Lewis Homestead. Sensitive recreational viewers are represented by KOPs 631, 651, and 652. Attachment A, Figure K-6d simulates landscape conditions showing Alternatives 4D/4E as viewed from KOP 652. The views of the undulating terrain, background mountainous silhouettes, and mottled vegetation exhibits diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features and simple geometric patterns. From KOP 652, Alternatives 4D/4E would be moderately visible from less than a mile due to the landscape backdrop absorbing the proposed structures. The Project would represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture and will not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It appears that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the historic resources south of Fossil Butte NM as well as the monument itself. As a transmission line in this setting would not be consistent with the VRM Class II objectives, it is recommended that if either Alternative 4D or 4E is selected, that the following area be reclassified to VRM Class III: the portion of the planning area south and west of U.S. Highway 30 (the highway) beginning on a north-south line along the high ridgeline approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west of the current active coal leases (west of the town of Kemmerer); south along the high ridgeline to the ridgeline behind the active coal leases in T21N, R117W, Section 25; then west following the high points of the topography approximately 3 miles south of the highway to T21N, R118W, Section 28; then north-west following the high points of the topography within approximately 3 miles of the highway to T21N, R118 W, Section 18; then north-west following the high points to within approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the highway in T21N, R118W, Section 12; then west to the junction of U.S. Highway 30/State Highway 89. Portions of the route that do not fall within this recommended reclassification area would be permitted a one-time allowance without changing the VRM Classification (see Figure 5.4-17).

Mitigation measures may include choosing the southern alternative yet another alternative may be to use design of structure and a mottled color pattern to blend better with the background landscape throughout the season but especially during any high tourist seasons. Additionally the following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: "In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such

as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated” (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.7 AOI K-7 Sillem Ridge AOI (Alternatives 4C/4E)

The Sillem Ridge AOI comprises an isolated 341-acre parcel with a total VRM Class II area crossed of 0.11 mile that would be crossed by Alternatives 4C and 4E (see Figure 5.4-19).

Alternatives Considered – Alternatives 4C and 4E follow a joint route in this AOI and were identified as a means of following State Route 30 thereby substantially avoiding the Cokeville NWR, high-quality trail crossings, and Rock Creek/Tunp SMA.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The AOI is centered on a peak just south of Highway 30. The Project would cross the southern ridgeline and associated foothills and lowlands within the AOI. Figure 5.4-18 shows the 15-mile radius viewshed, the proposed routes and alternatives, VRM classifications, and towers used to evaluate the viewshed impacts. The western portion of the analysis area is flat to rolling topography with some pivot-plot agriculture. The Bear River Valley NWR is approximately 4 miles northwest of the AOI. The eastern portion of the analysis area is rolling to mountainous with steep ravines and U-shaped valleys. The vegetation occurs in mottled forms of coarse grasses/bushes and patchy clusters of natural vegetation and grasses. The Bear River runs north-south through the western area of the analysis area, and Twin Creek crosses east-west through the center of the analysis area before joining with Bear River. Historic trails run from the southeast to northwest in both the southern and northern portions of the analysis area and join in the western portion along the eastern edge of the NWR. Existing transmission lines run through the middle of the analysis area, branching north and southwest just south of the NWR, as well as running through the northeast section of the analysis area. Highway 30 crosses east-west through the middle of the area, following Twin Creek and then north, along the eastern edge of the NWR and the Bear River Valley.

Conformance Analysis – Crossing this isolated parcel would result in a high degree of contrast as the transmission line would be skylined where it crosses the peak. It would create a dominant element in the landscape. With no realistic mitigation options, the proposed transmission line facilities would draw the attention of the casual observer; dominate the setting and deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture of the landscape. As a result, Alternatives 4C/4E will not conform to VRM Class II objectives that have been assigned to this area likely to protect the scenic quality of the peak. If either Alternatives 4C or 4E are selected, micrositing may reduce the length across VRM Class II areas but would not avoid the entire parcel. It is recommended that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in AOI K-7. The following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: “In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated” (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.8 AOI K-8 Boulder Ridge (Alternatives 4C and 4E)

The Boulder Ridge AOI is a common segment of Alternatives 4C and 4E that comes within about 3 miles of the Wyoming-Utah state line before turning abruptly to the north, up the Bear River Valley, paralleling the east side of US Highway 30 and the west side of Boulder Ridge. The Boulder Ridge AOI is located within the southwest portion of the Rock Creek/Tunp Range SMA, an administrative area with multiple restrictions on development due to its unspoiled character. It is located on the east side of the Cokeville Meadows NWR. Figure 5.4-20 shows the viewshed of the Boulder Ridge AOI, Alternatives 4C/4E, and the VRM classifications. Figure 5.4-21 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation. This AOI crosses a total of 5.3 miles across two VRM II designated parcels comprising approximately 280,000 acres.

Alternatives Considered – Common Alternatives 4C/4E could not easily be moved to avoid the VRM Class II land. If moved farther east, they would increase the amount of VRM Class II land crossed, as well as placing the alternatives farther into the Rock Creek/Tunp Range SMA. The Cokeville Meadows NWR prevents movement to the west. Alternatives 4B/4E, located west of 4C/4E, provide an alternative to crossing the AOI. If Alternatives 4B/4E were selected, the Boulder Ridge AOI would be avoided, and it would cross only one small area of VRM Class II land.

Existing Landscape Conditions – With the exception of the Bear River Valley running north to south through the western half of the 15-mile-radius area surrounding this AOI, the topography is very rugged with many steep slopes. There are many north-south oriented landscape features including Boundary Ridge, Dempsey Ridge, the Sublette Range, and valleys following the Bear River and numerous other drainages. The vast majority of the area is undeveloped with farms and farmland mostly confined to the Bear River Valley. The small community of Cokeville is situated along U.S. Highway 30, the primary highway in the area. SRs 89 and 30 provide access from Wyoming into northeastern Utah and intersect U.S. Highway 30 south of Cokeville. There are several transmission lines crossing the area from east to west and north to south including a multiple 345-kV line corridor just south of Cokeville. Forest land occurs in scattered locations mostly in the eastern part of this area. Potentially sensitive viewing areas include the highways, communities, historic trails, the Cokeville Meadows NWR, Fossil Butte NM, and other recreational and natural areas.

Attachment A, Figure K-8a shows the landscape in the vicinity of KOP 1368. In this view, the topography ranges from undulating and rolling to more dramatic mountainous terrain in the background.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.4-20 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to evaluate the degree of consistency between the proposed 500-kV facilities and the existing landscape including VRM Class II lands. Attachment A, Figure K-8b simulates landscape conditions showing Alternatives 4C/4E as viewed from KOP 1368.

Alternatives 4C/4E would be skylined and highly visible as a dominant element in the landscape. With no realistic mitigation options, the proposed transmission line facilities would draw the attention of the casual observer; dominate the setting and deviate from

the natural form, line, color, and texture of the landscape. As a result, Alternatives 4C/4E will not conform to VRM Class II objectives that have been assigned to this area to protect the scenic quality of the landscape around and including Boulder Ridge. It is recommended that if either Alternative 4C or 4E is selected, that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification (see Figure 5.4-21). This would provide the most protection for adjacent visual resource management goals.

Mitigation suggestions should include clearing tower pads that are less geometric and resemble the lines of the surrounding vegetation and moving the alignment across the road as not to cut lines across historic trail segments. Additionally the following specific mitigation measure, VIS-9, will be implemented: "In specific areas identified by the applicable federal land manager (such as VRM Class II, erosive soils, steep slopes, areas near NHT Trails) the access road used for construction will be restored and an alternative access route for operations will be designated" (see Table 2.7-1 in the Draft EIS).

5.4.9 Designated Viewsheds and Trail Segments

The RMP identifies designated sites where viewsheds within 3 miles are to be preserved, retaining the existing character of the landscape such that developments do not dominate the visible area and detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the site.

These sites include the following:

- Emigrant Spring/Slate Creek (87 acres)
- Emigrant Spring/Dempsey (11 acres)
- Johnston Scout Rock (2 acres)
- Alfred Corum and Nancy Hill emigrant gravesites (½ acre)
- Pine Grove emigrant camp (14 acres)
- Rocky Gap trail landmark (15 acres)
- Bear River Divide trail landmark (3 acres)
- Gateway petroglyphs (518 Acres)

As shown on Figure 5.4-22 all of the routes are outside of the viewshed of six of the designated sites. Of the remaining sites the Proposed Route would be within the viewshed of the Gateway Petroglyphs (0.1 mile), Alternative 4A would be within the viewshed of the Emigrant Spring/Dempsey and Alfred Corum and Nancy Hill emigrant gravesites (1.3 miles). Alternative 4F would be within the viewshed of the Alfred Corum and Nancy Hill emigrant gravesites (1.5 miles). It is recommended that if either Alternatives 4A or 4F are selected, the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification, micro-siting and alternative structure configurations would be considered in the design. This would provide the most protection of the historic character of the site.

The RMP also sets the goal to manage the viewsheds of national historic trail segments. As started in the RMP, these goals include:

- “(1)(a) Preserve the viewshed within 3 miles of Class 1 segments north and east of U.S. Highway 30 and west of the Hams Fork River (Tunp/Dempsey Trail area), where the visual characteristics of the setting contribute to the eligibility of the site, by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not dominate the visible area to detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the trail setting. Design ROW to preserve the visual integrity of the settings consistent with the BLM visual resources handbook and manual.
- (1)(b) Preserve the viewshed within 1 mile of Class 1 segments outside of the Tunp/Dempsey Trail area and the checkerboard land pattern area, where the visual characteristics of the setting contribute to the eligibility of the site, by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not dominate the visible area to detract from the feeling or sense of the historic time period of the trail setting. Design ROW to preserve the visual integrity of the settings consistent with the BLM visual resources handbook and manual.
- (1)(c) On Class 1 trail segments within the checkerboard land pattern area, manage the viewshed to preserve the existing character of the landscape within the federal section where the trail occurs.
- (2)(a) Preserve the viewshed within ½ mile of Class 2 segments that exist in blocked federal lands west of U.S. Highway 189 (south of Kemmerer) and south of U.S. Highway 30 by managing projects in federal sections to retain the existing character of the landscape so developments do not attract the attention of the casual observer.
- (2)(b) On Class 2 trail segments outside of the area described in (2)(a) manage the viewshed to preserve the existing character of the landscape within the federal section where the trail occurs.
- (2)(c) On Class 3 segments, manage the viewshed according to the appropriate VRM class for the area. The management action is intended to manage developments to maintain setting qualities and not to have an exclusion zone.”

As shown on Figure 5.4-23 several of the proposed and alternative routes cross Class I, II, and III trails and associated viewsheds. Table 5.4-1 lists the number of crossings and extent of viewshed crossed by these route alternatives. Section 3.3 of the Draft EIS provides more information on the effects to each trail.

It is recommended that micrositing and alternative structures be considered for any alternative that crosses a Class I, II, or III trail segment and that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. This would provide the most protection for the viewsheds of historic trail segments.

Table 5.4-1. Historic Trail Segments

Route Designation	Class I Trail Segments		Class II Trail Segments	Class III Trail Segments
	# of Crossings	Miles within Viewshed	# of Crossings	# of Crossings
Proposed Route	1	1.9 mi within 1 mi viewshed	2	-
Alternative 4A	2	16.8 mi within 3 mile viewshed	3	-
Alternative 4B	-	-	-	4
Alternative 4C	-	3.1 miles within 3 mi viewshed	-	5
Alternative 4D	-	-	-	4
Alternative 4E	-	3.1 miles within 3 mi viewshed	-	5
Alternative 4F	1	16.8 miles within 3 mi viewshed	3	-

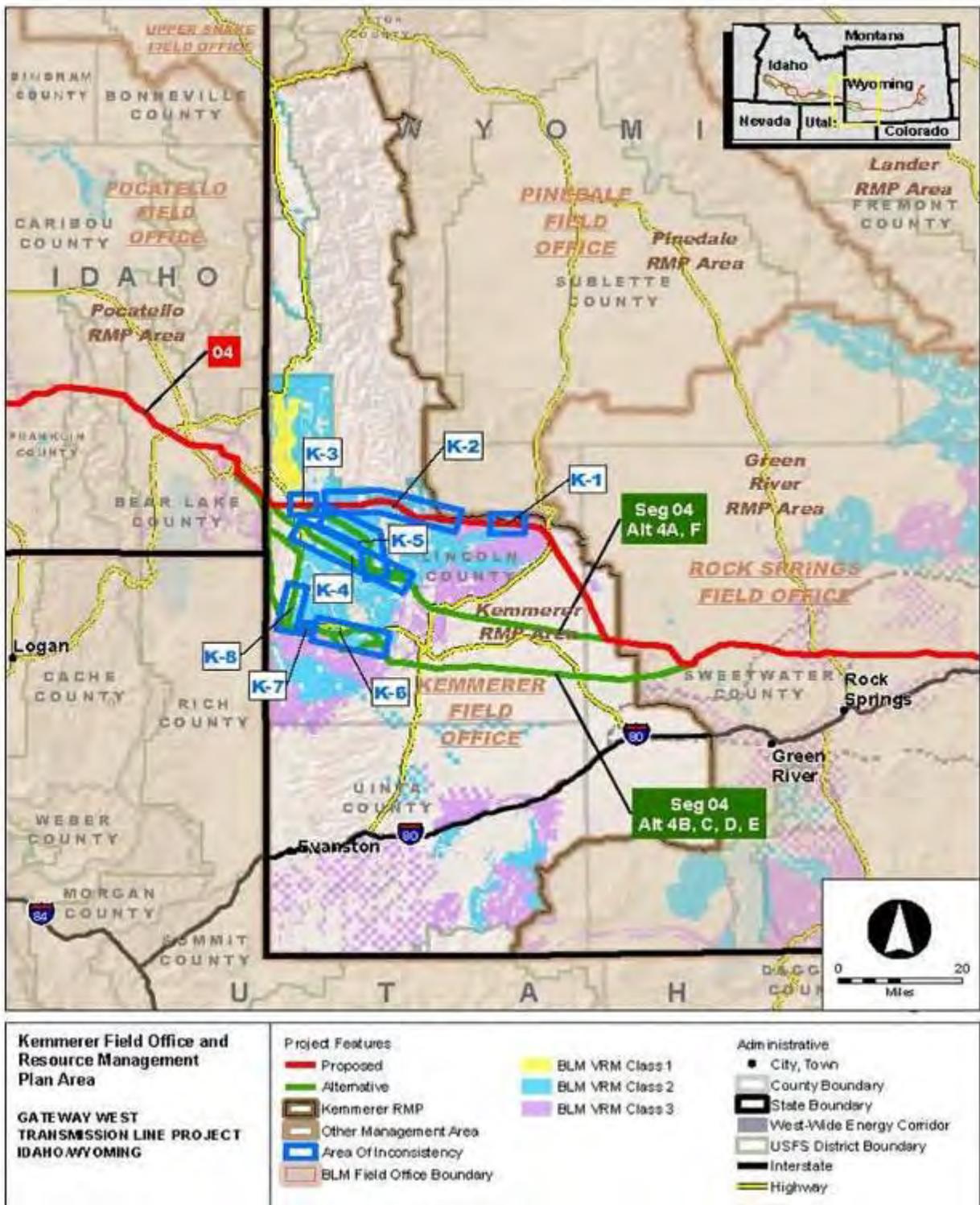


Figure 5.4-1. Kemmerer RMP Boundary Map

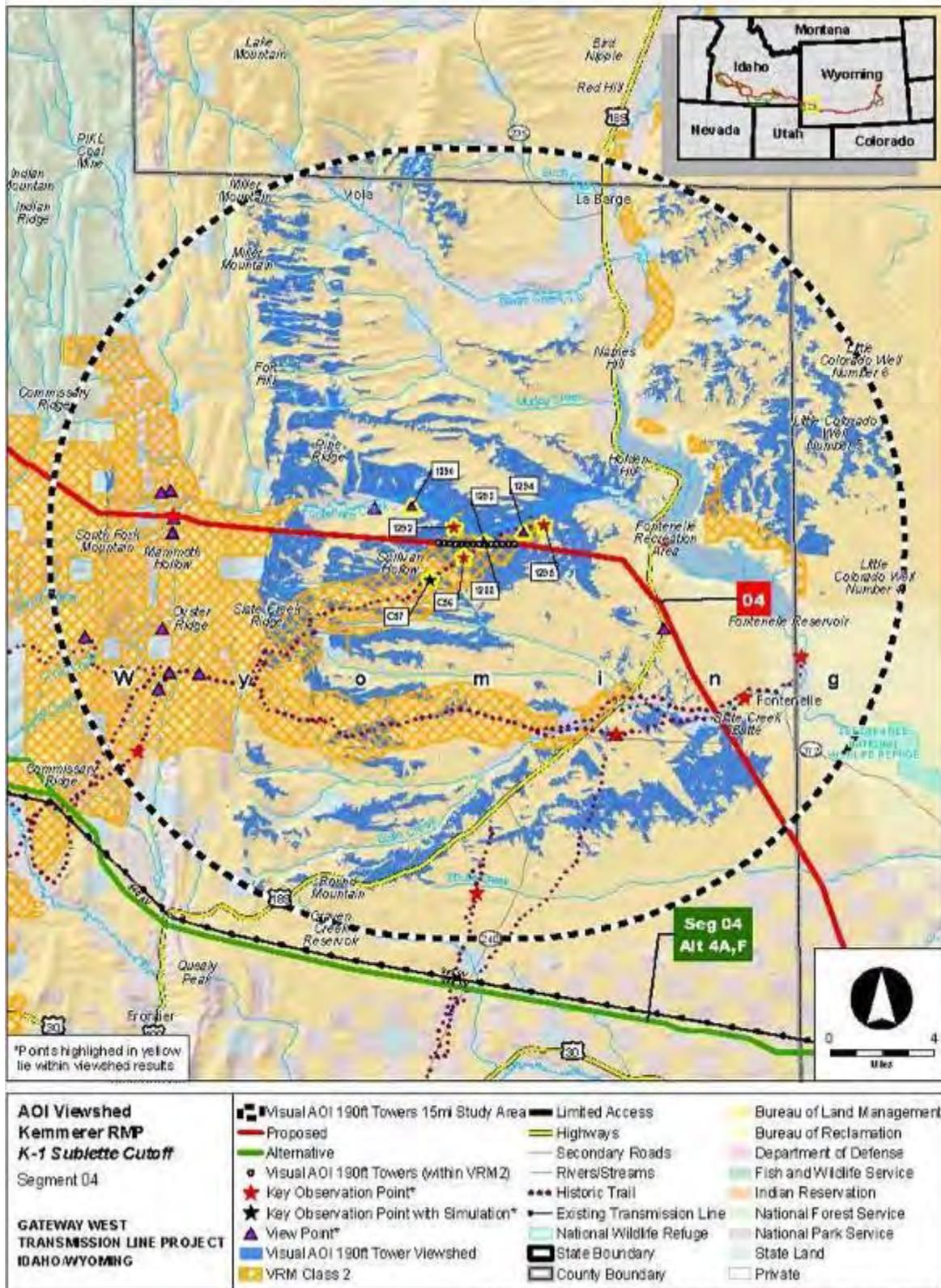


Figure 5.4-2. AOI K-1 Sublette Cutoff AOI Visual Analysis

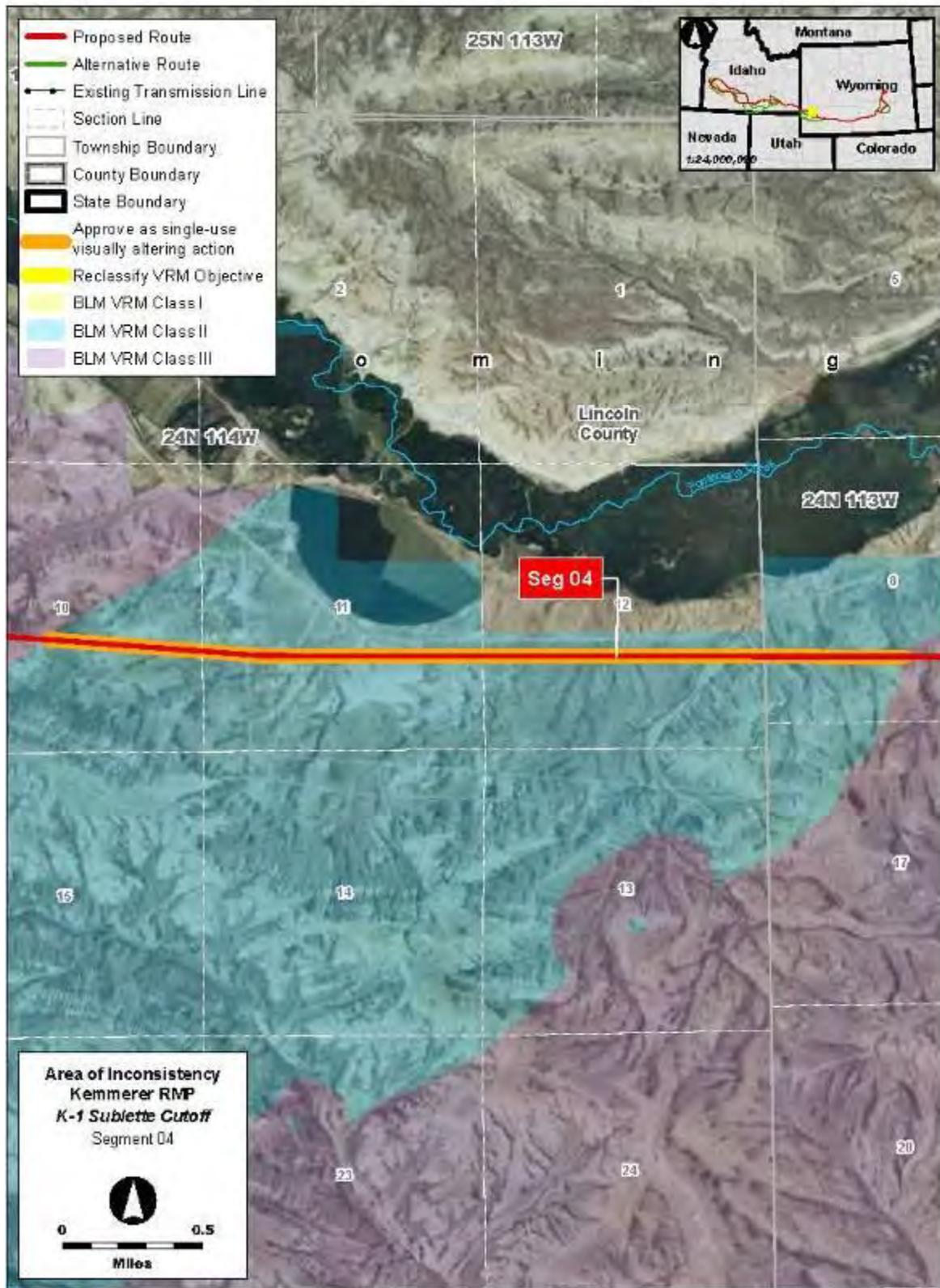


Figure 5.4-3. AOI K1 Sublette Cutoff AOI Detailed Map

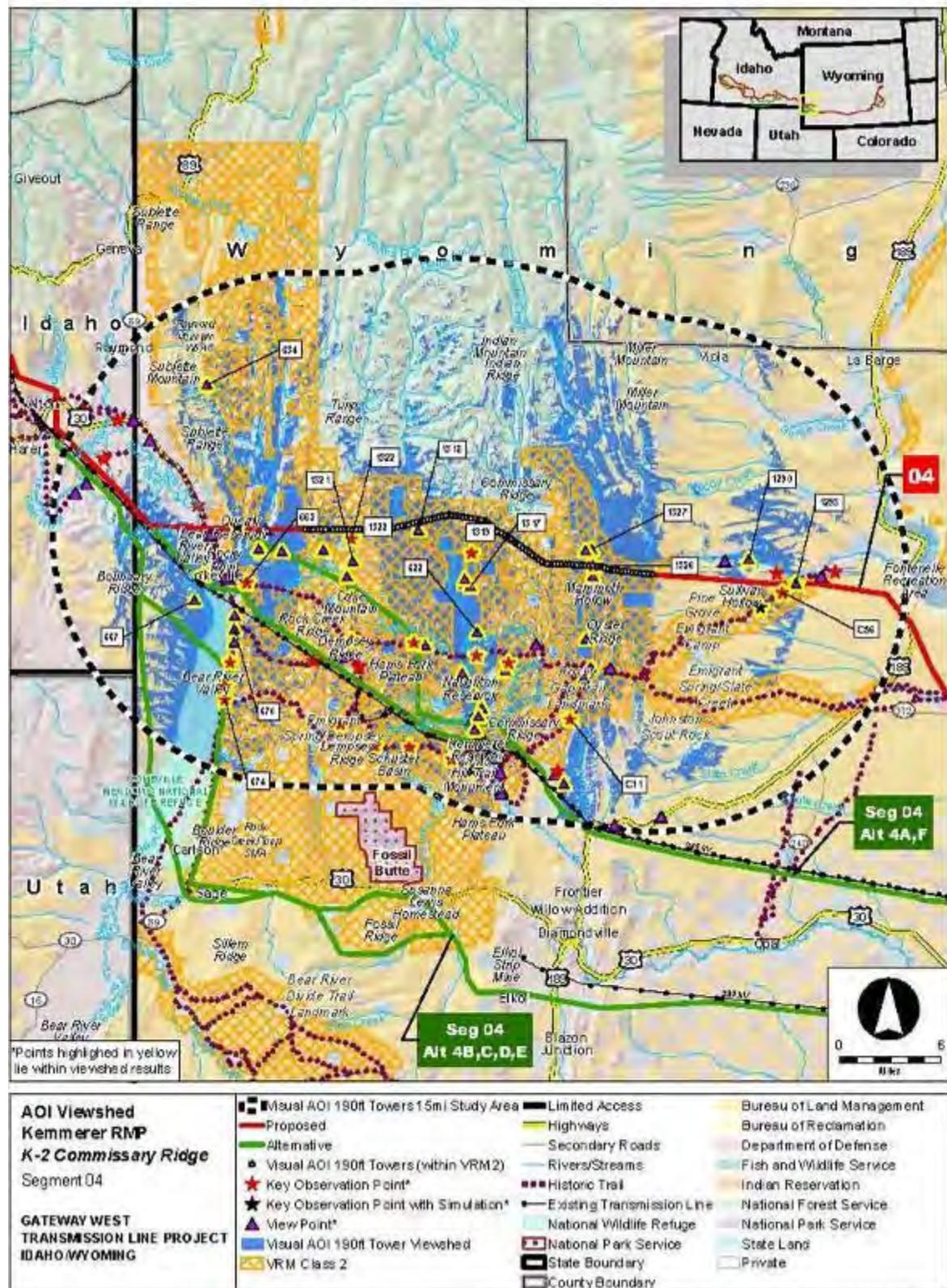


Figure 5.4-4. AOI K-2 Commissary Ridge AOI Visual Analysis

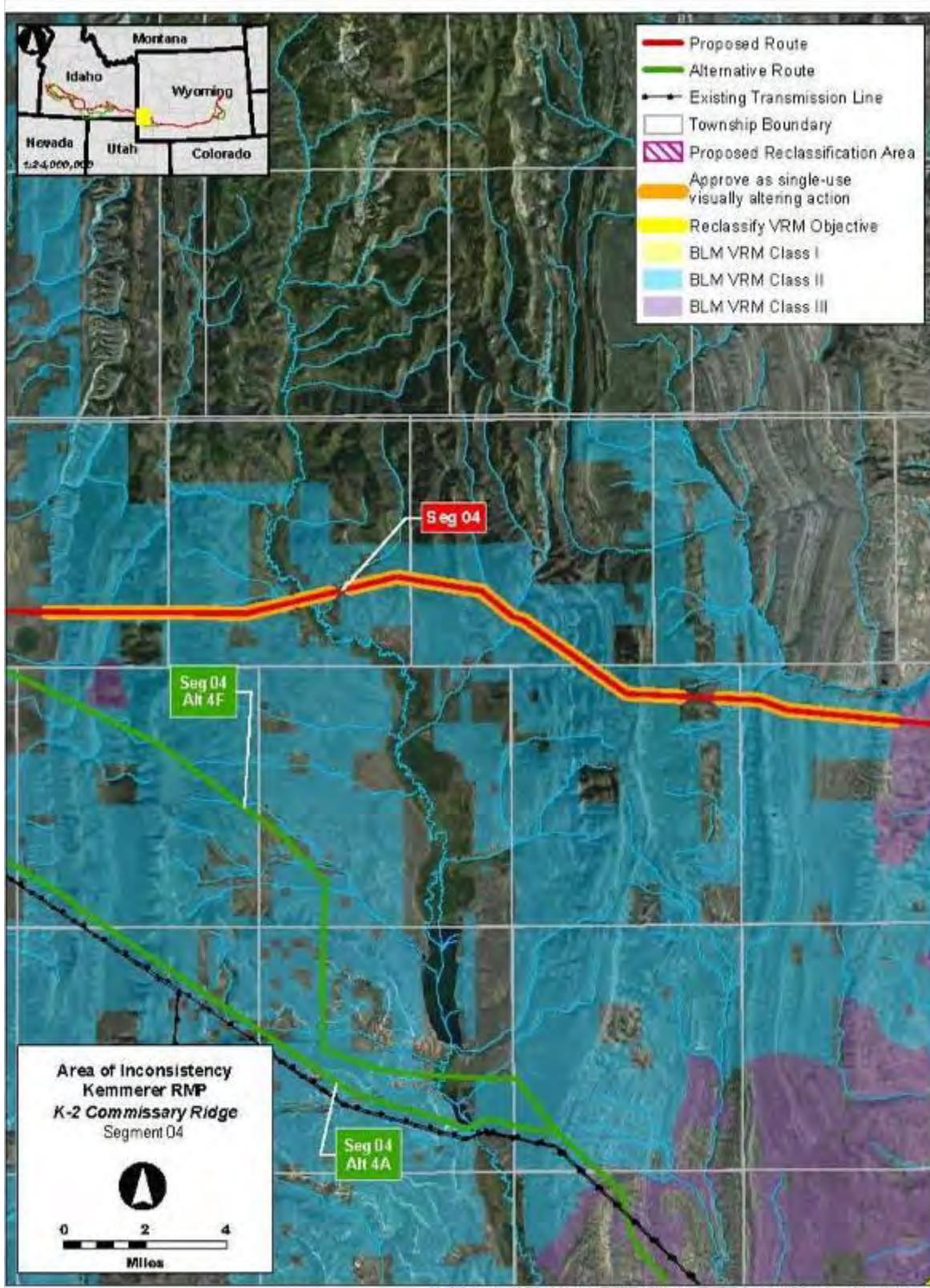


Figure 5.4-5. AOI K-2 Commissary Ridge AOI Detailed Map

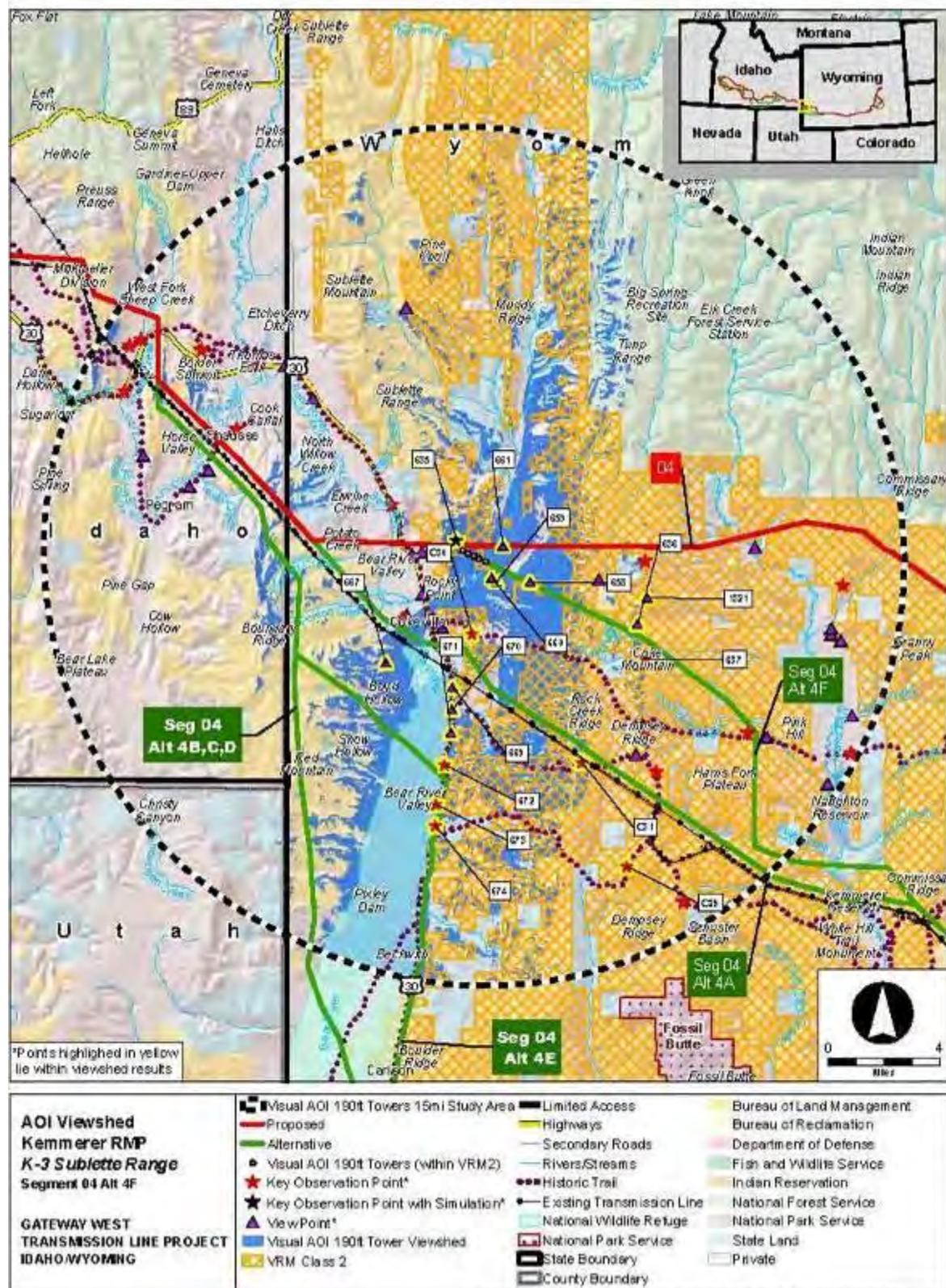


Figure 5.4-6. AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 4F)

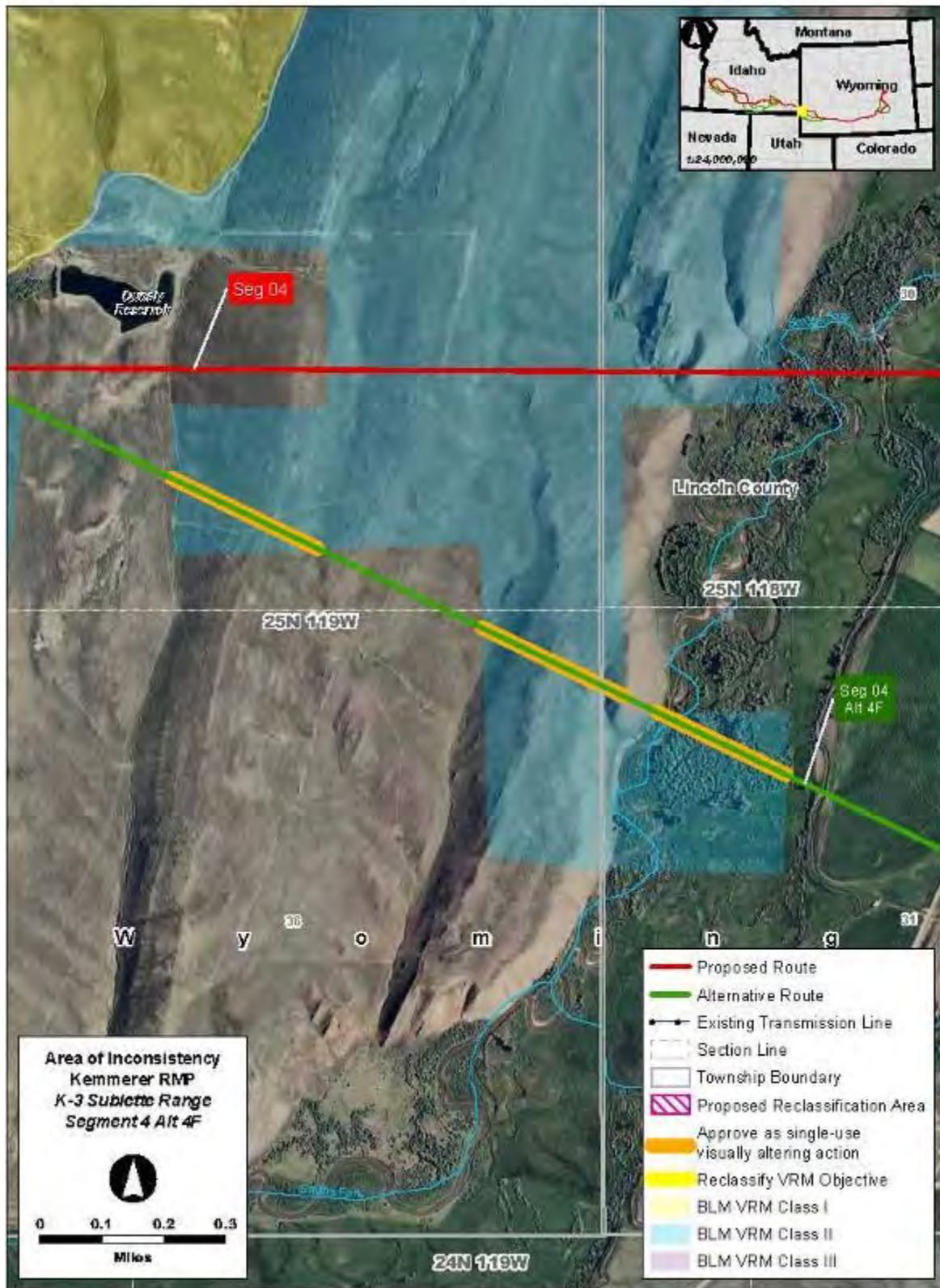


Figure 5.4-7. AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4F)

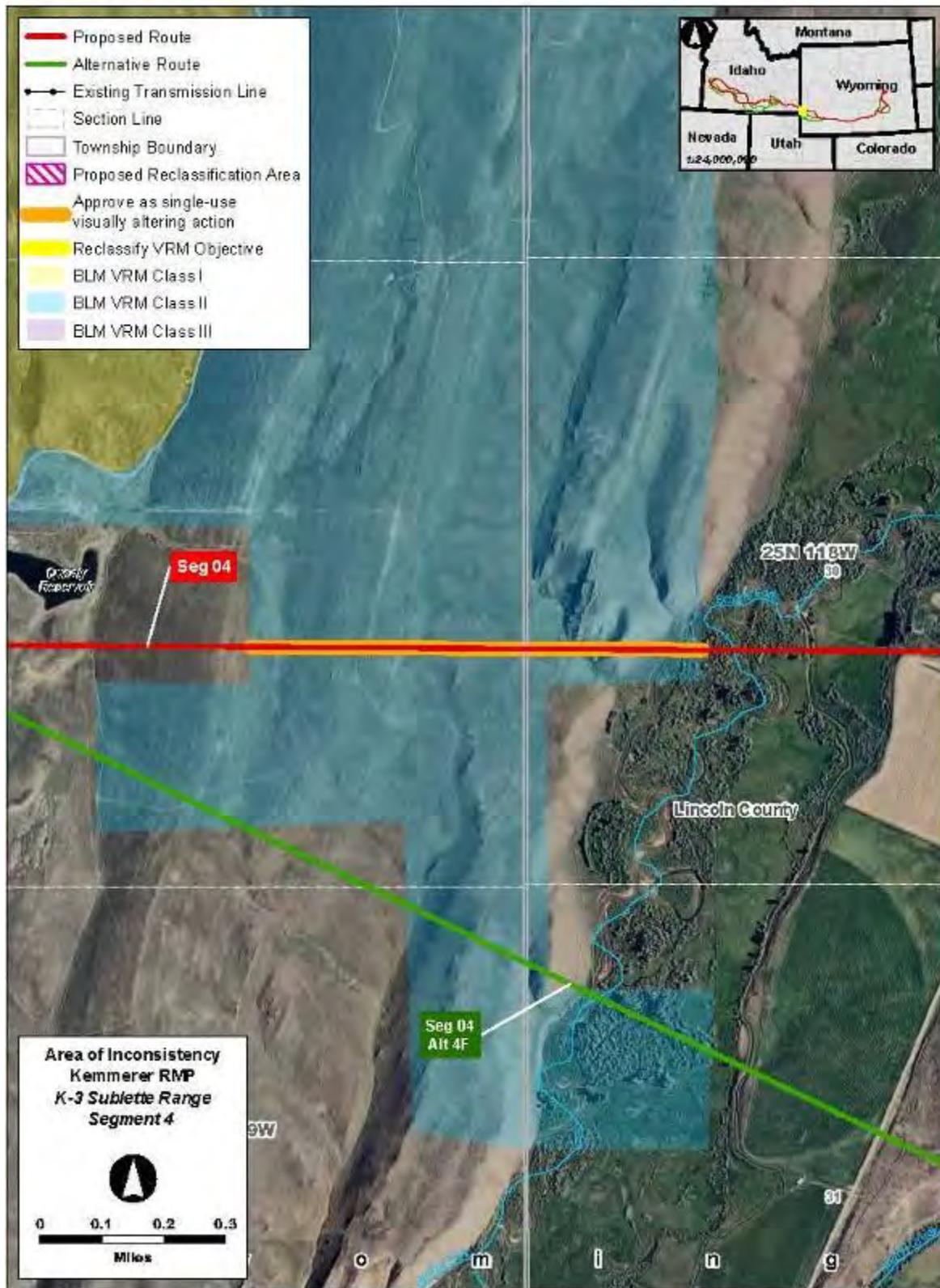


Figure 5.4-9. AOI K-3 Sublette Range AOI Detailed Map (Proposed Route)

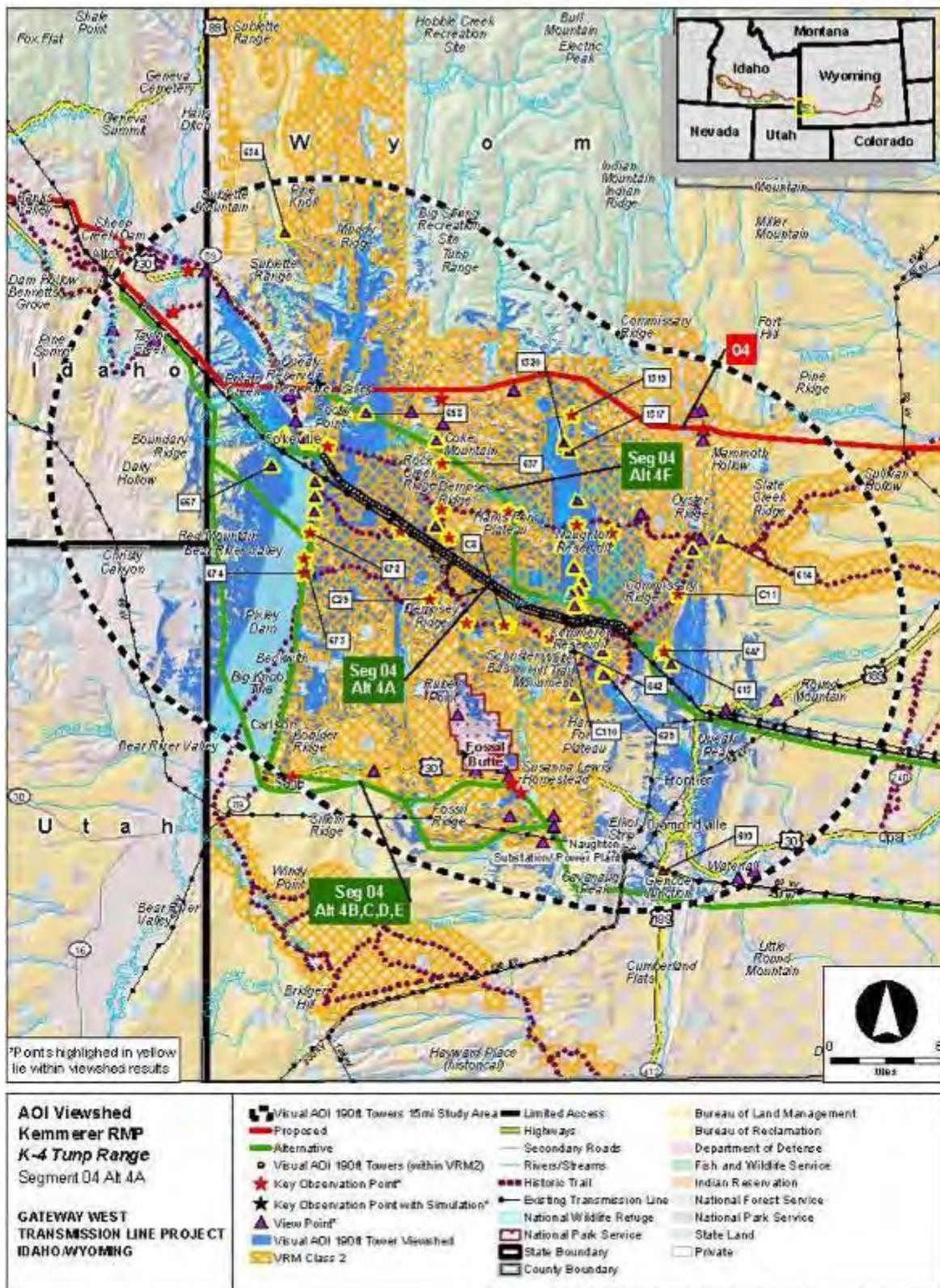


Figure 5.4-10. AOI K-4Tunp Range AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 4A)

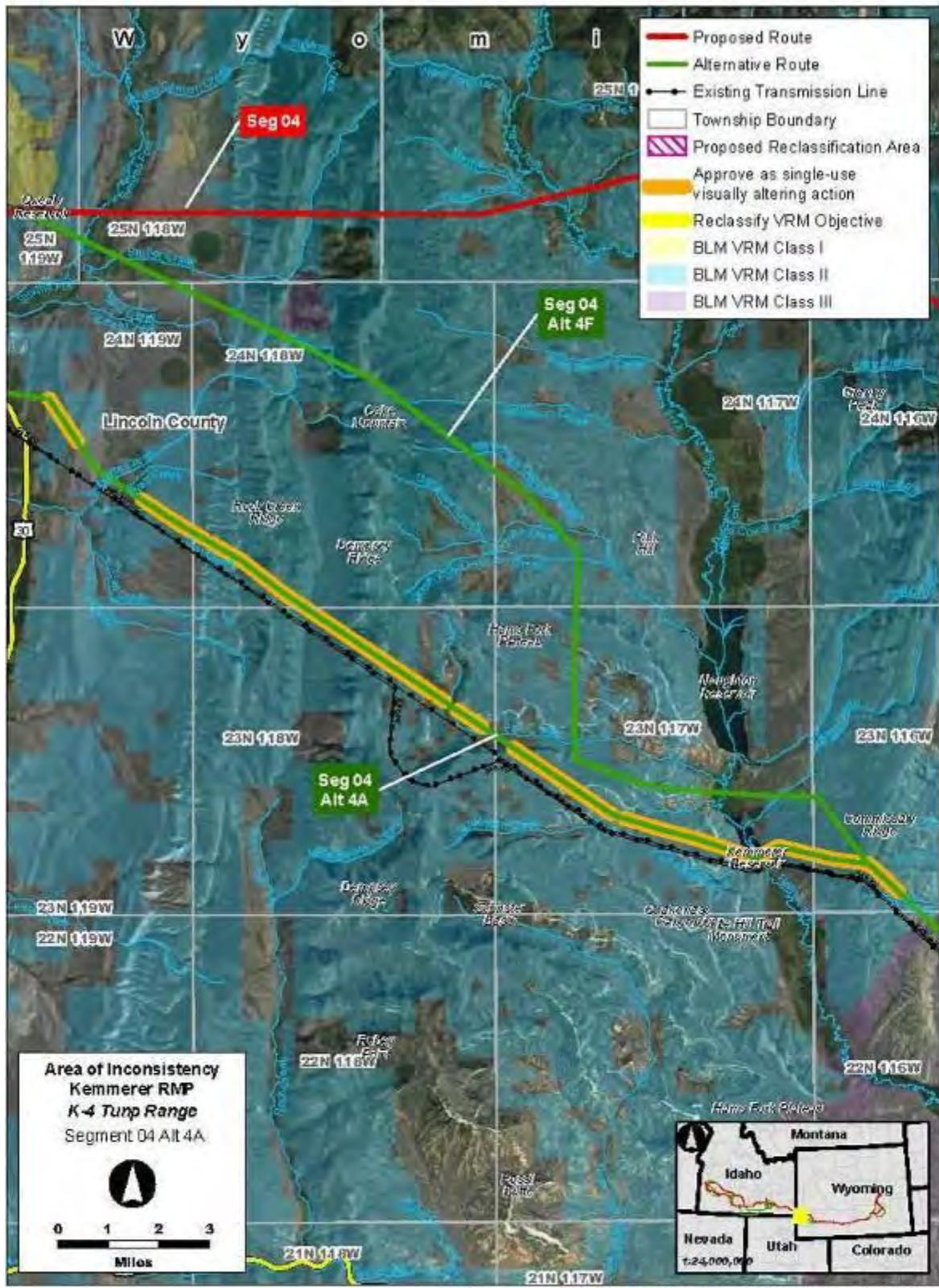


Figure 5.4-11 AOI K-4Tunp Range AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4F)

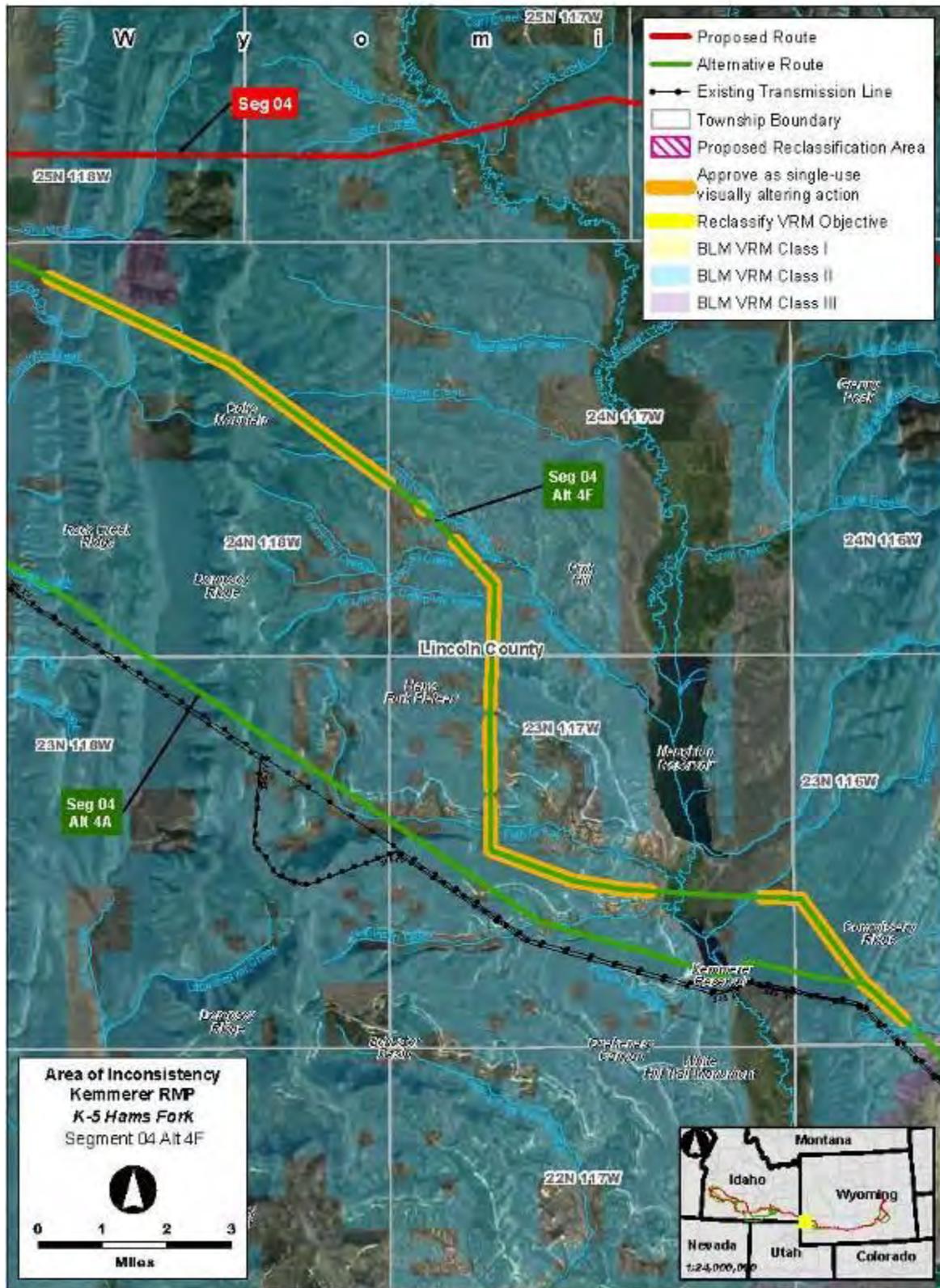


Figure 5.4-13. AOI K-5 Hams Fork AOI Detailed Map



Figure 5.4-14. AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternatives 4B/4C)

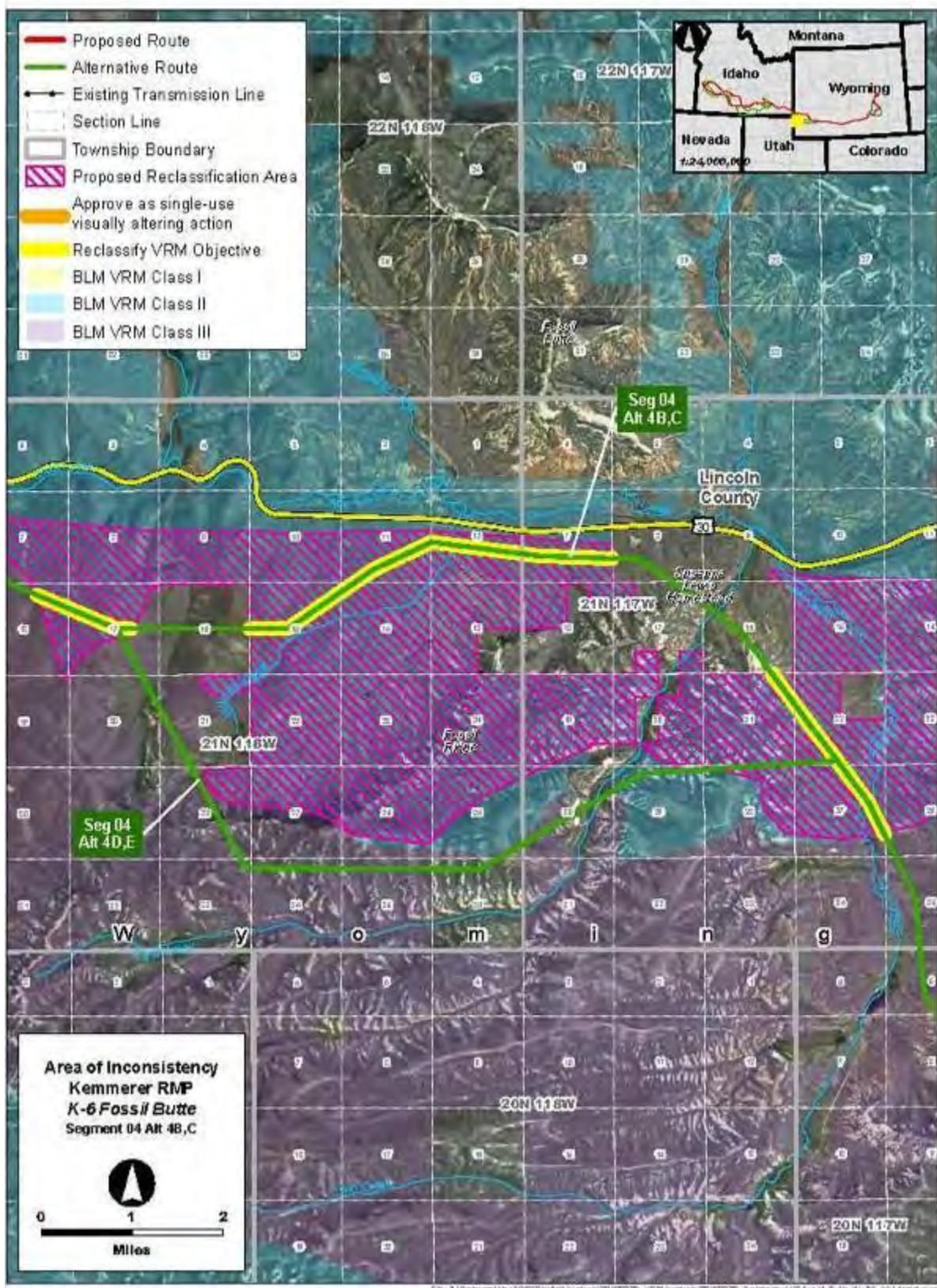


Figure 5.4-15. AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Detailed Map (Alternatives 4B/4C)

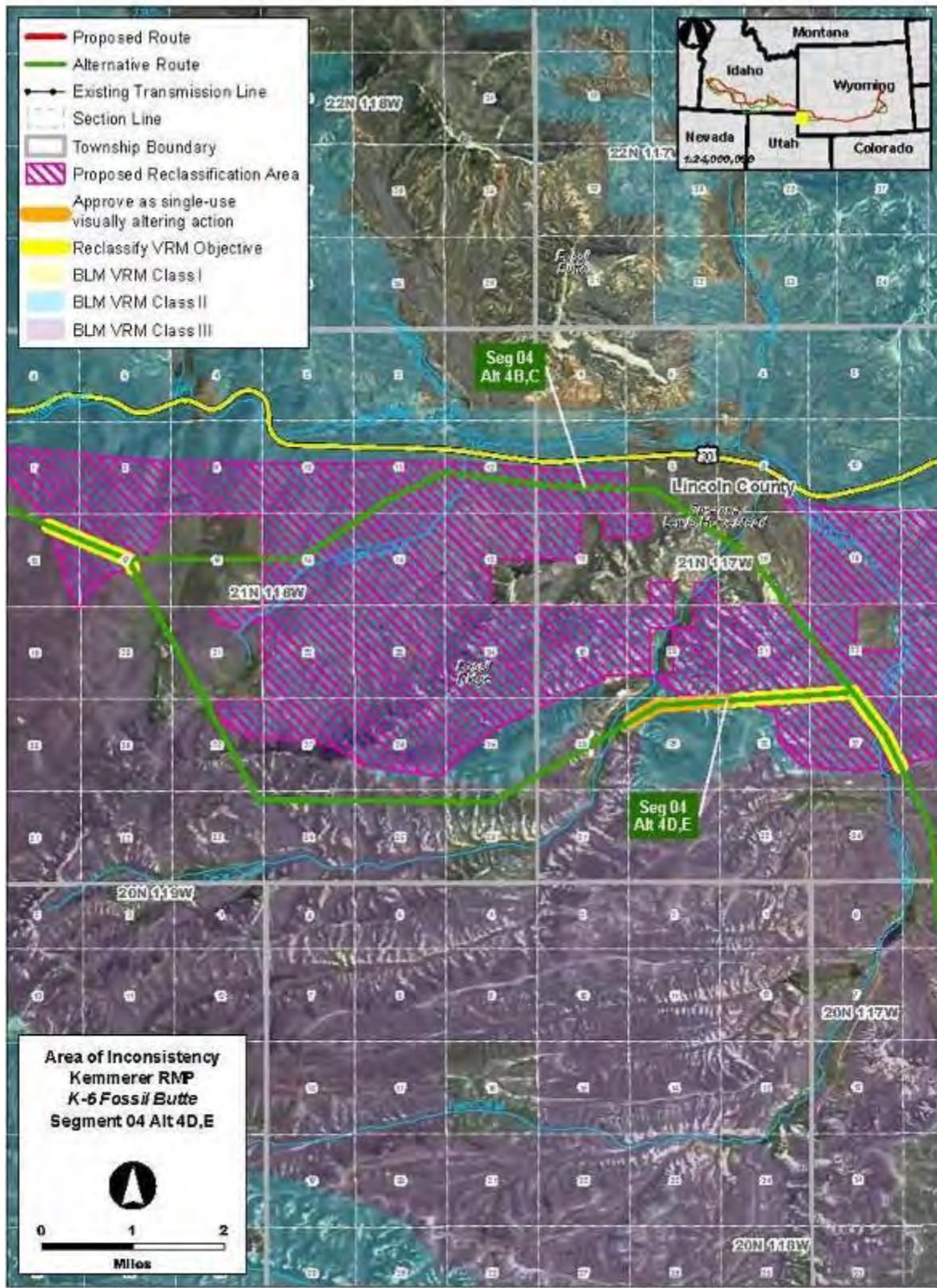


Figure 5.4-17. AOI K-6 Fossil Butte AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4D/4E)

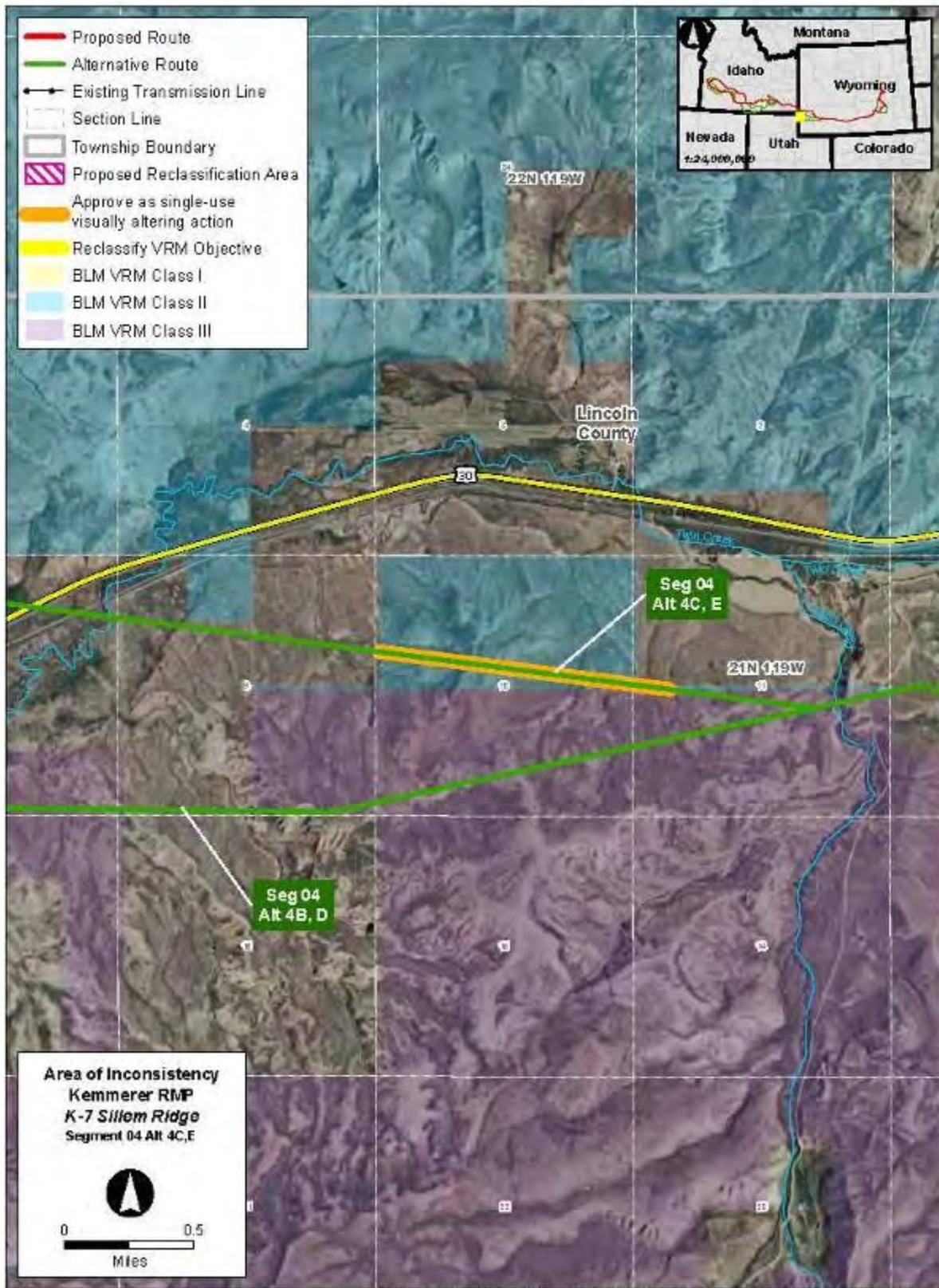


Figure 5.4-19. AOI K-7 Sillem Ridge Detailed Map (Alternative 4C/4E)

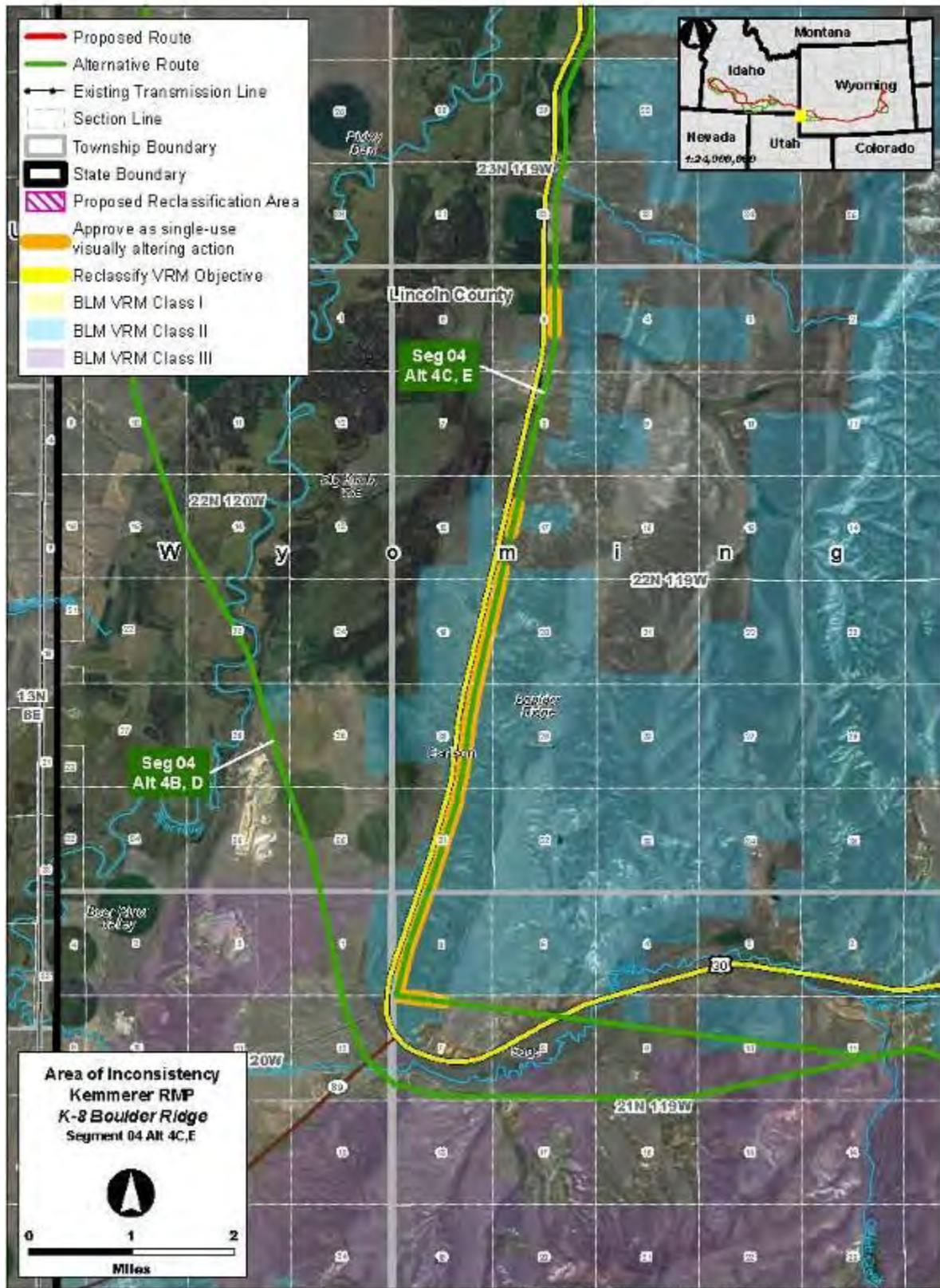


Figure 5.4-21. AOI K-8 Boulder Ridge AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 4D/4E)

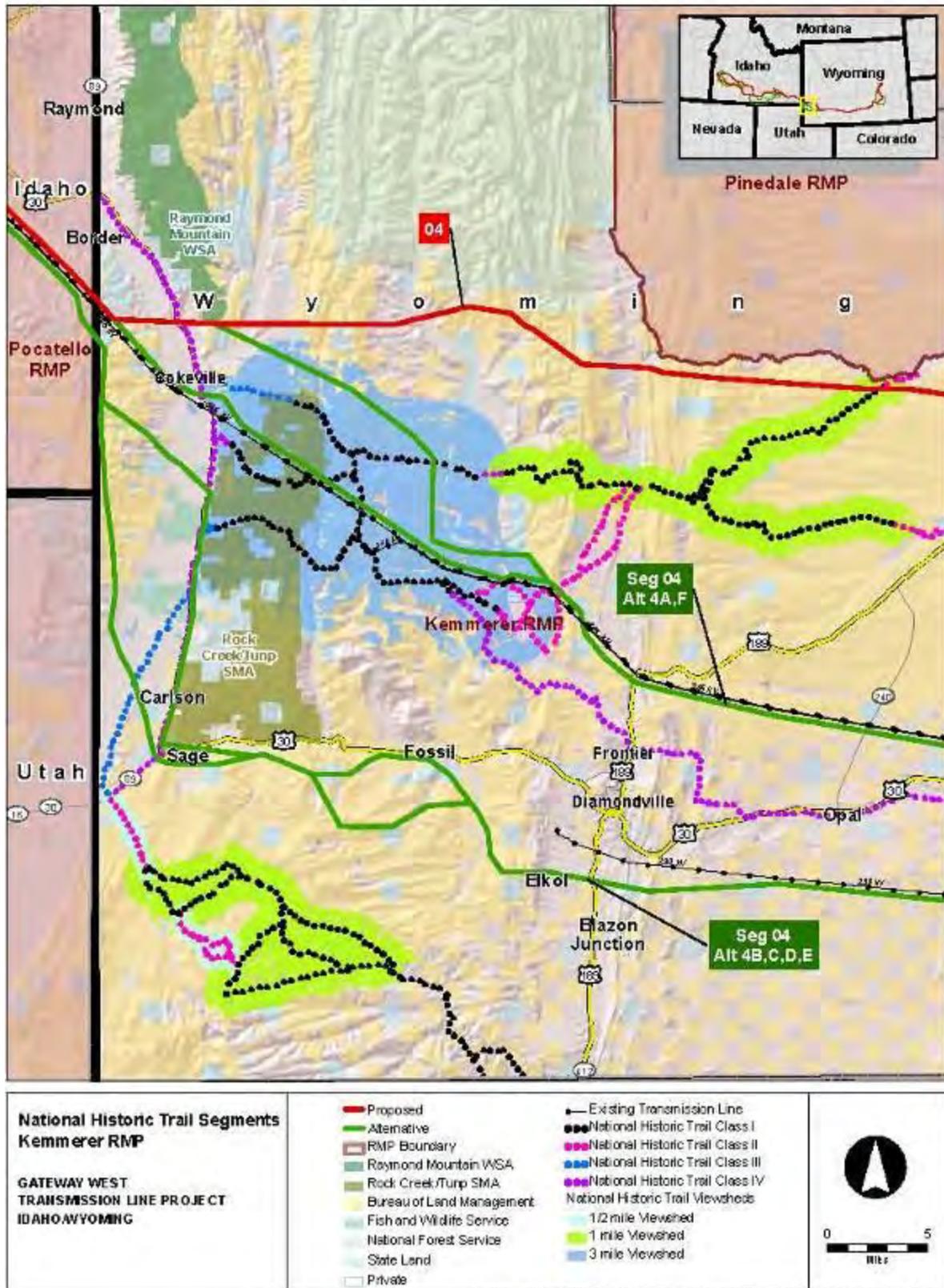


Figure 5.4-23. Historic Trail Segments

5.5 Malad MFP

The Malad MFP (BLM 1981) provides direction for management of resource activities on public lands administered by the BLM within the southwestern portion of the Pocatello FO (see Figure 5.5-1). The Malad MFP includes the following visual recommendations that could be applicable to the Gateway West Project:

- Specific development proposals will be allowed, located, and designated in accordance with the existing VRM class restrictions with emphasis on Class I areas.
- Allow changes within the landscape that are as natural as possible with appropriate location design and mitigation.
- Maintain a degree of management that minimizes changes in the visual dominance elements.

The Project begins in Wyoming and proceeds west into southeast Idaho. Beginning at Populus Substation, the Proposed Route splits into a northern route (Segments 5, 6, and 8) and a southern route (Segments 7 and 9). In the eastern portion of the Pocatello FO, the Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7 are parallel and closely aligned; however, farther west they diverge.

Segment 5 is 54.6 miles long and consists of a single-circuit 500-kV line between Populus Substation and Borah Substation. Routing issues in this segment include a subdivision, an eagle nest, the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, VRM Class II lands in the Deep Creek Mountains, avoidance of cultivated lands, establishment of a new ROW in rolling hills to mountainous terrain, residential development near the approach to the Borah Substation, and Power County zoning. There are no WWE corridors available for Segment 5. Segment 5 contains five feasible alternatives that are being studied in the EIS to provide options in negotiating the identified constraints.

Segment 7 also begins at Populus Substation and comprises a 118-mile-long single-circuit 500-kV line connecting with the Cedar Hill Substation. Routing issues in this segment include agricultural operations such as concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFOs), pivot irrigation, livestock, proximity to residences and a local hang gliding area. Cultural resource concerns include proximity to historic trails such as the California Trail, Hudspeth's Cutoff and the Oregon NHT, and the City of Rocks National Reserve. Big game winter range, sage-grouse key habitat and leks, visual impact, and conformance with BLM and Forest Service management plans are other concerns for this segment. There are no existing east-west transmission lines or WWE corridors available for Segment 7. Due to its long distance and considerable public interest, 10 feasible alternatives are being studied in the EIS for Segment 7.

In the Malad MFP area this Project would cross two VRM Class II management areas and one VRM Class III area. The presence of a transmission line in these landscapes would not meet the designated VRM objectives. As a result, BLM action would be necessary to modify the visual classifications or approve a one-time allowance to be consistent with the MFP. The AOIs are described in Sections 5.5.1 through 5.5.3 below.

5.5.1 AOI M-1 Deep Creek (Segment 5 and Segment 7 Proposed Routes)

The Deep Creek AOI is located in the Deep Creek Mountains, approximately 17 miles southeast of American Falls, Idaho. The Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7 leave Populus Substation and proceed northwest for about 15 miles following existing transmission lines, before turning due west and crossing the Deep Creek Range and lands managed for VRM Class II objectives, but avoiding the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. The Segment 5 of the Proposed Route turns to the north on the west side of the reservation and continues for approximately 20 miles to Borah Substation. Segment 7 of the Proposed Route continues approximately 90 to 100 miles farther west to the proposed Cedar Hill Substation.

These routes result in Segment 5 and Segment 7 crossing about 1.5 miles and 1.3 miles, respectively, of land managed for VRM Class II lands in the Deep Creek Mountains. Figures 5.5-2 and 5.5-3 show the viewsheds of the Deep Creek AOI, Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7, respectively. Figure 5.5-4 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation. This AOI includes one 17,638-acre VRM Class II parcel.

Alternatives Considered – The VRM Class II area is extensive, measuring approximately 10 miles north to south, and no small adjustments are possible to avoid it. BLM identified Alternatives 5A and 7A, which are approximately 5 to 6 miles south of the Proposed Route, and Alternatives 5B and 7B, approximately 10 to 12 miles farther south, to avoid the VRM Class II land and high quality forests. However, Alternatives 5A/5B and 7A/7B would cross more agricultural land than the Proposed Route that is of concern to local government and citizens. Alternative 5C, also identified by BLM, diverges from the Proposed Route east of the AOI avoiding the VRM Class II area, following an existing transmission line through the Fort Hall Reservation.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The landscape within a 15-mile-radius area of AOI M-1 has varied topography consisting of north-south oriented hills/mountains and valleys. The mountainous areas include the Deep Creek Mountains in the center of the study area, the Bannock Range along the eastern boundary, and the Sublette Range to the west. The Arbon Valley is located between the Deep Creek Range and the Bannock Range; Rockland Valley is located between the Deep Creek and Sublette Ranges in the western portion of the study area. Vegetation is dominated by grasses, forbs, and cropland in the valleys, and forests in the mountains. SR 37 and Arbon Valley Road cross the study area. Small communities like Rockland and Pauline as well as extensive agricultural lands are located in the valleys. A 345-kV transmission corridor passes east to northwest through the area.

Attachment A, Figure M-1/M-3a shows the existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 907. This view is used for both AOI M-1 and AOI M-3. The area is mountainous with a mixture of open land, forest land, and rock outcrops with no apparent manmade modifications.

Conformance Analysis – Figures 5.5-2 and 5.5-3 show the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study areas used to assess the consistency of the Project with existing landscape conditions for the Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7. In the north-south valleys east of AOI M-1 there are significantly more viewing

areas and viewers, but these areas are located 3 to 15 miles away, significantly reducing potential visibility and visual impact.

Attachment A, Figures M-1/M-3b and M-1/M-3c simulate landscape conditions of the Proposed Routes for Segment 5 and Segment 7, respectively, on the existing landscape from KOP 907. Scenic views of the Deep Creek Range are important to sensitive viewers in the surrounding area such as at the trailhead (KOP 920) and the scenic overlook at KOP 907. From both locations there are pristine mountain views exhibiting diversity in form, line, color, and texture and the lack development or manmade features. From high points such as KOP 907 on a scenic ridgeline, it is apparent that micrositing, screening, and other mitigation efforts may lower impacts to scenic resources, especially for Segment 5. However, the pyramidal forms, meandering ridgelines, and dominant rugged vegetation would contrast with transmission structures and access roads, which would draw the attention of the casual observer and thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

As illustrated in Figures M-1/M-3b and M-1/M-3c, vegetation and terrain would screen much of the transmission line for Segment 5 of the Proposed Route. Segment 7 of the Proposed Route would be more visible but would still be screened by topography and vegetation in many areas. The simulation of KOP 907 illustrates this, showing three structures in the view. Distances of over a mile between viewing locations and the transmission line make the Project more difficult to distinguish with the added influence of backdropping terrain. Although the proposed transmission line would not dominate the view, it would draw the attention of the casual observer and thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It appears that the area was designated VRM Class II to protect the undisturbed nature of the scenic Deep Creek Mountains. If the Gateway West Project were approved within the VRM Class II area, it would not meet the management objectives of a Class II, but would be located in a seldom seen portion of the area, and it would be beneficial to maintain the Class II Management Objectives to provide future protection of the visual resources found in this mountain range. It is recommended that if either of the Proposed Routes discussed here is selected, the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification. This would provide the most protection of visual resources found in this mountain range.

5.5.2 AOI M-2 Snake River (Proposed Route – Segment 5)

The Snake River AOI was originally identified as an area where the Project would likely not conform to BLM VRM requirements. This area is located on Segment 5 of the Proposed Route, approximately 1.5 miles east of Borah Substation. While the actual crossing of the VRM Class II parcel is across the Snake River, the remaining portion was of possible visual concern. It was subsequently determined by the Pocatello FO that no amendment was needed because the area of the VRM Class II parcel that would be crossed by the Proposed Route was inundated.

5.5.3 AOI M-3 Deep Creek East (Segment 5 and Segment 7 Proposed Routes)

The Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7 leave Populus Substation and proceed northwest for about 15 miles, following existing transmission lines, before turning due west and crossing the Deep Creek Range. The routes cross VRM Class III lands to avoid the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. As the routes climb the east flank of the Deep

Creek Mountains, the Segment 5 Proposed Route crosses about 2.8 miles of VRM Class III lands and the Segment 7 Proposed Route crosses approximately 2.9 miles of VRM Class III land. Based on the visual analysis, it is believed that the proposed transmission line in this area would be inconsistent with visual management goals, due to sensitive viewers in the Arbon Valley to the east.

Figures 5.5-5 and 5.5-6 show the viewsheds of the Deep Creek East AOI, the Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7, and land managed for VRM Class III objectives. Figure 5.5-9 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation. This AOI consists of a 6,636 acre parcel designated VRM Class.

Alternatives Considered – The VRM Class III area extends north to the Fort Hall Indian Reservation and about 2 miles to the south where it meets VRM Class II land. Therefore, there is no local re-route of this segment that would avoid the VRM Class III land. Alternatives 5A and 7A, located approximately 5 to 6 miles south of the Proposed Route, or Alternatives 5B and 7B, approximately 10 to 12 miles farther south, would avoid this AOI. However, because Alternatives 5A/5B and 7A/7B would cross more agricultural land than the Proposed Route there is extensive local government and citizen concern. Alternative 5C, also identified by BLM, diverges from the Proposed Route east of this AOI and follows an existing transmission line northwest through the Fort Hall Reservation, avoiding the VRM Class II and III management areas.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Topography in the 15-mile-radius area around AOI M-3 comprises north-south oriented hills/mountains and valleys. The mountainous areas include the Deep Creek Mountains in the center of the study area, the Bannock Range along the eastern boundary, and the Sublette Range to the west. The Arbon Valley is located between the Deep Creek Range and the Bannock Range; Rockland Valley is located between the Deep Creek and Sublette Ranges in the western portion of the Study Area. Vegetation consists mainly of grasses, forbs, and cropland in the valleys; mountainous areas are forested. Manmade development includes local roads and highways (SR 37 and Arbon Valley Road). Agricultural lands are located in the valleys, as are small communities, such Rockland and Pauline. A 345-kV transmission corridor passes east to northwest through the area.

Attachment A, Figure M-1/M-3a shows the existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 907. This view includes both AOI M-1, to the west, and AOI M-3, to the east. It is mountainous with a mixture of open land, forest land, and rock outcrops with no apparent manmade modifications. In the immediate vicinity of this AOI, topography and vegetation limit the viewing area and potential viewers. There are more numerous viewing areas in the north-south valleys east of the Segment 5 and 7 Proposed Route AOI crossings, however these areas are located 3 to 15 miles away, reducing potential visibility and visual impact.

Conformance Analysis – Figures 5.5-5 and 5.5-6 show the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM class. Attachment A, Figures M-1/M-3b and M-1/M-3c are simulations showing the Proposed Routes for Segments 5 and 7 on the existing landscape.

Scenic views of the Deep Creek Range are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers, such as hikers at the trail head designated KOP 920 and the scenic overlook at KOP 907. KOP 907 looks north towards the Bannock and Moonshine Peaks, which exhibit dominant pyramidal silhouetted shapes. Both of these pristine mountain views exhibit a high level of diversity in form, line, color, and texture as well as a lack of surrounding development and manmade features. From high points such as this scenic ridgeline, it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts may be partially successful at lowering impacts to scenic resources. The pyramidal forms, meandering ridgelines, and dominant rugged vegetation would contrast with transmission structures, access roads, and ROW clearing. This contrast would draw the attention of the casual observer but would not dominate the view. While the Project would not dominate the view, it is assumed that Segment 7 (and possibly Segment 5) will not conform to VRM Class III objectives in this area, given the pristine nature of the surrounding landscape. It appears that VRM Class III objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect this scenic mountainous terrain. If the Project were approved within the VRM Class II area, it would not meet the management objectives of a Class II, but would be located in a seldom seen portion of the area, and it would be beneficial to maintain the Class II Management Objectives to provide future protection of the visual resources found in this mountain range. It is recommended that if either of the Proposed Routes is selected, that the Project be given one-time exception, allowing it as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification (See Figure 5.5-7). This would provide the most protection for adjacent visual resource management goals.

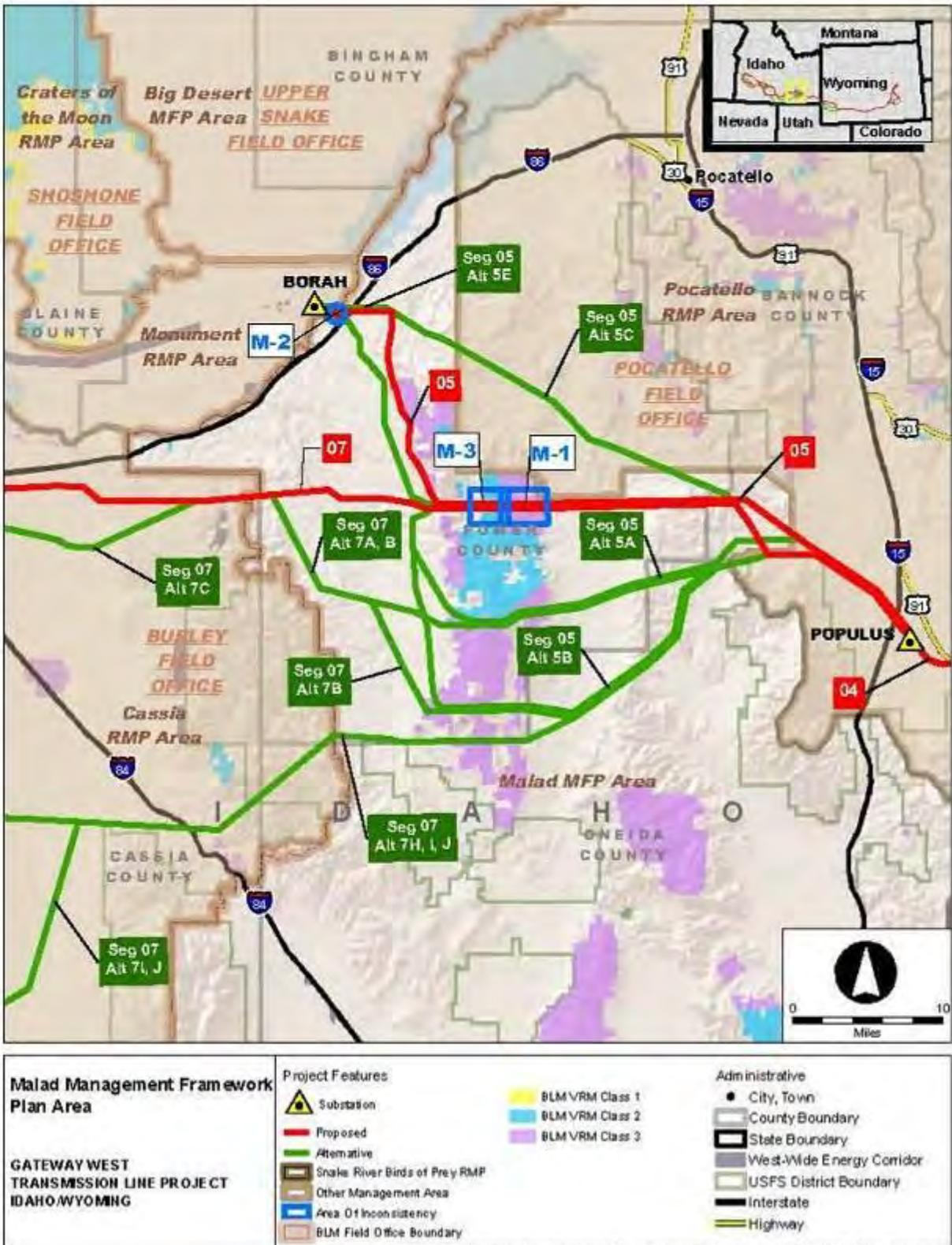


Figure 5.5-1. Malad MFP Boundary Map

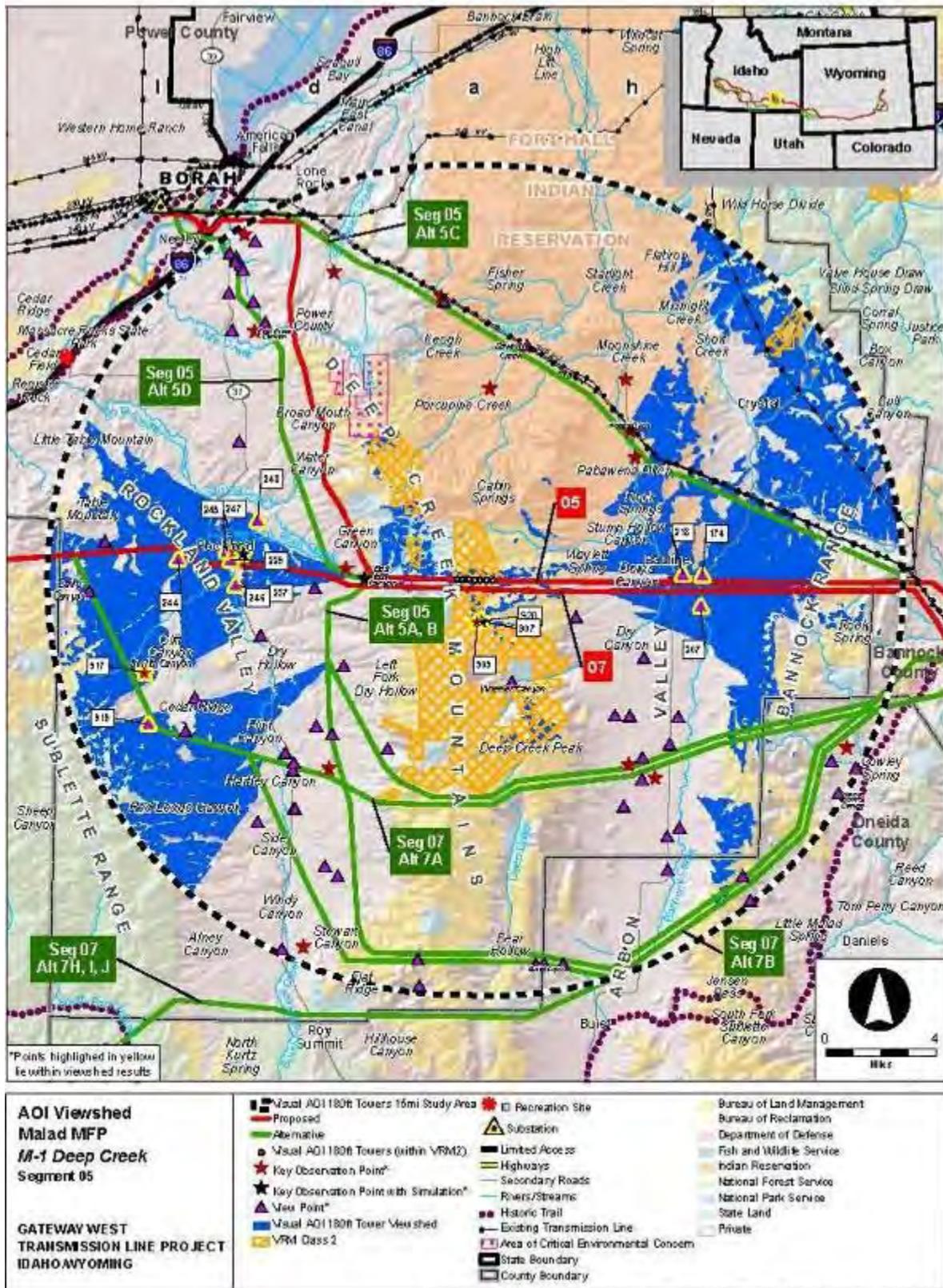


Figure 5.5-2. AOI M-1 Malad AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 5)

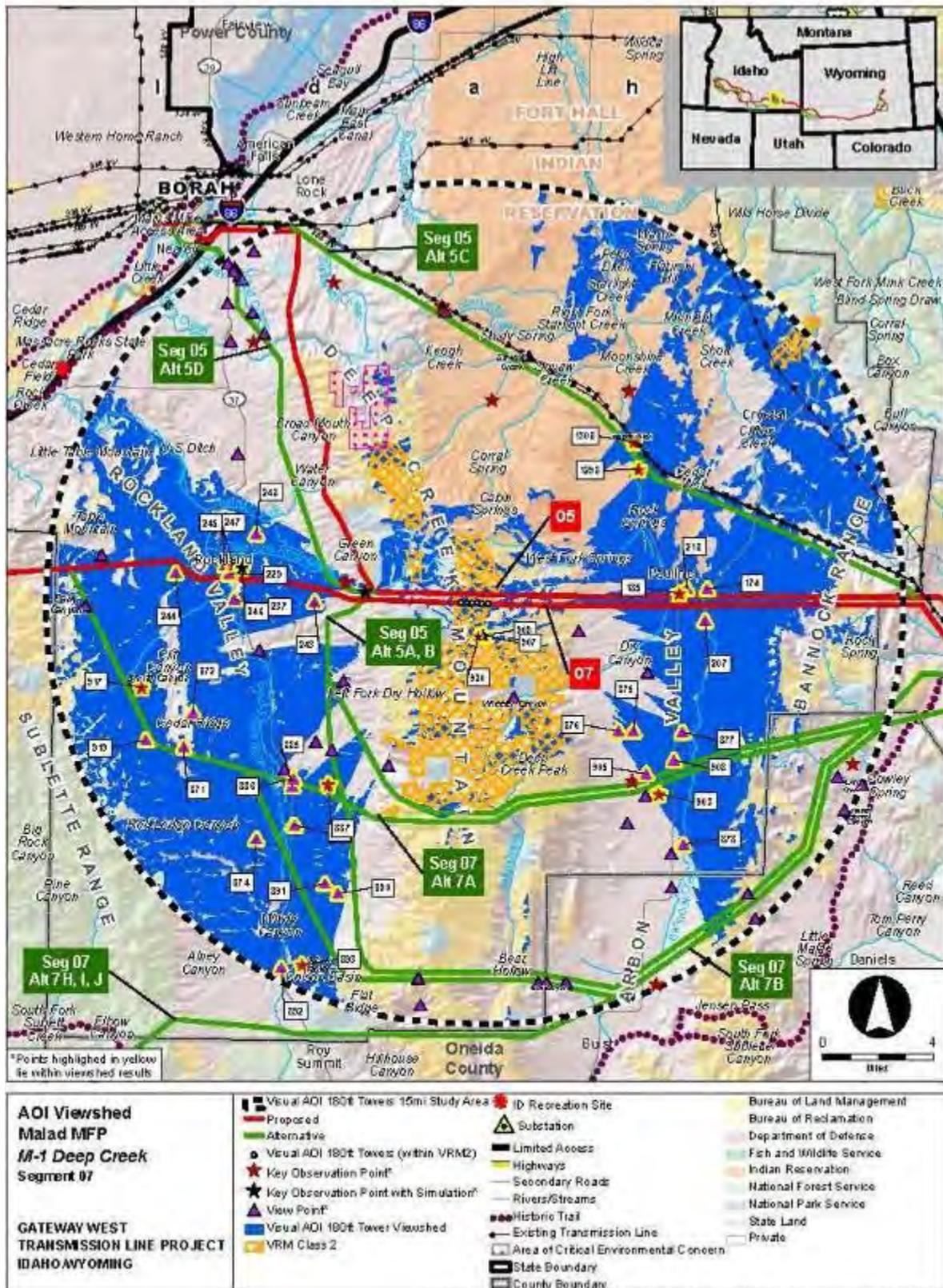


Figure 5.5-3. AOI M-1 Malad AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 7)

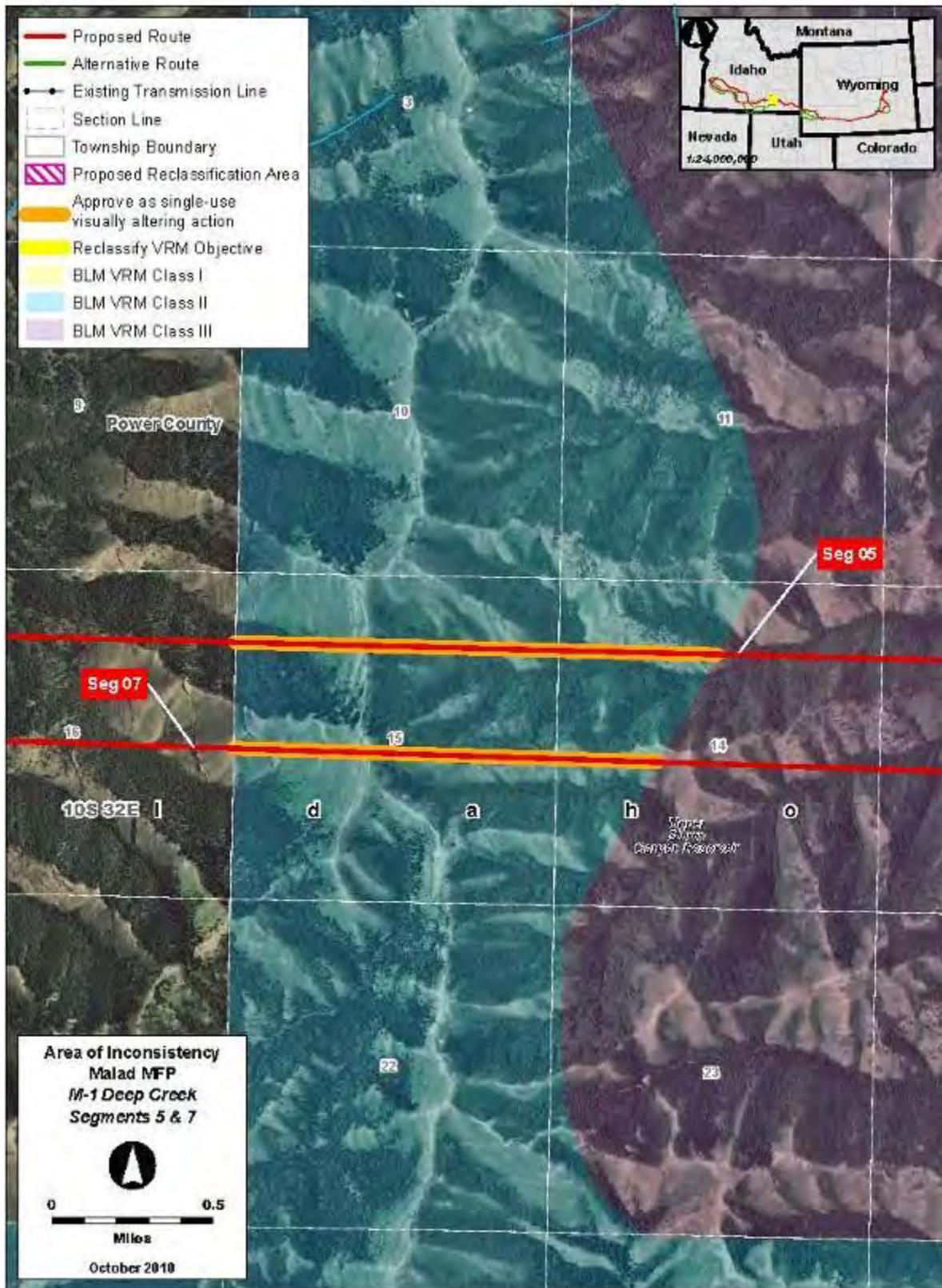


Figure 5.5-4. AOI M-1 Malad AOI Detailed Map (Segments 5 and 7)

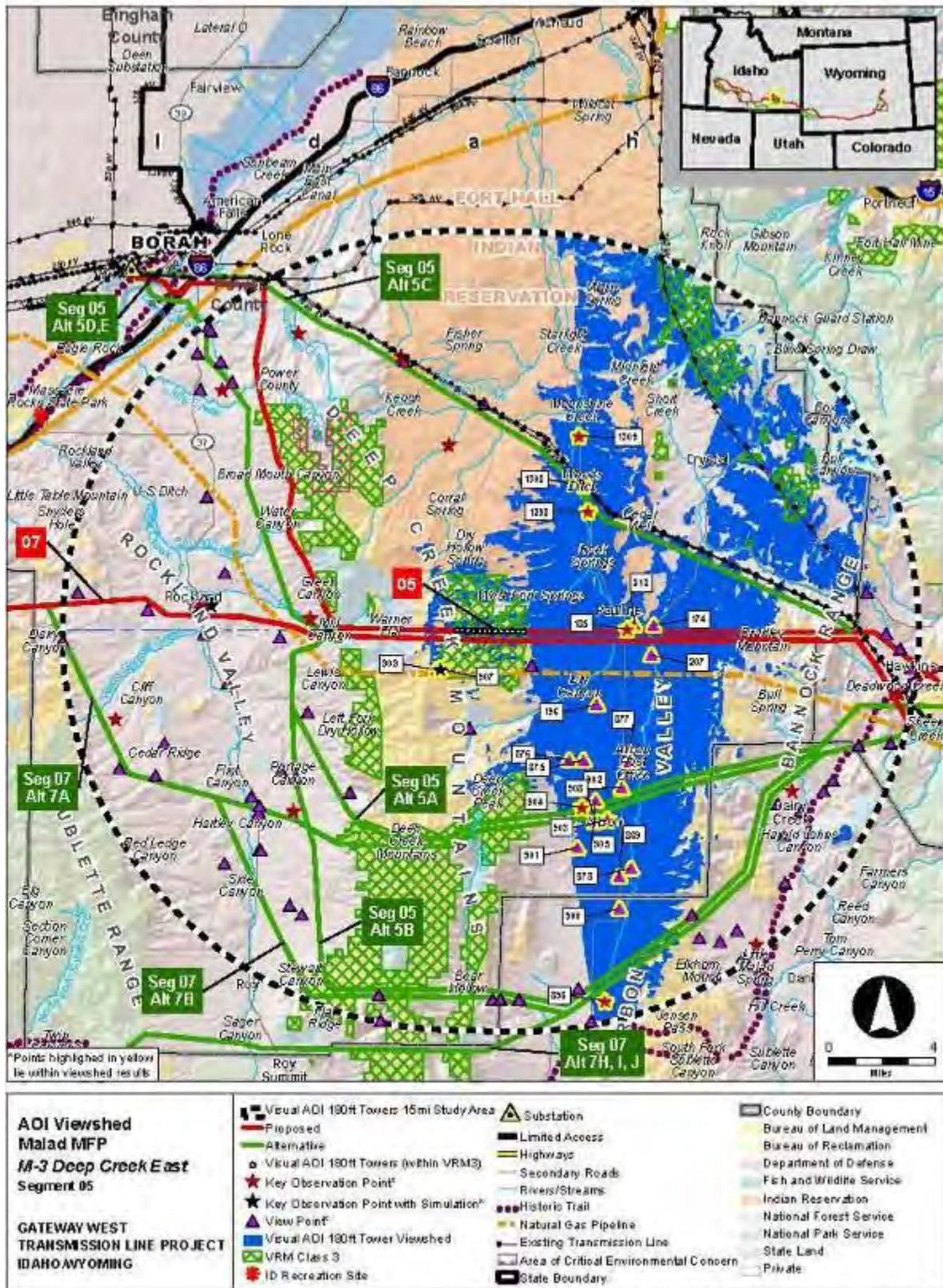


Figure 5.5-5. AOI M-3 Deep Creek East AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 5)

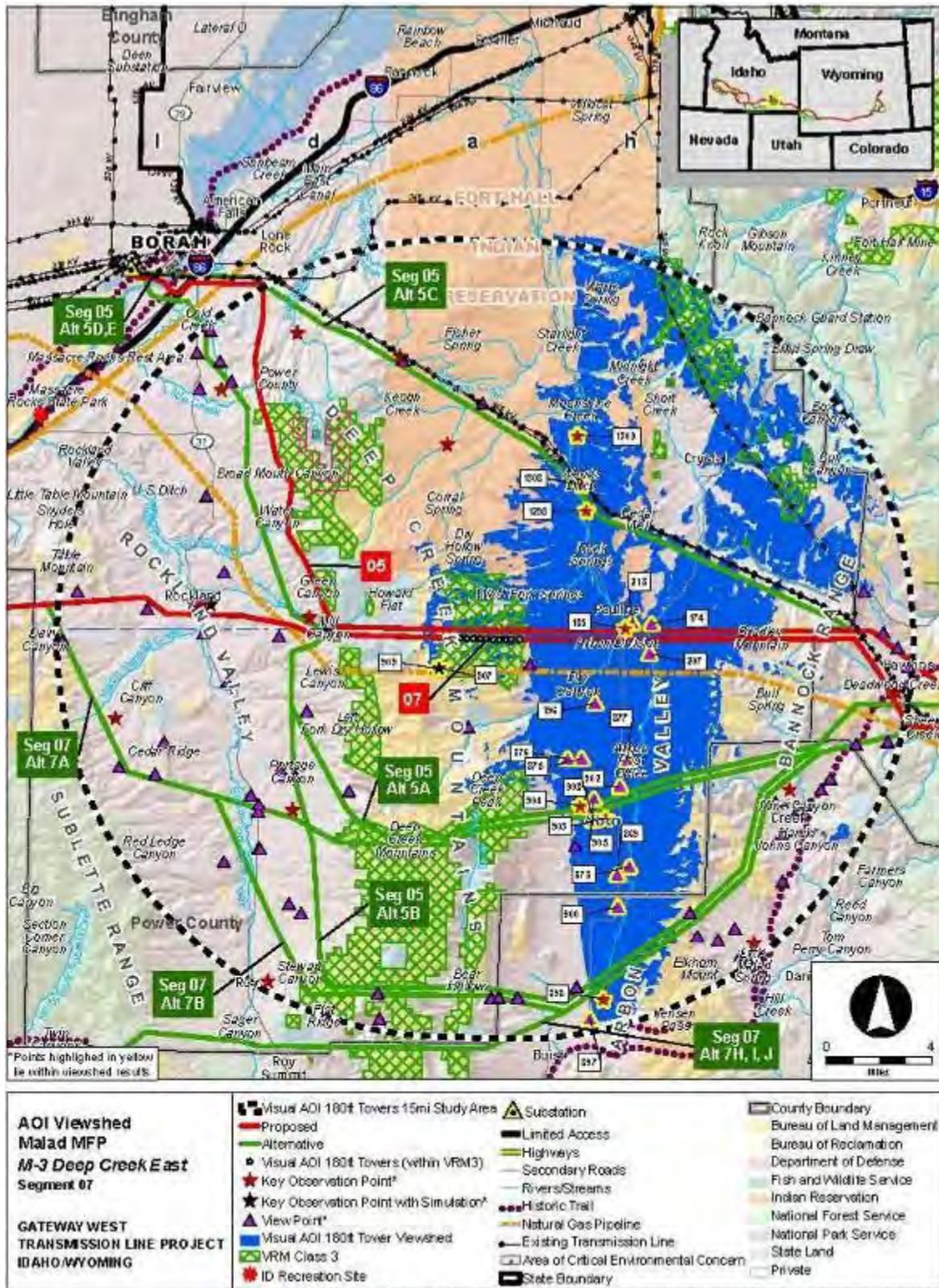


Figure 5.5-6. AOI M-3 Deep Creek East AOI Visual Analysis (Segment 7)

5.6 Cassia RMP

The Cassia RMP (BLM 1985a) provides direction for management of public lands in a planning area of approximately 1,629,472 acres to the south of the Snake River in south-central Idaho (see Figure 5.6-1), part of the Burley FO. Approximately 97 percent of the planning area is within Cassia County, with 2 percent in Oneida County and less than 1 percent in each of Twin Falls and Power Counties. Portions of Segments 7, 9 and 10 are located within the Cassia RMPPA. Two VRM Class II management areas are crossed by Route Alternatives. The Cassia RMP states that the “consideration of scenic values will be included in the analysis of all activities involving alteration of the natural character of the landscape. The degree of alteration allowed is determined through an inventory process which results in the classification of all public lands into one of five Visual Resource Management classes, each class allowing for a different degree of modification.” Data from the inventory process is not available at this time but it can be assumed that the language from the RMP applies to the various VRM objectives assigned throughout the planning area. Because the AOIs are on alternatives of Segment 7, the discussion below focuses on that Segment.

Proposed Segment 7 consists of 118 miles of single-circuit 500-kV transmission line. It leaves Populus Substation and proceeds northwest for about 15 miles, following existing transmission lines and Segment 5, before turning due west and proceeding through about 103 miles of mainly private irrigated agriculture to Cedar Hill Substation. Key siting issues are proximity to residences and agriculture including loss of prime farmland and CRP land, disruption to existing crops and surface irrigation patterns, interference with center pivot irrigation, and potential electrical effects on confined animal feeding operations. As a result of these concerns, a multi-county task force consisting of residents, county officials and state legislators, have recommended alternatives well south of the Proposed Route. These alternatives would primarily cross BLM or Forest Service land. Constraints in these southern alternatives include high quality forested land, historic trails, wetlands, steep slopes, crucial big game range, sage-grouse and raptor nests.

In all, there are 10 feasible alternatives for Segment 7. Eight additional routes were reviewed, but not carried forward for detailed analysis. Alternatives 7A through 7G are short alternatives which diverge from the Proposed Route to avoid local features, such as dairies, raptor nests, areas of concentrated agriculture, and so on. Alternatives 7H, 7I, and 7J are alternative routes to the south of the Proposed Route. Alternative 7H is located approximately 10 to 15 miles south of the Proposed Route. It passes through a mix of private land, BLM-managed land and the Caribou and Sawtooth NFs. The total length of Alternative 7H is 127 miles. Alternatives 7I and 7J share the same alignment through the route along the Idaho/Nevada state line, approximately 25 to 30 miles south of the Proposed Route, before splitting into separate routes to travel through NF or Private and BLM lands. Alternative 7I was recommended by the multi-county task force. This alternative is a 173 mile route located near the Idaho/Nevada state line.

VRM objectives in the Cassia RMP could be affected by the Project in four areas depending on the route selected. Jim Sage AOI (CA-1) is a VRM II management area crossed by Alternative 7H. Cottonwood Creek AOI (CA-2), also along Alternative 7H, is land managed as VRM Class III, but the transmission line would dominate the view of

the casual observer. Spring Canyon AOI (CA-3) is an isolated parcel managed as VRM Class II crossed by the Alternative 7E. Alternative 7I would cross AOI (CA-4) which includes the Goose Creek Travel Zone with lands managed for VRM Classes II and III.

5.6.1 AOI CA-1 Jim Sage (Alternative 7H)

The Jim Sage AOI is a single BLM parcel of approximately 1,515 acres, located on Alternative 7H, approximately 7 miles southwest of Malta, Idaho. Approaching the Jim Sage AOI from the east, Alternative 7H runs through the Raft River Valley, then into a pinch point between the Cotterel Mountains to the north and the Jim Sage Mountains to the south. The route at this point is adjacent to Idaho State Highway 77-Elba/Almo Highway, and Cassia Creek. The proximity of the highway and creek requires the powerline to be placed in the foothills of the Jim Sage Mountains. This route crosses approximately 0.8 mile of VRM Class II land in the Jim Sage AOI. The northeast corner of the VRM Class II parcel would be avoided during micro-siting. Figure 5.6-2 shows the viewshed of the Jim Sage AOI, Alternative 7H, and VRM management classification. Figure 5.6-3 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – In the vicinity of Jim Sage AOI the route could not be moved to the south or north because of steep terrain and conflicts with raptor nest buffers. As the route proceeds west in its current placement, it maintains a straight line that also avoids the steeper areas within the Albion Range. Selection of the Proposed Route or Alternative 7I would avoid the Jim Sage AOI; however, the Proposed Route is closer to residential areas, and would affect more active agricultural operations. Alternative 7I is 55 miles longer than the Proposed Route and 46 miles longer than Alternative 7H and crosses other VRM Class II and VRM Class III areas.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The 15-mile radius study area includes the Raft River Valley on the east, the Cotterel and Jim Sage Mountains running north to south in the middle, and the Albion Range in the Sawtooth NF in the west. Figure 5.6-2 shows the Jim Sage AOI viewshed analysis area. Most of the area is undeveloped with large areas of forests in the Sawtooth NF. Areas of irrigated agriculture occur on the west side of Raft River Valley, in the Elba Basin, along the more narrow valleys between mountainous areas, in the area around the city of Albion, and on the northwest side of the Albion Mountains. There are a small number of waterbodies, including Lake Cleveland and the Independence Lakes. SR 81 runs north-south on the west side of Raft Valley and intersects Interstate 84 near Horse Butte in the northeast. SR 77 crosses the study area northwest to southeast through the mountains, and joins SR 81 at Malta. There are many recreation opportunities including Pomerelle Ski Area, picnic areas, campgrounds, and trails. Attachment A, Figure CA-1a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1246.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.6-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM class. Attachment A, Figure CA-1b simulates landscape conditions, showing the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1246. Scenic views of Jones Hollow, the Jim Sage Mountains, and the surrounding mountainous terrain of the Sawtooth NF are important to sensitive viewers such as the adjacent residents on SR 77, and recreational drivers on the City of Rocks Back Country Byway. These sensitive

residential and recreational viewers are represented by KOPs 1243, 1244, 1245, and 1246. The mountain views exhibit diversity and dominance in form, line, color, and texture with the surrounding residential development and man-made features. From this lower elevation vantage point, it is apparent that Alternative 7H of the Proposed Project would interrupt the scenic views. Micrositing to take advantage of topographic and screening would be unlikely to reduce impacts in the surrounding area. As shown on the Figure CA-1b, there would be skylining in some of these views, representing a high level of contrast. The pyramidal forms, jagged terrain with numerous silhouette lines, and mottled rugged vegetation would be directly contrasted with the proposed structures (and perhaps access roads). As a result, the Project would attract the attention of the casual observer and thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

If Alternative 7H is selected, the VRM Class II area northwest of the Project would be bounded by the transmission line, residences, and the Elba-Almo Road. Therefore, it is recommended that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action resulting in reclassifying 122 acres of AOI CA-1 from VRM Class II to VRM Class III if this alternative is selected (see Figure 5.6-3). During final design, consideration would be given to micrositing the alignment to reduce visibility as much as possible. This micrositing would also be used to either avoid crossing the northeastern corner of the AOI or cross in such a way that it would conform to VRM Class II requirements for that area.

5.6.2 AOI CA-2 Cottonwood Creek AOI (Alternative 7H)

The Cottonwood Creek AOI is located on the west end of Alternative 7H, about 5 miles northwest of Oakley, Idaho. The route passes just south of Oakley before turning to the northwest to connect with the Cedar Hill Substation. The route is predominantly on BLM-managed land. Local route adjustments occur in several locations to avoid agricultural fields with center pivot irrigation. The Cottonwood Creek AOI is one 2,496-acre VRM III parcel that would be crossed for approximately 2.5 miles by Alternative 7H. Due to proximity of the route to key observation points, including a residence, a historic trail, and an entrance to the Cottonwood Wildlife Management Area (WMA), a visual analysis was conducted to evaluate the effects of a transmission line in this location. Figure 5.6-4 shows the viewshed of the Cottonwood Creek AOI, Alternative 7H, and the VRM management classifications. Figure 5.6-5 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – Much of the BLM-managed land near the Cottonwood Creek AOI is managed as VRM Class III. The route location is constrained to the southwest by scenic mountainous areas of the Sawtooth NF and to the north by center pivot irrigated agricultural lands. Several alternative routes that avoid VRM areas were eliminated due to increased agricultural impact. Both the Proposed Route and Alternative 7I would avoid VRM lands at this location. However, Alternative 7I crosses VRM Class I and VRM Class II areas at other locations.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Within the 15-mile radius study area, two landscape conditions predominate. In the southeast, east, and northeast, the foreground and middle ground are flat against a backdrop of the Albion Mountains. To the south and southwest there are many canyons, ridges, and steep slopes within the Sawtooth NF.

The Snake River crosses the northernmost part of the 15-mile radius area. U.S. Route 30 is the primary road and is located in the northern portion of the study area. There are a number of small communities including Burley to the north of the study area, Oakley in the southeast, and Albion to the east of the study area. In addition to the local roads, highways and communities, there are sensitive viewing areas such as campgrounds and trails in the NF, the Pomerelle ski area, and Martaugh Lake County Park. The main access road to the Big Cottonwood Wildlife Management Area would be crossed by Alternative 7H. Attachment A, Figure CA-2a shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity as viewed from KOP 1171 and Figure CA-2c shows existing landscape conditions in the immediate vicinity as viewed from KOP 1173.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.6-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency with the existing VRM class. Attachment A, Figures CA-2b and CA-2d simulate impacts to landscape conditions showing Alternative 7H as viewed from KOP and KOP 1173, respectively. Scenic views of Golden Valley, adjacent to Cottonwood Creek, are important to sensitive viewers such as hikers on the trail at KOP 1173, WMA visitors, and the residential viewers in the vicinity of KOPs 1171 and 1174. These valley and mountain views exhibit a diversity of form, line, color, and texture with few visible man-made features. From low valley vantage points, it is apparent that there would be some skylining with little potential vegetation and topographic screening. Structures for Alternative 7H would directly contrast with the various angular and pyramidal forms, meandering ridgelines, and strong horizon. These structures would be visible and dominant, thus not conforming to VRM Class III objectives. While not stated, it appears that a VRM Class III objective has been assigned to this particular area to protect the viewshed of this scenic mountainous terrain and the broad almost flat terrain of the Golden Valley.

With the transmission line in place, the VRM Class III area to the east of the transmission line would be more visually associated with the transmission structures which dominate the flat agricultural landscape. If Alternative 7H is approved, it is recommended that the area north/northeast of the transmission line, totaling 806 acres of AOI CA-2, be reclassified from VRM Class III to VRM Class IV (see Figure 5.6-5).

5.6.3 AOI CA-3 Spring Canyon (Alternative 7E)

This AOI comprises an isolated 300-acre VRM Class II parcel located at the north end of the Albion Mountains, in the Declo Hills. A total of 0.3 mile of this parcel would be crossed by Alternative 7E. Figure 5.6-6 shows the viewshed of the Spring Creek AOI and VRM management classification. Figure 5.6-7 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – Alternative 7E (4.5 miles long) diverges from the 3.8-mile equivalent segment of the Proposed Route at point 7j, approximately 4.5 miles north of Albion. It proceeds southeast for about 1 mile and then southwest for about 3 miles back to the Proposed Route. This alternative diverges slightly east from the Proposed Route to avoid two sage-grouse lek 0.65-mile buffers and stay east of a hang gliding launch location. The entire route would be Greenfield.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Within the 15-mile radius study area around AOI CA-3, the northwest half is generally flat to rolling. The majority of this area, and the area along the Snake River, is occupied by farms and farmland. In contrast, the southeastern half of the area is mostly undeveloped and, to a large extent, mountainous (Albion and Cotterel Mountains). The exceptions to this being farms and farmland in the Raft River Valley and in the vicinity of Albion. Forests are found in the mountainous areas, especially within the Sawtooth NF. Interstate 84, U.S. 30, and SRs 24, 25, 27, 77 and 81 cross the area and provide highway service to communities such as Burley, Rupert, Heyburn, and Albion. Sensitive viewers include motorists, local residents and visitors to the NF, campgrounds, trails and other recreation areas and historic sites.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.6-6 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to assess the consistency of Alternative 7E with the existing VRM Class II. Sensitive viewers, such as the residents at KOPs 306, 310, and 311, have scenic views of Spring Canyon north of the Albion Mountains and Pine Knob. Figure 5.6-8 shows views of the existing conditions south of KOP 311 and KOP 306. These valley and mountain views exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture, with a few man-made features visible in the residential areas.

From high elevation vantage points, it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts would not be successful at sufficiently lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The various angular and pyramidal forms, mountain silhouettes, meandering ridgelines, curvilinear divergent bands, and strong horizon would contrast directly with transmission structures and access roads for Alternative 7E. There would be areas where skylining of the powerline and towers would dominate the view of the casual viewers. As a result of these visual impacts, Alternative 7H would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It is assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the hills and mountainous terrain adjacent to Spring Canyon.

Micro-siting may reduce the length across VRM Class II area but would not completely avoid the parcel. If this route is approved, it is recommended that 39 acres of AOI CA-3 be reclassified from VRM Class II to VRM Class III (see Figure 5.6-7). Alternative 7E would be constructed using appropriate mitigation measures and BMPs to lower potential impacts to visual resources and scenic qualities.

5.6.4 AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Travel Zone (Alternative 7I and Alternative 7J)

The Goose Creek AOI comprises one 20.9-acre VRM Class II parcel within the Goose Creek Travel Zone that is crossed for 348 feet by Alternatives 7I/7J, just north of the Idaho/Utah State line. The RMP states that the management objective is to “preserve scenic values in the Goose Creek Travel Zone (within 0.5 mile of Goose Creek road between Wilson Pass and the Utah border).” Other constraints in the area include sage-grouse leks and buffers, raptor nests and buffers, a historic trail and lands classified as VRM I and II. In routing a line east to west through this area, the Travel Zone cannot be avoided. This route does, however, avoid the sage-grouse and raptor habitat. Figure 5.6-9 shows the viewshed for AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Travel Zone, the Alternative routes, and VRM classifications. Figure 5.6-10 shows the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – Proposed Segment 7 and Alternative 7H would avoid this AOI. The proposed route would cross more pivot plot agriculture land than these alternatives. Alternative 7H would cross Sawtooth NF land as would Alternatives 7I and 7J. Alternative 7I is the route preferred by the Southern Idaho Task Force, a group of residents, irrigators, and county and state officials who oppose the Proposed Route which largely passes through private agricultural land. Alternative 7J was proposed by the Task Force as an alternate route for the west end of 7I.

Existing Conditions –Figure 5.6-9 shows the 15-mile radius study area and the viewshed analysis for towers within the AOI. Goose Creek flows northeast through the analysis area. The 0.3 mile-wide floodplain is bounded by eroding cliffs and buttes. There is scattered agriculture and grasslands within the river valley. Beaverdam Creek drains into Goose Creek just north of this AOI. The Goose Creek Road follows the valley along the eastern edge. Lower Goose Creek Reservoir is in the northeast portion of the analysis area. The Sawtooth NF comprises the northwest quadrant of the analysis area. The upland area around Goose Creek is characterized by broad, flat expanses and dramatic buttes. Further from the creek, the landscape becomes mountainous with a patchwork of forested, shrub, and high elevation grasslands. Numerous drainages cross the area.

Conformance Analysis – High-sensitivity residential viewers at KOP 1091 would have a moderate level of Project visibility 1.1 mile from Alternative 7I/7J. The viewer would have a focal and somewhat enclosed view toward the alignment which would not parallel any existing alignments or linear features but would be either screened or back dropped by the rocky terrain in the middle ground and background resulting in contrast levels that are anticipated to be moderate to high. Potential visual impacts on residences from this KOP and in the general vicinity are expected to be moderate to high because the Alternative would create a new linear feature in a relatively undisturbed landscape with moderate to high contrast due to possible opportunities for screening or backdropping. The various angular and pyramidal forms, mountain silhouettes, meandering ridgelines, curvilinear divergent bands, and strong horizon would contrast directly with transmission structures and access roads for Alternative 7I/7J.

Because the Travel Zone cannot be avoided, and a transmission line in this area would not be consistent with VRM Class II objectives, an amendment would be needed, if this route is approved, to reclassify the 20.9-acre VRM II parcel crossed to VRM Class III (see Figure 5.6-10).

5.6.5 AOI CA-5 Goose Creek Travel Zone (Alternative 7I and Alternative 7J)

The Goose Creek AOI comprises a single VRM III parcel located within the Goose Creek Travel Zone near the Idaho/Utah State line. AOI CA-5 is east of the river crossing from AOI C-4. The RMP states that the management objective is to “preserve scenic values in the Goose Creek Travel Zone (within 0.5 mile of Goose Creek road between Wilson Pass and the Utah border).” Alternatives 7I and 7J follow the same route through this portion of their routes and cross the VRM Class III parcel for a distance 1,241 feet. Figure 5.6-11 shows the viewshed for AOI CA-5 Goose Creek

Travel Zone, the Route Alternatives, and VRM classifications. Figure 5.6-12 shows the Alternative 7I/7J, the existing VRM Class, and proposed amendment action.

Alternatives Considered – Proposed Route 7 and Alternative 7H would avoid this AOI. The Proposed Route would cross more pivot plot agriculture land than these alternatives. Alternative 7H would cross Sawtooth NF land as would Alternatives 7I and 7J. Alternative 7I is the route preferred by the Southern Idaho Task Force, a group of residents, irrigators, and county and state officials who oppose the Proposed Route which largely passes through private agricultural land. Alternative 7J was proposed by the Task Force as an alternate route for the west end of 7I.

Existing Conditions –Figure 5.6-11 shows the 15-mile radius study area and the viewshed analysis for towers within the AOI. Goose Creek flows northeast through the analysis area. The 0.3 mile-wide floodplain is bounded by eroding cliffs and buttes. There is scattered agriculture and grasslands within the river valley. Beaverdam Creek drains into Goose Creek just north of this AOI. The Goose Creek Road follows the valley along the eastern edge. One Scenic Byway and two NHTs cross the northeast quadrant of the study area. Lower Goose Creek Reservoir is in the northeast portion of the analysis area. The Sawtooth NF comprises the northwest quadrant of the analysis area. The upland area around Goose Creek is characterized by broad, flat expanses and dramatic buttes. Further from the creek, the landscape becomes mountainous with a patchwork of forested, shrub, and high elevation grasslands. Numerous drainages cross the area.

Conformance Analysis – The Project would be highly visible from the Goose Creek road and micro-siting and screening would not lower the visual impact to the area. The transmission line would cross rolling, sparsely vegetated terrain with rocky outcrops and dramatic views. Because the Travel Zone cannot be avoided, and a transmission line in this area would not be consistent with VRM Class II objectives, an amendment would be needed, if this route is approved. It is recommended that, if this route is approved, the project be allowed as a single-use visually altering action across the VRM III lands in the Goose Creek Travel Zone, without changing the VRM classification (see Figure 5.6-12).

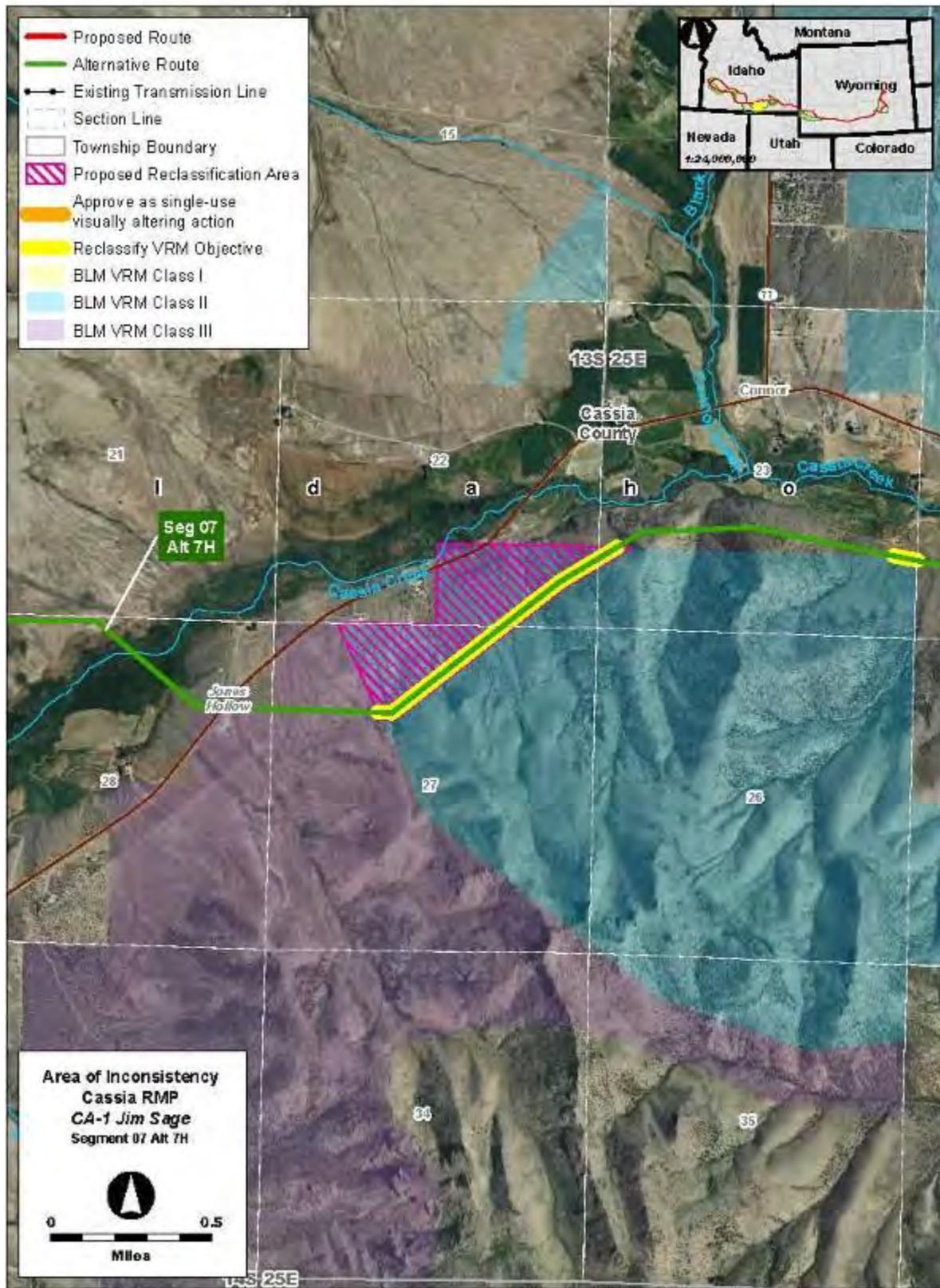


Figure 5.6-3. AOI CA-1 Jim Sage Detailed Map

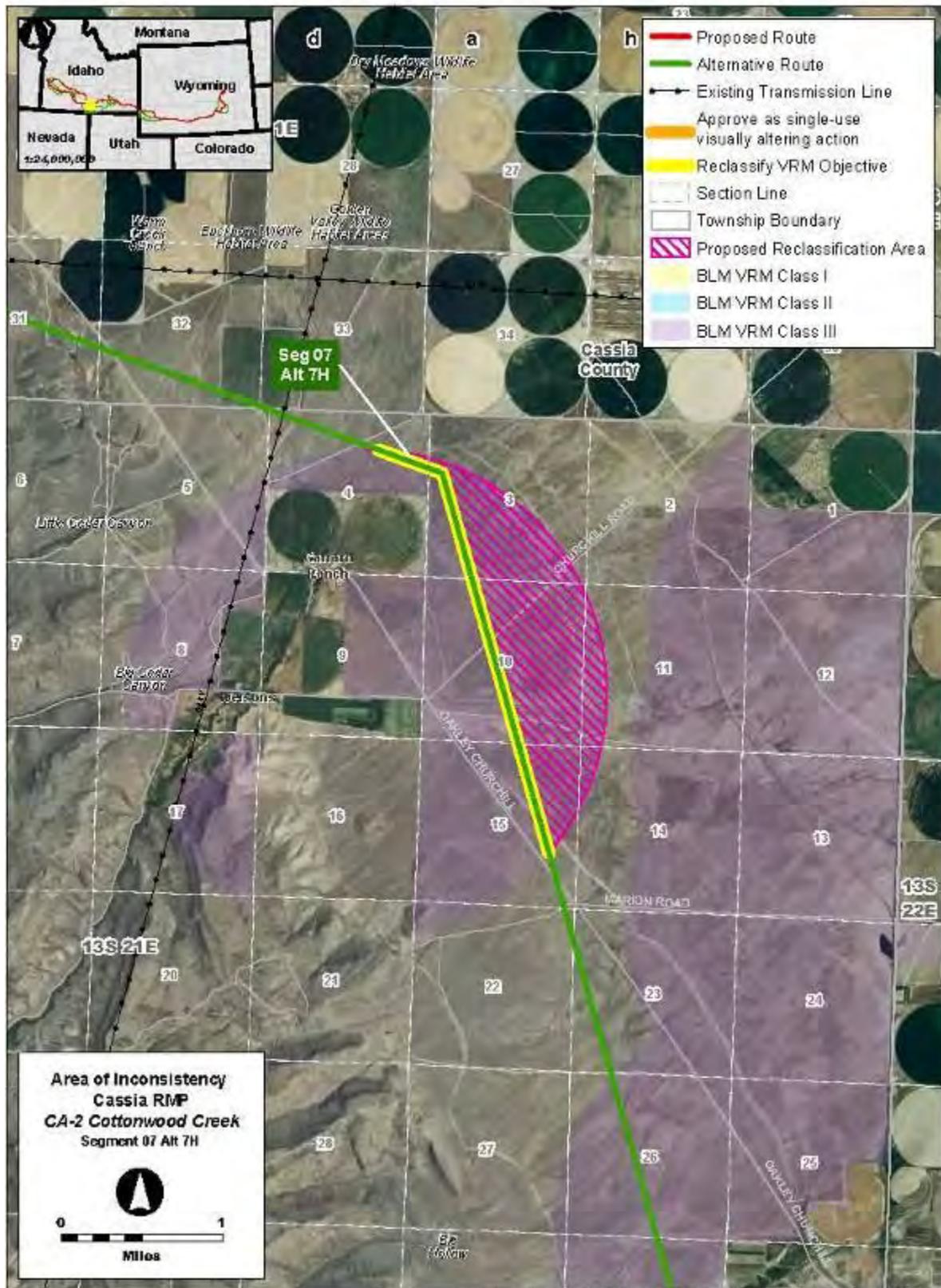


Figure 5.6-5. AOI CA-2 Cottonwood Creek Detailed Map



Figure 5.6-6. AOI CA-3 Spring Canyon Visual Analysis

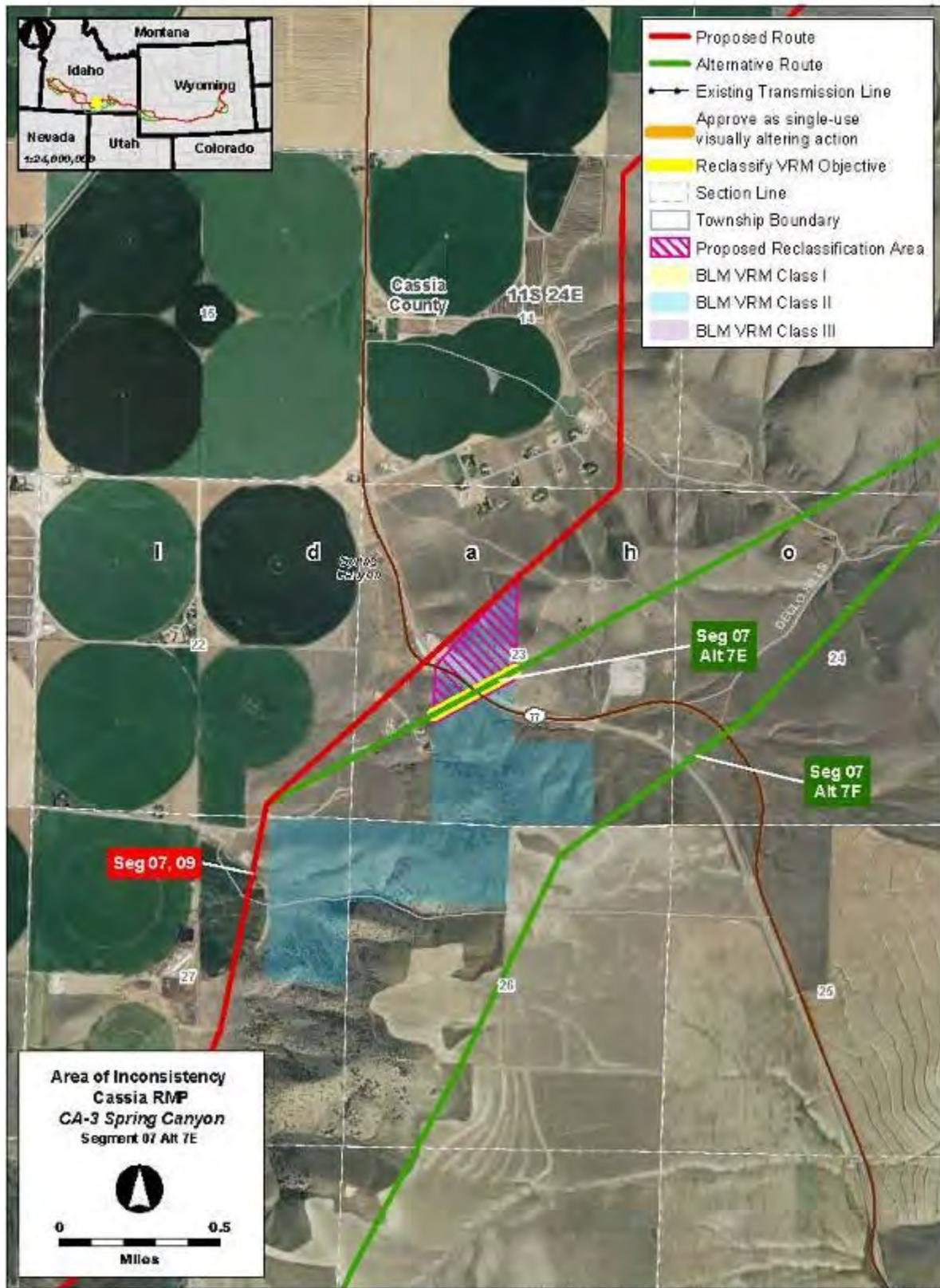
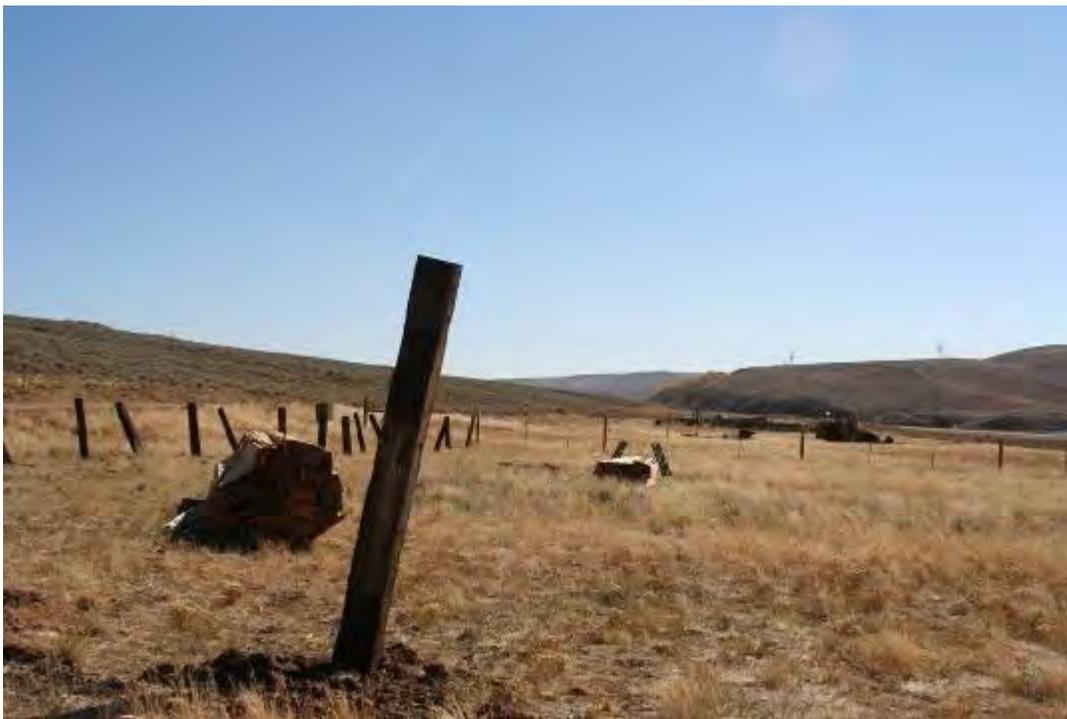


Figure 5.6-7. AOI CA-3 Spring Canyon Detailed Map



KOP 311 Looking South



KOP 306

Figure 5.6-8. Spring Canyon AOI Looking South from KOP 311 and KOP 306

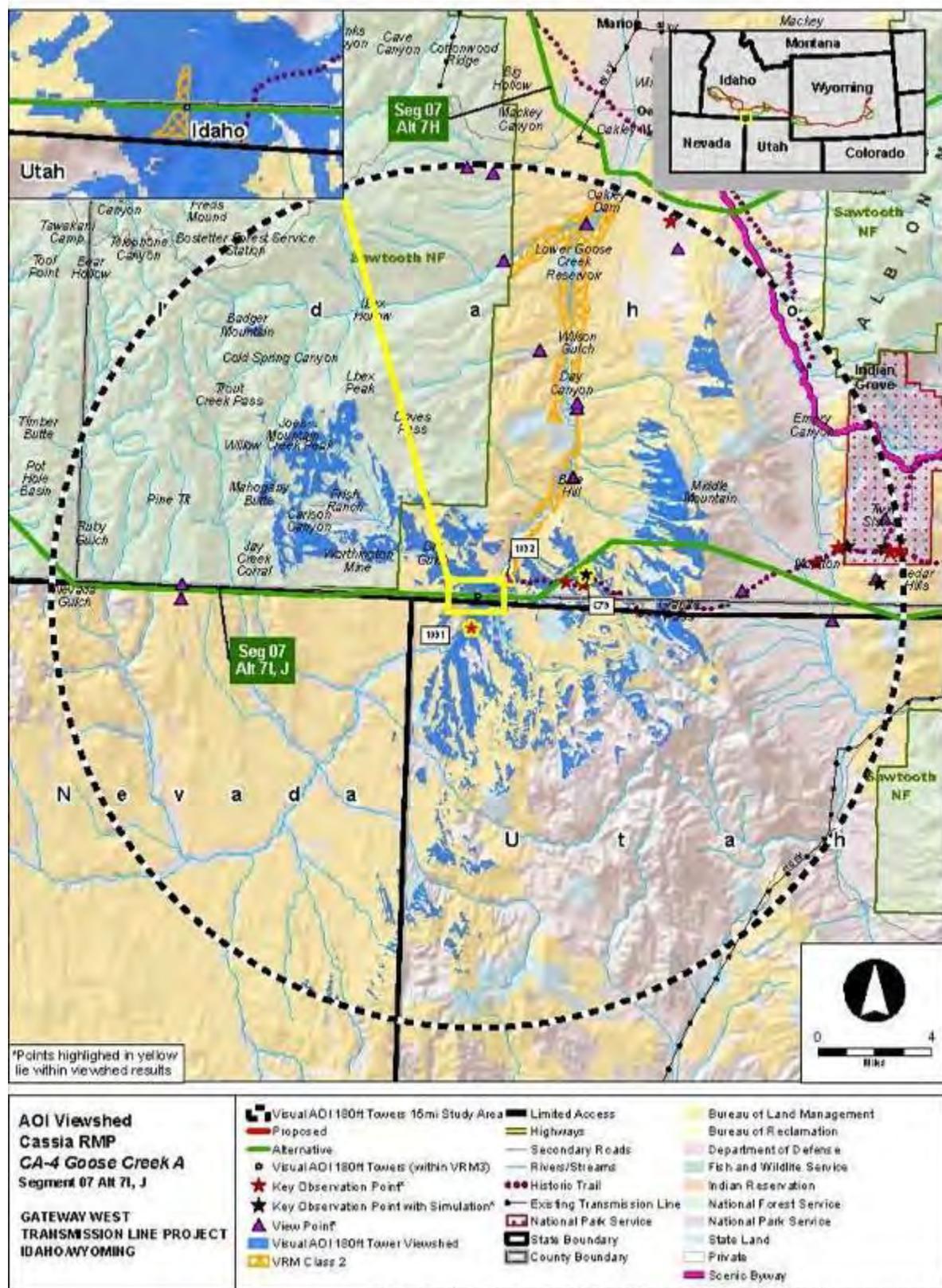


Figure 5.6-9. AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Visual Analysis

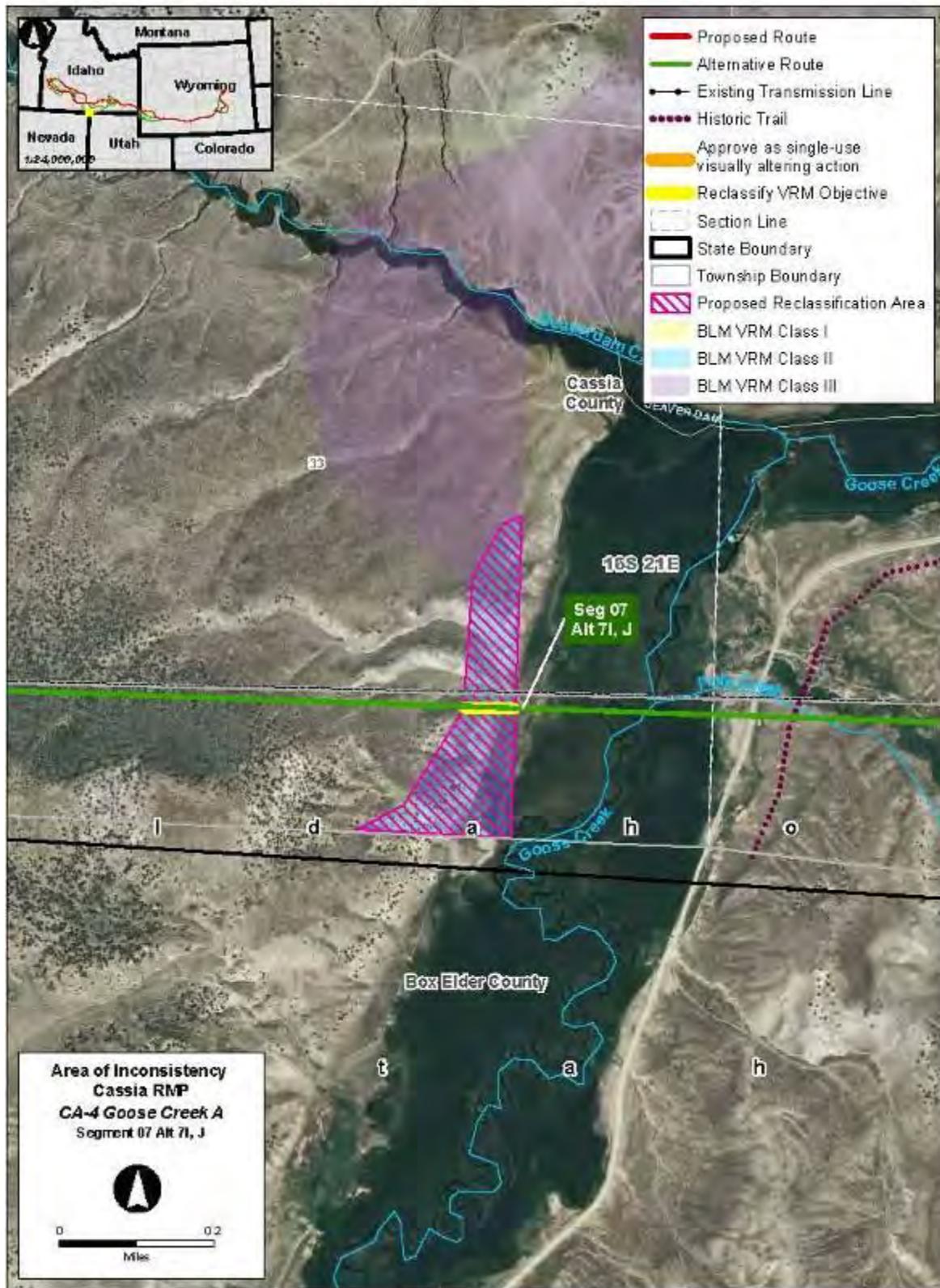


Figure 5.6-10. AOI CA-4 Goose Creek Detailed Map

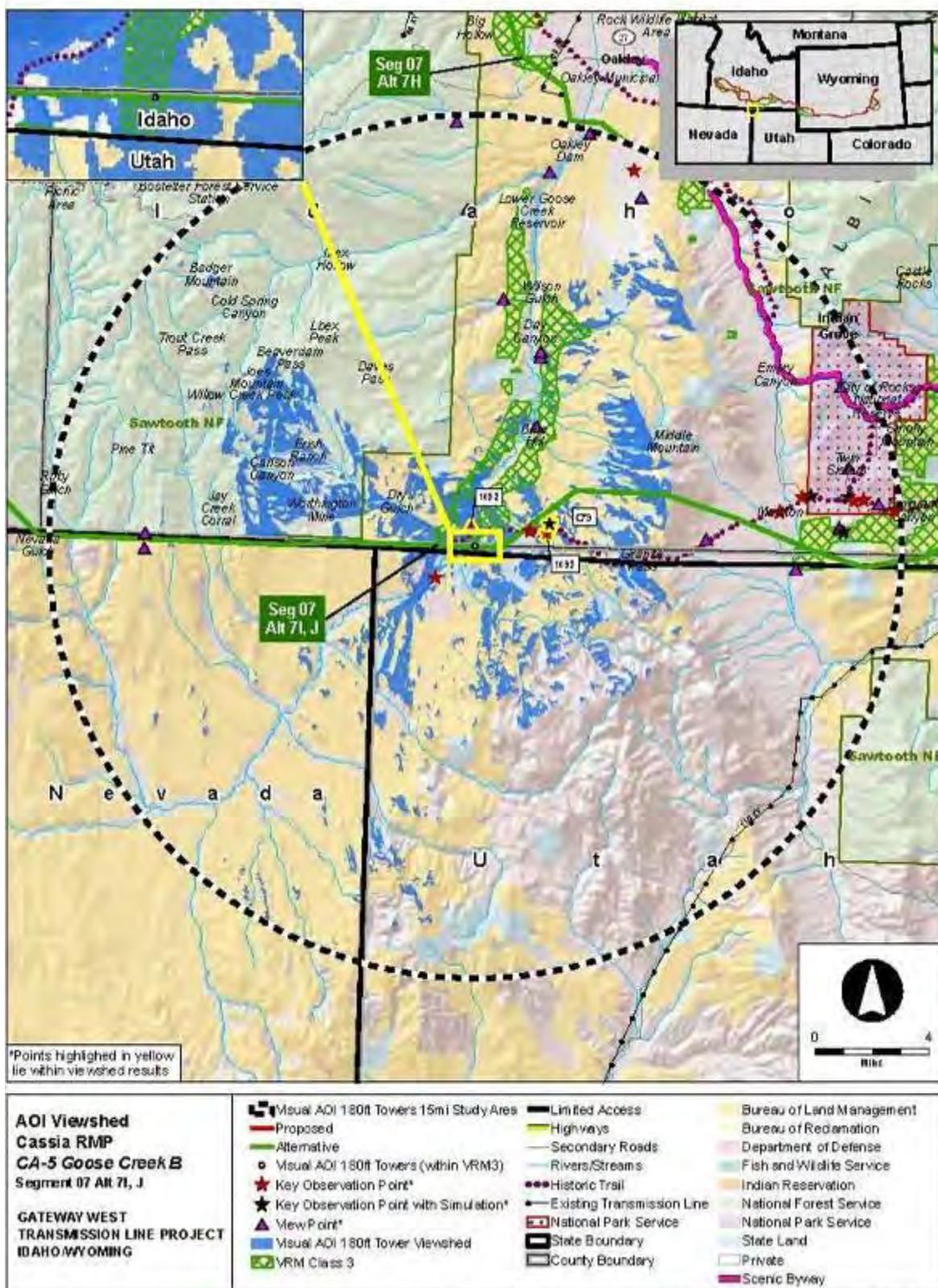


Figure 5.6-11. AOI CA-5 Goose Creek Visual Analysis

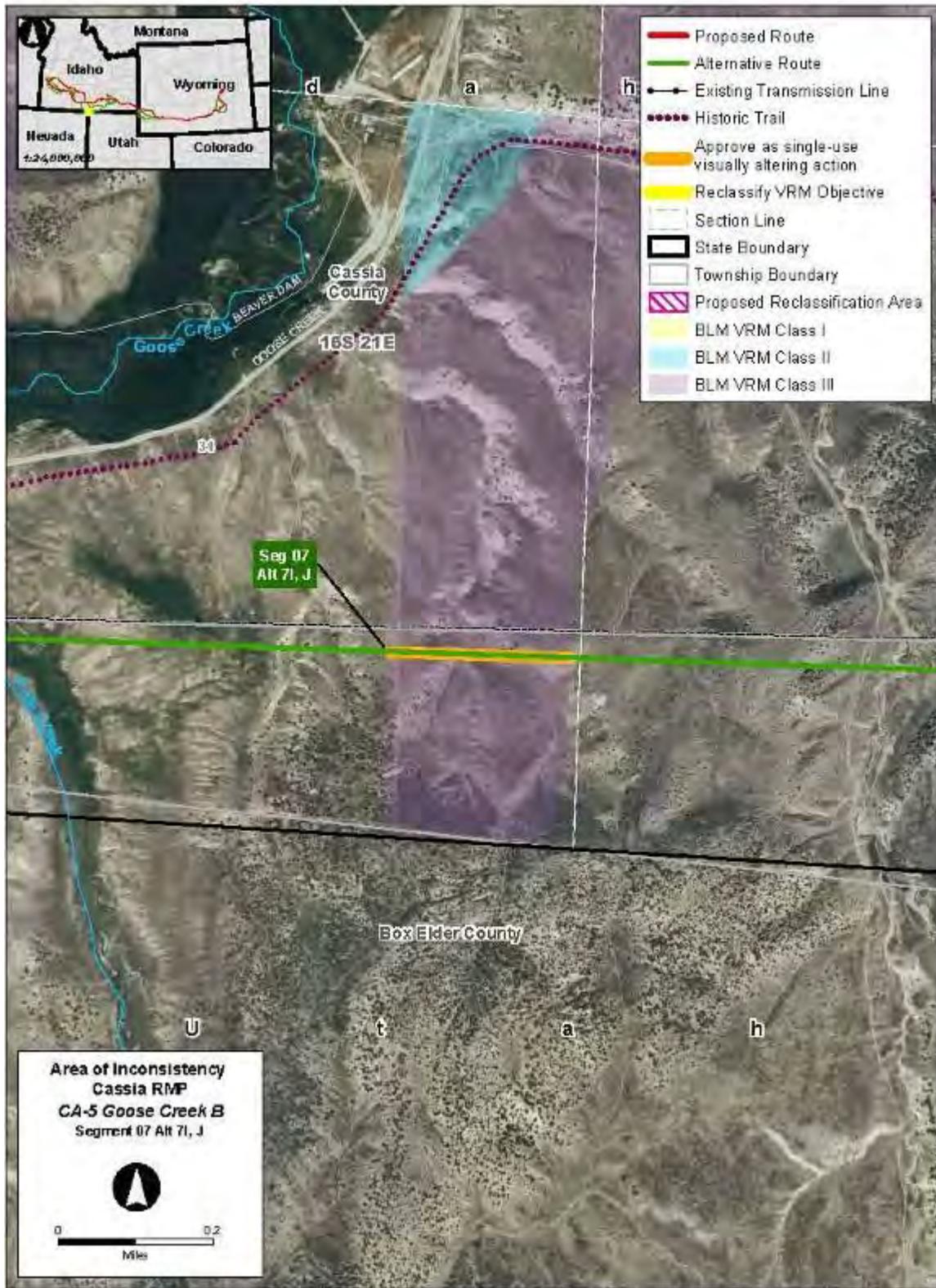


Figure 5.6-12. AOI CA-5 Goose Creek Detailed Map

5.7 Twin Falls MFP

The Twin Falls MFP (1982) provides direction for management of public land within its planning area under the jurisdiction of the Burley FO in south-central Idaho. The Twin Falls MFP planning area consists of approximately 809,000 acres in eastern Twin Falls County (see Figure 5.7-1). The Twin Falls MFP includes Objective L-4, which states “Confine future power transmission lines and oil and gas pipelines to designated corridor locations.

Objective VRM-1 states that the district is to “Manage all public lands in manner which will protect and maintain the existing visual qualities and provide for enhancement where consistent with management policies”. The Twin Falls MFP lists various VRM decisions starting with a high priority for the protection of Salmon Falls Creek. The VRM decisions are detailed as:

- VRM 1.1 – Manage Salmon Falls Canyon between the Salmon Falls Dam and Lilly Grade for natural ecological change in accordance with a VRM Class I designation. This designation would include only the area from rim to rim. Manage the canyon from Lilly Grade to Balanced Rock under a VRM Class II designation.
- VRM 1.2 – Designate 12,695 acres as VRM Class II. This class requires management activities to be designated and located to blend into the natural landscape and not to be visually apparent to the casual visitor. The following resource management guidelines shall apply:
 - Range Management – Juniper and sagebrush removal must be made to simulate adjacent natural openings. Fences, water developments, etc., would require construction with mostly hand tools and be of natural materials. No red fence posts allowed.
 - 2) Structures – Structures must incorporate the natural lines, colors, and materials of the natural landscape, skylined structures would be prohibited.
 - 3) Roads – Required roads must be concealed by vegetation, follow natural landforms, and be seeded as soon as possible. Overland “roads” may be necessary in some areas to protect the scenic values. Cut and fill areas that exceed 5 feet will generally not be accepted unless the fill can be replaced and vegetation established in 2 years.
- VRM 1.3 – Designate 32,819 acres of VRM Class III. This class provides the management activities may be evident to the casual visitor; however, the activity should remain subordinate to the visual strength and natural character of the landscape. The following resource management guidelines shall apply:
 - Range management – Juniper and sage brush clearings shall simulate typical natural openings.
 - 2) Structures – Structures should incorporate the natural lines, colors and materials of the natural landscape. Skylined structures should be avoided, if possible.
 - 3) Roads – Roads should be partially concealed by vegetation, follow natural landforms, and be seeded as soon as possible.

Data from the visual resource inventory process are not available at this time but it can be assumed that the above language from the MFP should be applied to the various VRM objectives assigned throughout the planning area.

An amendment to the MFP was approved in 1989, designating the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC to protect natural and scenic values. Alternative 7I would cross this area and therefore be inconsistent with the management objectives.

Segment 9 of the Proposed Route is 161.7 miles long and connects the proposed Cedar Hill Substation with the Hemingway Substation. The line would be constructed as a single-circuit 500 kV line. The primary concerns for siting in the eastern portion of this segment were avoidance of irrigated farmland and dairy operations; scattered residential development; interference with the Jarbidge Military Operating Area; making use of the WWE corridor; and minimizing impacts to visual resources. In the western portion of the Proposed Route (within the Jarbidge and Owyhee FOs), following the WWE corridor was a primary objective. Other concerns included minimizing impact to Bruneau Dunes State Park and scenic qualities associated with the Bruneau River, avoiding conflicts with the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Military Operating Area, and issues associated with crossing the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey Nature Conservation Area. Use of public land versus private land was an important issue for all portions of the route.

Two VRM Class I and II areas in the Twin Falls MFP would be affected by this project. AOI TF-1 was identified as an AOI because it is managed as VRM Class I. This AOI is located within Salmon Falls Creek. The presence of the proposed transmission line in this location would be inconsistent with visual objectives. This section of Salmon Falls Creek is an eligible Wild and Scenic River (WSR) segment. Unless this segment was determined to be unsuitable for WSR designation, crossing Salmon Falls Creek would not be allowed, and therefore an amendment would not be able to be approved at this time for the Proposed Route through this area. The Rock Creek AOI is an isolated parcel of land managed for VRM Class II objectives in an area of an existing transmission line. The MFP would need to be amended to allow the Route Alternatives 7J and 7I at this location.

5.7.1 AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek (Proposed Route – Segment 9)

The Salmon Falls Creek AOI is located approximately 4 miles south of Castleford, Idaho, in Twin Falls County. The AOI overlaps both the Twin falls MFP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. The Proposed Route for Segment 9 proceeds west and north from the proposed Cedar Hill Substation, avoiding areas of irrigated agriculture. After crossing SR 93, the route proceeds west to eastern border of Salmon Falls Creek ACEC, then turns northwest to parallel the east side of Salmon Falls Creek adjacent to an existing 138-kV transmission line for about 4.4 miles before turning west again and crossing the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC at Lily Grade, just north of the Salmon Falls Creek WSA but still part of an ACEC and eligible WSR segment. The portion of the AOI within the Twin Fall MFP is managed as Class I within the riparian area and is crossed for 0.6 mile. Figure 5.7-2 shows the viewshed of the Salmon Falls Creek AOI, Proposed Route, and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.7-3 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation. Because this segment of

Salmon Falls Creek is WSR eligible, this route would not be permitted to cross and an amendment would only be possible if the river segment was determined to be unsuitable for WSR designation.

Alternatives Considered – Several alternatives are analyzed in the EIS that avoid the sensitive resources affected by the Proposed Route. At the point where the Segment 9 of the Proposed Route crosses Salmon Falls Creek, Alternative 9B leaves the Proposed Route and continues northwest then north just east of Salmon Falls Creek. BLM portions of Alternative 9B follow the WWE Corridor to the northwest then north to within a few miles of the Snake River, before turning west and re-joining the Proposed Route several miles north of the Salmon Falls Creek AOI. If Alternative 9B is selected no VRM Class I managed lands would be affected near Salmon Falls. However, Alternative 9B intercepts VRM Class II further north, by the Snake River. Another alternative designated 9C would cross Salmon Falls Creek north of the eligible WSR segment in the vicinity of Balanced Rock County Park as well as avoid land managed for Class I and II objectives. The Proposed Route was selected by the Proponents based on the its preferred location by Twin Falls County due to concerns over residential and agricultural impacts from Alternative 9B.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The 15-mile-radius study area for the Salmon Falls Creek AOI is located in southern Idaho. Approximately 75 percent of the study area is in Twin Falls County, the remaining land in Owyhee County. The topography is mostly flat to rolling with much steeper slopes along the banks of Salmon Falls Creek and other drainages. Salmon Falls Creek traverses the study area from the southeast, north to its confluence with the Snake River at about mile 58.6 just north of the area. There are numerous farms and farmland in the northeastern part of this area with scattered farmland in other locations. The majority of the area is undeveloped. The small communities of Buhl and Filer are located along U.S. Route 30, in the northeast quadrant.

Attachment A, Figures J-1/TF-1a show existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1068. The land adjacent to the proposed alignment is very flat and grass covered. In such an area there is no topography or vegetation to screen views of the proposed line, thus skylining would occur. The steep topography along Salmon Falls Creek is not seen in the view from KOP 1068; however it is discussed for KOP 1067 in the EIS.

Conformance Analysis- Figure 5.7-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs and other features within the 15-mile radius study area. Attachment A, Figures J-1/TF-1b simulate landscape conditions showing for the proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1068.

Sensitive views of the sagebrush steppe and rolling grasslands west of Twin Falls adjacent to Salmon Falls Creek are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers such as recreational drivers, represented by views from KOPs 1068 and 1067, as well as the numerous residences on the east side of the creek. The flat to rolling landscape views from KOP 1068 exhibit little diversity in form, line, color, or texture. There is very little development visible this far from Twin Falls, Idaho. From this broad open vantage point it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts would not be successful in lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The flat plain and strong horizon line would be directly contrasted with the proposed transmission structures for

the proposed transmission line would be visible and dominant. Though not represented in KOP 1068, views in the Salmon Falls Creek Canyon are also an important scenic resource and located in an interesting and diverse canyon landscape. It is important to note that VRM Class I objectives in the MFP have been assigned from canyon rim to canyon rim to protect the viewshed of Salmon Falls Creek Canyon. Through micrositing, it is likely that towers could be set back from the canyon rim such that the visual intrusion within the canyon would be confined to the conductors. Nevertheless, any intrusion would be inconsistent with VRM Class I objectives.

There is a high degree of visual sensitivity in the crossing of Salmon Falls Creek due to its VRM Class I management objective, ACEC designation, and eligible Wild and Scenic River status. An amendment to land use would not be allowed unless this portion of Salmon Falls Creek was determined to be unsuitable for Wild and Scenic River designation. If this did occur, an amendment to the ACEC objectives and, an amendment to the RMP VRM objectives would be needed in order to build this route. It is recommended that if the Proposed Route is selected, and the above conditions are met, that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in the Twin Fall MFP portion of AOI J-1/TF-1. This would provide the most protection for adjacent management goals. If this route is selected it is recommended that the Proponents be required to microsite structures to minimize the visibility from within the Salmon Falls Creek canyon.

5.7.2 AOI TF-2 Rock Creek (Alternative 7I and Alternative 7J)

The Rock Creek AOI is located approximately 2 miles southeast of the town of Rock Creek and approximately 0.3 miles east of Rock Creek. The AOI consists of an isolated parcel of approximately 232 acres crossing 0.3 mile of VRM Class II land. At this location, 7I and 7J-C share the same route. These alternatives share the same route from the Populus Substation to MP 137.2 where Alternative 7J takes a more southern route in a northwest direction and Alternative 7I proceeds in a more northerly direction across Forest Service land. The routes join up again after 7J splits into two separate routes, with 7J-C proceeding to the northeast, meeting 7I approximately 18 miles from the end of their routes. Figure 5.7-4 shows the viewshed for the AOI, routes, and VRM classification. Figure 5.7-5 shows the location of the Rock Creek AOI, Alternative 7I, and VRM management classifications.

Alternatives Considered – Proposed Segment 7 and Alternative 7H would avoid this AOI. The proposed route would cross more pivot plot agriculture land than these alternatives. Alternative 7H would cross Sawtooth NF land as would Alternatives 7I and 7J. Alternative 7I is the route preferred by the Southern Idaho Task Force, a group of residents, irrigators, and county and state officials who oppose the Proposed Route which largely passes through private agricultural land. Alternative 7J was proposed by the Task Force as an alternate route for the west end of 7I.

Existing Landscape Conditions – Figure 5.7-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs and other features within the 15-mile radius study area. Landscape conditions north of Alternative 7I are flat with predominant agricultural land use. To the south the terrain rises, crossing both BLM-managed and NFS lands. The town of Rock Creek is approximately 2 miles northwest of the AOI. The Snake River flows east to west across the north-

northeast portion of the study area. Multiple canals cross the northern half of the study area with pivot-agriculture dominating the landscape. The middle portion of the study area is shrub-dominated BLM land with multiple south-to-north drainages, including Rock Creek, Dry Creek, and Dry Cottonwood Creek. This area is dominated by shrub-steppe habitat. The southern portion of the area contains Sawtooth NF land.

Attachment A, Figure TF-2a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 410. This view shows the shrub and agricultural land in the Rock Creek valley bottom and the view toward the AOI as the land rises with rocky outcrops and shrub-dominated hillsides. An existing transmission line runs south through the middle of the study area and then proceeds west-southwest, approximately 2 miles east of the AOI.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.7-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs and other features within the 15-mile radius study area. Figure TF-2b simulates landscape conditions showing Alternative 7I as viewed from KOP 410. It is apparent that mitigation and micrositing would not lower the visual impact to the surrounding area. The Project would be highly visible and would draw the attention of the casual viewer, thus not conforming to the VRM Class II management objectives. Crossing this isolated parcel in parallel to, but offset by 1,500 feet from, and existing 345-kV transmission line would be preferred over creating a new Greenfield route. If this alternative is selected, micrositing may reduce the distance across VRM Class II areas but could not feasibly avoid all parcels. If Alternative 7I or 7J were selected, an amendment changing the VRM classification for the VRM Class II area north of the section line to VRM Class III objectives (approximately 70 acres) is recommended for AOI TF-2 (see Figure 5.7-5).

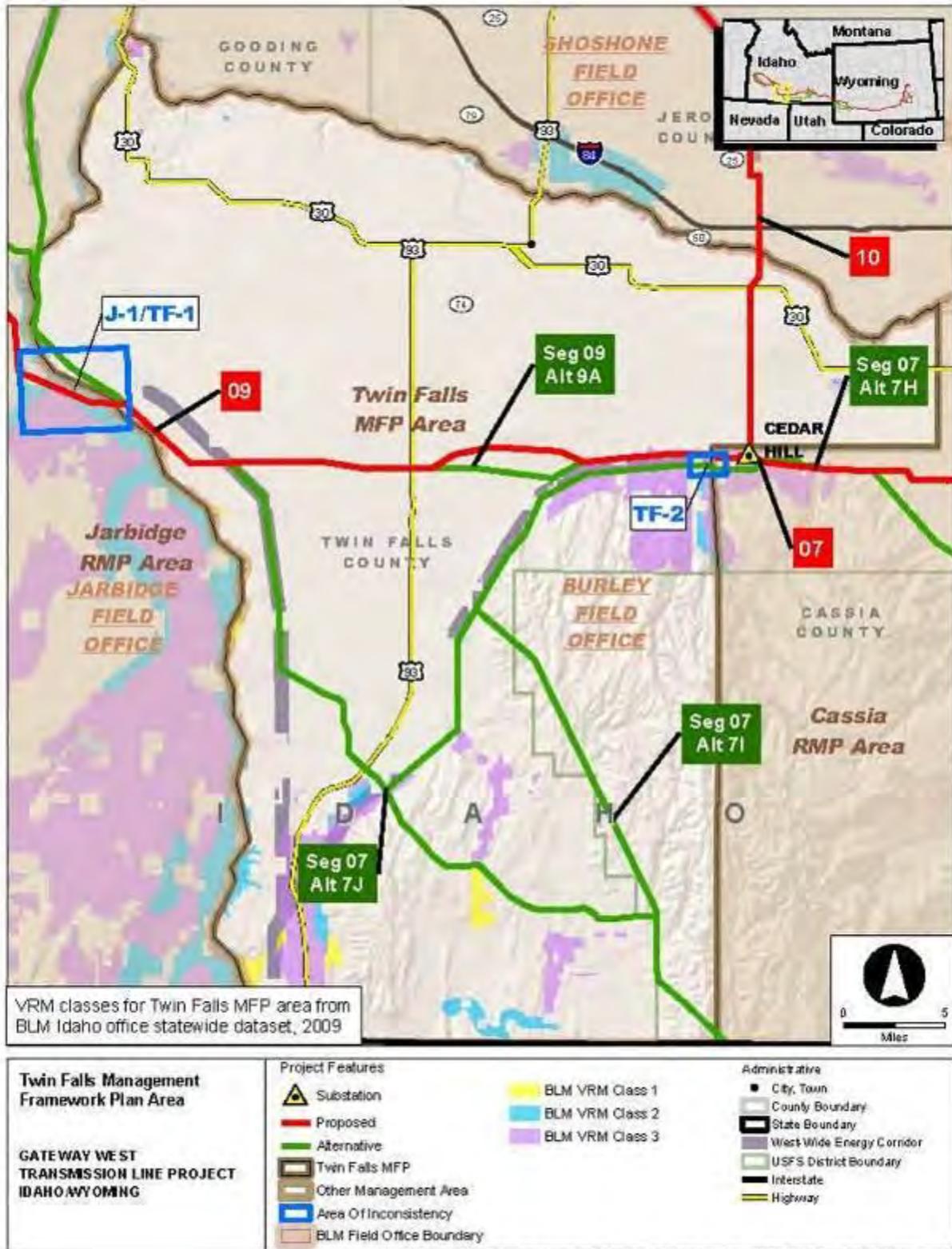


Figure 5.7-1. Twin Falls MFP Boundary Map

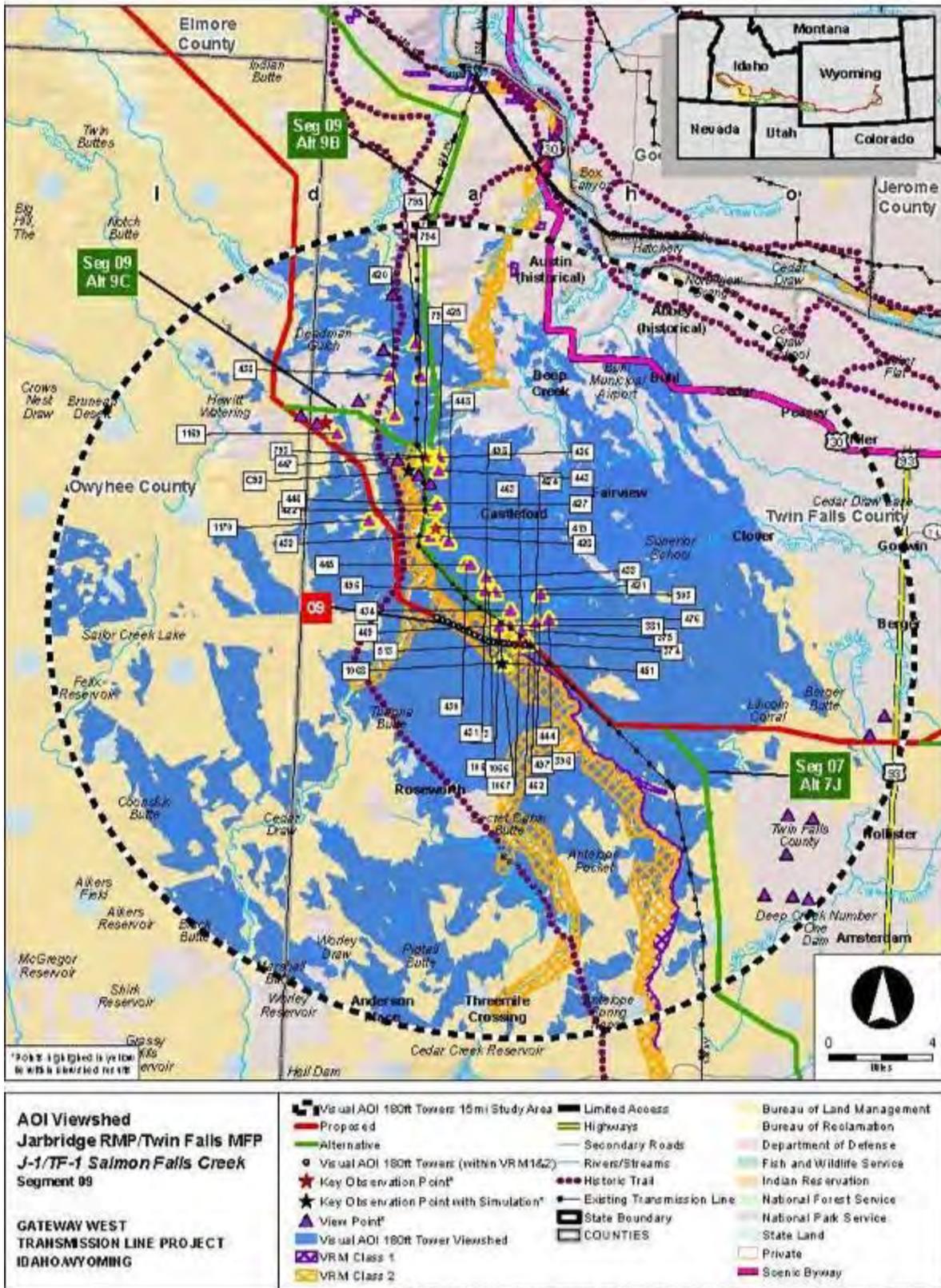


Figure 5.7-2. AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek Visual Analysis

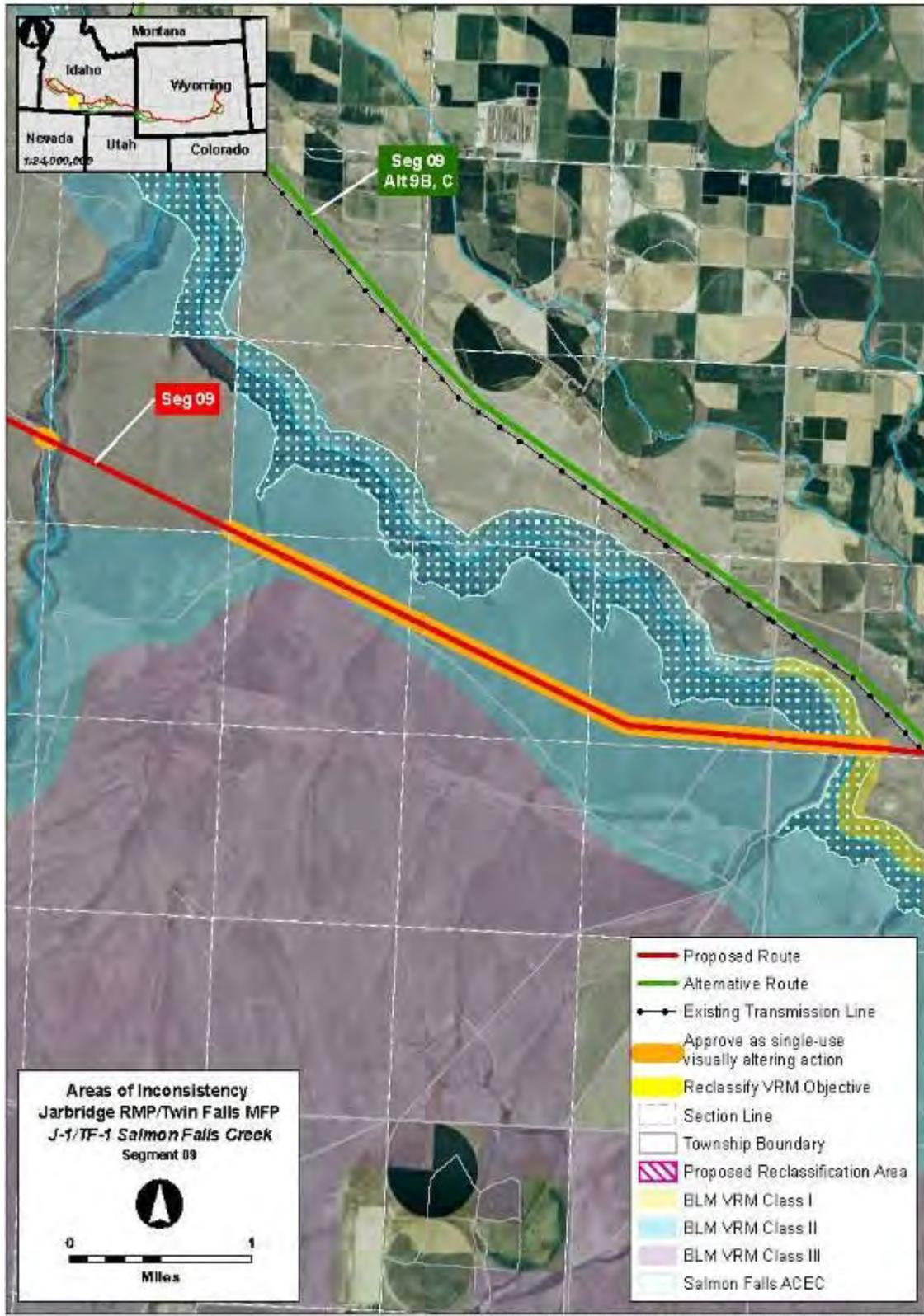


Figure 5.7-3. AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek Detailed Map

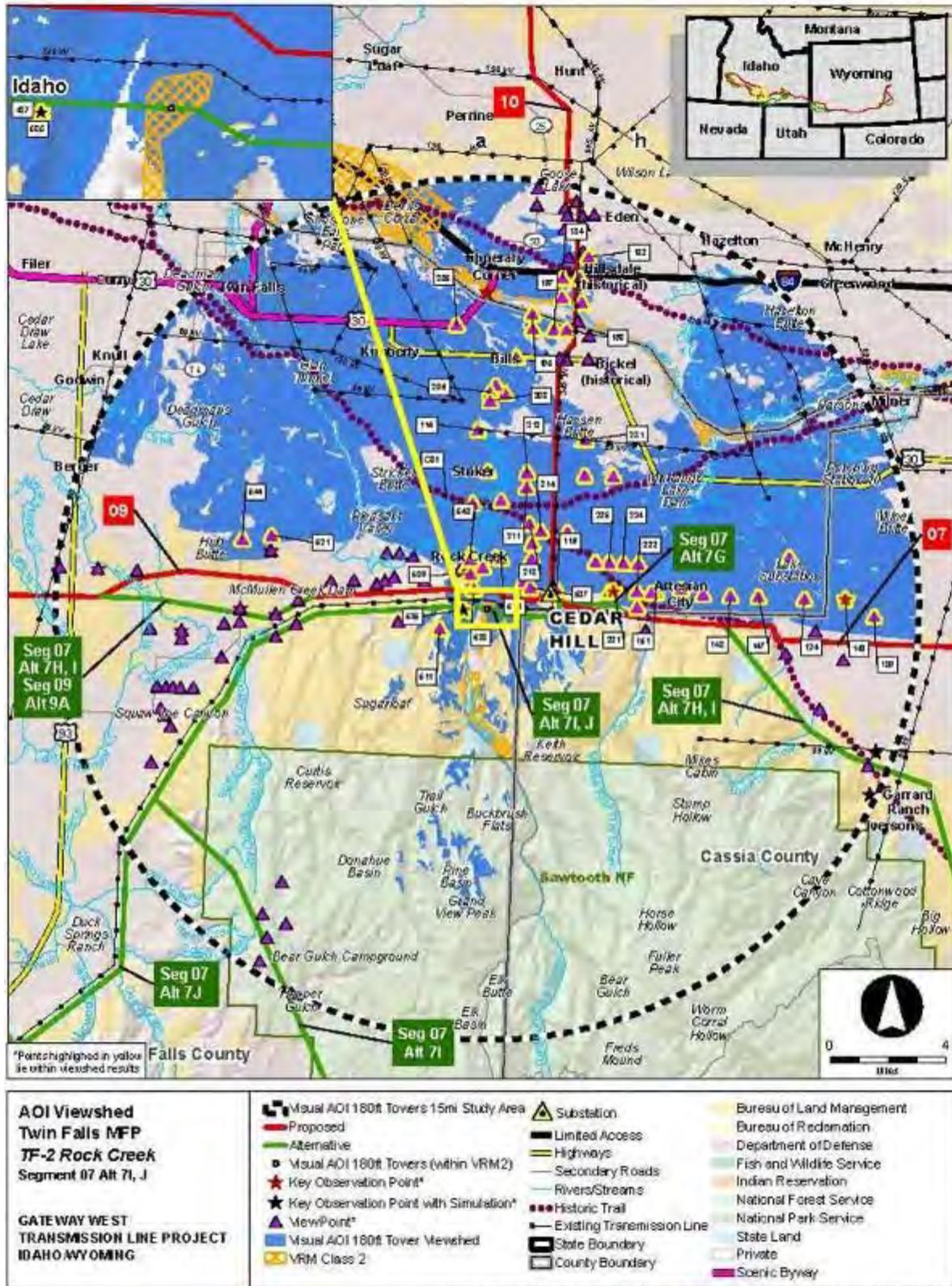


Figure 5.7-4. AOI TF-2 Rock Creek Visual Analysis

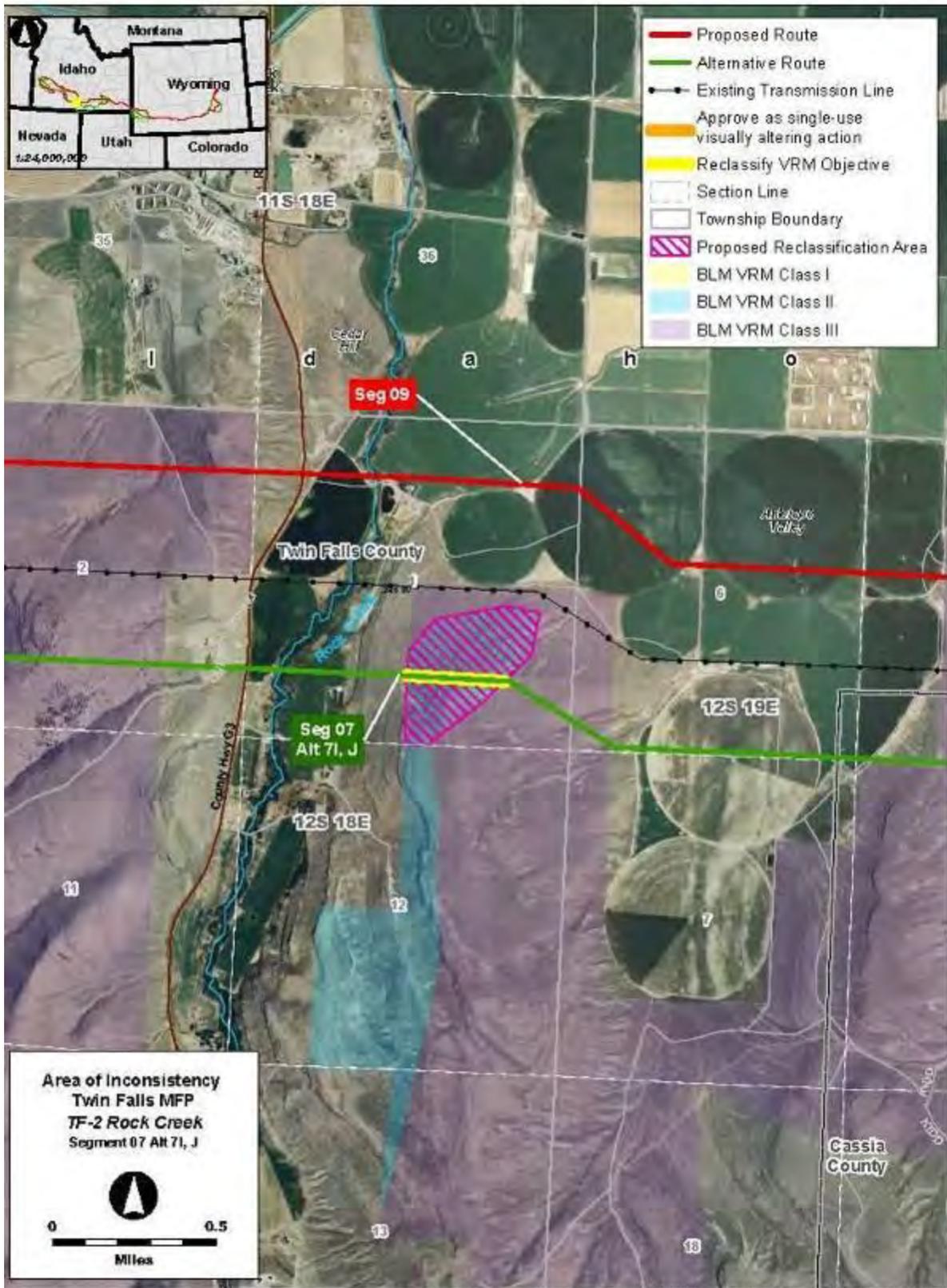


Figure 5.7-5. AOI TF-2 Rock Creek Detailed Map

5.8 Jarbidge RMP

The Jarbidge RMP (BLM 1887, 1989) provides direction for managing public lands under the jurisdiction of the Jarbidge FO in south-central Idaho. The Resource Area includes 2,100,519 acres of land in south-central Idaho and northern Nevada. Within this area, 81 percent are public lands administered by BLM in Elmore, Owyhee, and Twin Falls Counties in Idaho and Elko County, Nevada (see Figure 5.8-1). The Jarbidge RMP states:

the visual or scenic values of the public lands will be considered whenever any physical actions are proposed on BLM lands. The degree of alterations to the natural landscape will be guided by the criteria established for the four Visual Resource Management Classes as outlined in BLM 8400.

The Jarbidge RMP includes a map of VRM classified lands (Map 9). In addition, the RMP provides locations of utility lines and utility avoidance areas (Map 7). The Jarbidge RMP boundary is crossed by the proposed route and alternative routes for Segments 8 and 9. The existing land use plan is currently being revised. If a new plan is in effect prior to action on Gateway West, this visual analysis would be revised.

Segment Alternatives

The Segment 8 Proposed Route would be 131.0 miles long and connect the Midpoint Substation to the Hemingway Substation with a single-circuit 500-kV line. The route location was selected to follow the WWE corridor or existing transmission lines and avoid agricultural lands, especially in the southeastern portions. The Proposed Route is within the WWE corridor for 38.1 miles out of its total 131.0-mile length. Constraints on federal land include historic trails, wetlands, steep slopes, and raptor nests. In addition to the Proposed Route, five Route Alternatives were considered that have varying impacts on military training ranges and the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (SRBOP). Initially, routing in the northwestern portion of Segment 8 focused primarily on avoiding the SRBOP and the Orchard Training Area. Later siting studies identified opportunities to parallel the existing Summer Lake to Midpoint 500-kV transmission line through the SRBOP. Other siting constraints include existing and planned commercial and residential development, in the cities of Kuna and Melba.

Segment 9 of the Proposed Route would be a 161.7-mile-long 500-kV single-circuit line that would connect the proposed Cedar Hill Substation with the Hemingway Substation. Primary siting considerations in the eastern portion of this segment were avoidance of irrigated farmland, dairy operations, and scattered residential development; avoiding interference with the Jarbidge Military Operating Area; making use of the WWE corridor; and minimizing impacts to visual resources. In the western portion, following the WWE corridor was a primary objective, with other concerns such as minimizing impact to Bruneau Dunes State Park and scenic qualities associated with the Bruneau River, avoiding conflicts with the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Military Operating Area, and crossing the SRBOP. For the entire line segment, placement of the transmission line on public land versus private land was an important issue.

Six VRM Class I and II areas in the Jarbidge RMP would be affected by the Proposed Route and Route Alternatives. The presence of a transmission line in these landscapes

would not meet VRM Class I or II objectives. As a result, BLM action would be necessary to modify the visual classifications to be consistent with the RMP. AOI J-1/TF-1 could not be amended unless the segment of Salmon Falls Creek crossed by the Proposed Route was determined to be unsuitable for WSR designation, because this portion of the alignment is dependent on the portion that would cross the WSR. The analysis of the AOI is presented below for informational purposes. The AOIs are described in Sections 5.8.1 through 5.8.6, below.

5.8.1 AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek (Proposed Route – Segment 9)

The Salmon Falls Creek AOI is located approximately 4 miles south of Castleford, Idaho, in Twin Falls County. The AOI overlaps both the Twin Falls MFP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. The Proposed Route for Segment 9 proceeds from the proposed Cedar Hill Substation west and north avoiding areas of irrigated agriculture. After crossing SR 93, the route proceeds west until near the east side of Salmon Falls Creek, then turns northwest to parallel the east side of Salmon Falls Creek adjacent to an existing 138-kV transmission line for about 4.4 miles before turning west again and crossing the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC at Lily Grade just north of the Salmon Falls Creek WSA but still part of an ACEC and eligible WSR segment. The portion of the AOI within the Twin Falls MFP is managed as Class I within the riparian area and is crossed for 0.6 mile. Figure 5.8-2 shows the viewshed of the Salmon Falls Creek AOI, Proposed Route, and VRM management classifications. The portion of the AOI within the Jarbidge RMP is managed as Class II and is crossed at two locations for a total distance of 3.7 miles. Crossing the VRM Class II lands within the Jarbidge management area with the current alignment would require that the WSR-eligible segment of Salmon Falls Creek be crossed; therefore, the BLM cannot amend the land use plan to accommodate the Project. The following analyses are provided for informational purposes.

Alternatives Considered – Several alternatives are analyzed in the Draft EIS that avoid the sensitive resources affected by the Proposed Route. At the point where the Proposed Route crosses Salmon Falls Creek, Alternative 9B leaves the Proposed Route and continues northwest then north just east of Salmon Falls Creek. BLM portions of Alternative 9B follow the WWE corridor to the northwest then north to within a few miles of the Snake River, before turning west and re-joining the Proposed Route several miles north of the Salmon Falls Creek AOI. If Alternative 9B is selected, no BLM-managed lands classified as VRM Class I would be affected near Salmon Falls. However, Alternative 9B intercepts BLM-managed lands classified as VRM Class II farther north, by the Snake River. Another alternative, Alternative 9C, would cross Salmon Falls Creek north of the WSR-eligible segment in the vicinity of Balanced Rock County Park as well as avoid land managed for Class I and II objectives. The Proponents state that they prefer the Proposed Route because of Twin Falls County's concerns over how Alternative 9B would impact residential and agricultural areas.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The study area for the Salmon Falls Creek AOI is located in southern Idaho, with approximately 75 percent of the land area in Twin Falls County and the remainder in Owyhee County. Generally the topography is flat to rolling, with much steeper slopes along the banks of Salmon Falls Creek and other drainages. Salmon Falls Creek traverses the study area from the southeast to north up to its confluence with the Snake River at about milepost 58.6 just north of the study area.

There are considerable farms and farmland in northeastern part of this area and at several smaller scattered locations. The large majority of the area is undeveloped; however, there are communities like Buhl and Filer along U.S. Route 30, the major road in the area located in the northeast quadrant.

Attachment A, Figure J-1/TF-1a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1068. The land in close proximity to the alignment is very flat and grass covered. In such an area there is no topography or vegetation to screen views of the proposed line and therefore skylining will occur. Although not seen in the view from KOP 1068, KOP 1067 in the EIS documents the steep topography along Salmon Falls Creek.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.8-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area. Attachment A, Figure J-1/TF-1b simulates landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1068.

Sensitive views of the sagebrush steppe and rolling grasslands west of Twin Falls adjacent to Salmon Falls Creek are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers such as recreational drivers at KOPs 1068 and 1067 as well as the numerous residences on the east side of the creek. The flat to rolling landscape views from KOP 1068 exhibit little diversity in form, line, color, or texture as well as few man-made features visible this far from Twin Falls, Idaho. Views in the Salmon Falls Creek Canyon are interesting and diverse but are not apparent from KOP 1068. From this broad open vantage point it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts would not be successful in lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The flat plain and strong horizon would be directly contrasted with the transmission structures for the proposed transmission line, which would be visible and dominant. However, it is important to note that VRM Class I objectives in the Twin Falls MFP have been assigned from canyon rim to canyon rim to protect the viewshed. Through micrositing, it is likely that towers could be set back from the canyon rim such that the visual intrusion within the canyon would be confined to the conductors. Nevertheless, any intrusion would be inconsistent with VRM Class I objectives.

An amendment would be needed if the Proposed Route is selected because of the visual sensitivity of crossing Salmon Falls Creek due to its VRM Class II management objective, ACEC designation, and WSR-eligible status. Unless this river segment is determined to be unsuitable for WSA designation, however, crossing of the canyon would not be a feasible option. If management regulations would permit an amendment to this area, it is recommended that the Project be allowed as a visually altering action without changing the VRM classification in the Jarbidge RMP portion of AOI J-1/TF-1. Figure 5.8-3 shows the location of the Salmon Falls Creek AOI, Proposed Route, and amendment management recommendation that would apply if this segment of Salmon Falls Creek is determined to be unsuitable for WSR designation.

This would provide the most protection for adjacent management goals. If this route is selected, it is recommended that the Proponents be required to microsite structures to minimize the visibility from within the canyon.

5.8.2 AOI J-2 Saylor Creek (Proposed Route – Segment 9)

The Proposed Route for Segment 9 enters the SRBOP east of the Saylor Creek AOI (milepost 88.0). The route proceeds to the west, passing through the northern edge of the Saylor Creek Air Force Range restricted area and to the south of Bruneau Dunes State Park. The Jarbidge RMP designates the area between Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Bruneau Dunes State Park as an area of utility avoidance. However, consultation between representatives of the BLM, U.S. Air Force, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Proponents has determined that the location of the Proposed Route within the restricted Military Operating Area and just to the south of Bruneau Dunes State Park is acceptable. From this point, the Proposed Route proceeds generally southwest across the Bruneau River Valley. Constraints in this portion of Segment 9 include minimizing the distance across the SRBOP and Saylor Creek Air Force Range, and avoiding Bruneau Dunes State Park.

The Saylor Creek AOI is located about 4 miles south of the Snake River, approximately 18 miles south of Mountain Home, Owyhee County, Idaho. The AOI is less than 1 mile west of the Elmore County/Owyhee County boundary. As the route proceeds west, constrained on the south by the Saylor Creek Range Air Force restricted area and on the north by Bruneau Dunes State Park, it crosses approximately 1.7 miles of VRM Class II area located in a low interval of hills within the WWE corridor. Figure 5.8-4 shows the viewshed of the Saylor Creek AOI, the location of the Proposed Route, and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.8-6 shows the AOI, route, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – The Saylor Creek AOI is located in a portion of the Project without a feasible alternative. There are no alternatives to Segment 9 of the Proposed Route that would avoid the Saylor Creek AOI. The route is fixed in its current location due to the short distance between the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Bruneau Dunes State Park. Farther south, the Bruneau Canyon and continuous VRM Class I Management Areas extend south into Nevada. The location of this route is further restricted to the north by the Snake River. An important routing consideration is that the Proposed Route in this location is within the WWE corridor.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The major water feature within the 15-mile-radius area of Saylor Creek AOI is the Snake River, which passes east to west through the northern half of this area. Topography is mostly flat to rolling. More severe topography exists along the river and other drainages, especially north of Glens Ferry. There are extensive areas of farmland and farms along the Snake River in the northwest, southeast (Deadman Flat), and other scattered locations. Interstate 84 is the major highway in the vicinity of this AOI and traverses the area from northwest to southeast. Development in the area, such as Hammett and Glens Ferry, is found primarily along Interstate 84. There are a number of recreation facilities along the Snake River, such as Three Island Crossing State Park. Numerous transmission lines occur in the northeast.

Attachment A, Figure J-2a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 372. The land is flat to gently sloping and grass-covered. There is no topography or vegetation to screen views of the proposed line and skylining would be unavoidable. There is steep

topography along a canyon designated VRM Class II outside of the view from KOP 372. Views of this steep topography can be seen from KOP 816 (see Figure 5.8-5).

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.8-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to assess the consistency of the proposed transmission line facilities with the existing VRM Class II area. Attachment A, Figure J-2b simulates landscape conditions showing for the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 372.

KOPs 372 and 389 represent sensitive residential viewers along the Snake River Plain. The existing views from these residences are mostly of agricultural lands with few man-made elements; however, the view from KOP 816 has distinguishing canyon features. KOP 816 exhibits diversity in form, line, color, and texture that would result in moderate levels of contrast with the proposed transmission facilities along Segment 9. The views from KOP 816 are interrupted by a wind farm in the middleground to background viewing distance zone. Views of the Snake River are not apparent from these particular KOPs. From more elevated viewing locations, it is apparent that screening and other mitigation efforts would not mitigate impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The alignment would need to span the canyon, making it highly visible to sensitive viewers and drawing the attention of the casual observer from over a mile away, which would not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

The Proposed Route would cross lands managed for VRM Class II objectives within a WWE corridor. The VRM Class II designation is not consistent with an area designated as the WWE corridor; therefore, it is recommended that, if this route is selected, the area within the WWE Corridor be designated VRM Class III (approximately 667 acres). It is further recommended that the Proponents be required to microsite structures to minimize the visibility from within the canyon.

5.8.3 AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail (Alternative 9D/9G)

The South Oregon Trail AOI is located north and south of the Snake River beginning at the C.J. Strike Reservoir dam. This AOI overlaps both the SRBOP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. Alternatives 9D and 9G share the same alignment in this area. Alternative 9D/9G leaves the Proposed Route near Bruneau, Idaho, heading northwest for about 6 miles before intercepting the C.J. Strike Reservoir, formed at the junction of the Bruneau River and the Snake River. Land surrounding the reservoir has been designated as VRM Class II due to its scenic qualities and close proximity to the Oregon NHT. Alternative 9D/9G turns west, paralleling the Oregon NHT and crossing the Narrows portion of the Bruneau Arm of C.J. Strike Reservoir. Alternative 9D/9G continues west on the south side of the reservoir crossing back to the north side of the Snake River approximately one-half mile downstream from C.J. Strike Dam. Except for minor detours to avoid agricultural land, the route continues west from the dam then turns to the northwest, diverging into two different routes before crossing the SRBOP before and rejoining the Proposed Route east of Hemingway Substation. Although not located within a WWE corridor, Alternative 9D follows existing transmission lines for approximately 37 miles.

The portion of the AOI within the Jarbidge RMP crosses 0.3 miles of BLM land managed for VRM Class II objectives. Figure 5.8-7 shows the viewshed of the South Oregon Trail

AOI, Alternative 9D, and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.8-8 shows the AOI, Routes, and amendment management recommendation.

Alternatives Considered – Three alternative routes in the western portion of Segment 9 are analyzed in the EIS as a means of connecting the Cedar Hill and Hemingway Substations. The Proposed Route is largely within the WWE corridor but crosses more private land than the alternatives. Alternative 9D was identified by the Owyhee County task force and recommended by Owyhee County to avoid private land and maximize the use of public land. Alternative 9E was also identified by the task force but is less preferred than Alternative 9D. Alternative 9F follows the same route as 9D north of C.J. Strike Reservoir, taking a southern route for the first part of the route in order to avoid the Cove non-motorized zone. Alternative 9G follows the same route as alternative 9D through this AOI. Alternative 9H follows the same route as 9F through this area and diverges from the joint route south of where 9D crosses the SRBOP. No VRM Class I or Class II areas are crossed by this portion of the Proposed Route or Alternative 9E.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the South Oregon Trail AOI. The river crosses the middle of the area from west to east and leaves the study area in the vicinity of Indian Cove. C.J. Strike Reservoir is located at the northern end of the Bruneau Valley in the center of the area. The topography is generally flat to rolling with numerous drainages. Although much of the area is undeveloped, there are large areas of farms and farmland along the Snake River, south of Mountain Home, and in other locations such as the Bruneau Valley and Twentymile Flat. SR 78 is the major road and generally follows the Snake River east to west. SR 51 extends north to south through the area. There are a number of communities along the local highways and Snake River including Grandview and Bruneau. Mountain Home Air Force Base is located in the northeast portion of the study area. Numerous transmission lines cross this area. In addition to the highways and communities, other potential viewing areas include recreation areas such as Bruneau Dunes State Park, the SRBOP, and historic sites and trails.

Attachment A, Figure AOI BOP-1/J-3a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1156. The area has a rolling topography that slopes toward the reservoir. An existing wood pole H-frame transmission line is evident in the view. More distant views toward the north are characterized by water and bluffs.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.8.7 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Attachment A, Figure BOP-1/J-3b simulates landscape conditions showing for Alternative 9D/9G as viewed from KOP 1156.

Scenic views of the C.J. Strike Reservoir and the surrounding Snake River Plain are available to sensitive recreational viewers at nearby locations including KOPs 1154, and 1156, and visitors to the Oregon NHT (KOP 1155). The views of the undulating to rocky terrain from these viewpoints exhibit diversity in form, line, and texture with numerous man-made features such as high voltage transmission lines and a dam. From these KOPs it is apparent that Alternative 9D/9G of the proposed Project would be visible in the foreground and middle ground, sometimes skylined and at other times, backdropped. It would often be seen in conjunction with the existing wood pole H-frame line. Screening and other mitigation efforts would be moderately successful at lowering impacts to scenic

resources in the surrounding area. The undulating and rugged terrain with mottled and diverse vegetation and expansive waters of the reservoir would be moderately contrasted by an additional set of structures. These additions would draw the attention of the casual observer in certain portions of the area; represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture of the surrounding landscape; and thus would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. The Boise District office has stated that the alignment to the east and north of the river within the VRM Class II area would be buffered by topography and thus would not attract the attention of the casual observer. It appears that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor and adjacent landscapes. A high-voltage transmission line would not be consistent with the VRM Class II management goals for those VRM Class II areas west of the Snake River. It is recommended that, if Alternative 9D is selected, 1,203.6 acres of VRM Class II area associated with the route be reclassified to VRM Class III for the Jarbidge RMP portion of AOI BOP-1/J-3 (see Figure 5.8-8).

5.8.4 AOI J-4 Oregon Trail (Alternative 8A, Alternative 9B)

The Oregon Trail AOI is located approximately 13 miles east and slightly north of Hagerman, Idaho. Alternatives 8A and 9B pass through the Oregon Trail AOI. These alternatives pass less than 1 mile from each other. Both alternatives were identified as potential routes because they follow the WWE corridor for much of their lengths.

From the Snake River, Alternative 8A proceeds to the west, following the WWE corridor and existing transmission lines for about 8 miles, before turning northwest, crossing the Snake River again, and joining the Segment 8 Proposed Route. Four parcels totaling 6.4 miles of VRM Class I–managed area is crossed by Alternative 8A both north and south of the river crossing. Several segments of the Oregon NHT crisscross through this area along the river. The town of Glens Ferry, located just west of the Segment 8A river crossing, was an important river crossing point for travelers on the Oregon NHT. Many historic trail segments converge on the Snake River in this area. The Three Mile Island State Park, which commemorates the historic river crossing, is located at Glens Ferry and is within the vicinity of Alternative 8A. Figures 5.8-9 and 5.8-11 show the viewshed of the South Oregon Trail AOI, the location of Alternative 8A and Alternative 9B, and the VRM management classifications. Figures 5.8-10 and 5.8-12 show the AOI, routes, and amendment management recommendations.

Alternative 9B proceeds from the southeast toward the northwest until it approaches the Snake River just south of Alternative 8A, where it turns west to join the Segment 9 Proposed Route about 5 miles west of the AOI. Alternative 9B crosses Deer Gulch, a 1.4-mile length of VRM Class I land, south of the Snake River. Figure 5.8-10 shows the location of Alternative 9B.

Alternatives Considered – Proposed Segment 8 does not cross the Snake River and would not affect the Oregon Trail AOI or other VRM Class I–managed areas in the vicinity of the Snake River. There is no local change that could be made to Alternative 8A that would keep it in the WWE corridor without also crossing VRM Class I or Class II Management Areas. The presence of many historic trail segments converging at the Glens Ferry Crossing would make it very difficult to avoid visual impacts to historic trails.

Segment 9B is sited within a WWE corridor and crosses 1.6 miles of VRM Class I land. It would be feasible to move the alignment south to avoid the Class I area but that would be inconsistent with maximizing use of the WWE corridor.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile area surrounding the Oregon Trail AOI. It crosses the area from east to west in a circuitous path and leaves the study area in the vicinity of Hagerman WMA. The flat to rolling topography on both sides of the river is cut by numerous drainages; many with steep, canyon-like walls. The northern part of the area is occupied by steep terrain of the Mount Bennett Hills. A large part of the study area is undeveloped; however there is some agriculture along the Snake River and in other locations such as Indian Cove, Deadman Flat, and Black Mesa. Interstate 84 passes southeast and then east through the study area. A number of communities including Hammett, Glens Ferry, King Hill, Bliss, and Hagerman occur along local highways and the Snake River. Numerous transmission lines cross this area northwest to southeast. Potentially sensitive viewing includes highways, communities, historic sites and trails, and recreation areas such as Three Island Crossing State Park, and Hagerman WMA.

Attachment A, Figure J-4a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 810. The landscape is flat to hilly grassland. Although this KOP is oriented toward Alternative 9B, it is representative of landscape conditions along Alternative 8A.

Conformance Analysis – Figures 5.8-9 (8A) and 5.8-11 (9B) show the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area. Attachment A, Figure J-4b simulates landscape conditions showing for the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 810.

Scenic views affected by Alternative 8A include Rosevear Gulch and Black Mesa south of Glens Ferry, which are important to residential and recreational viewers (KOPs 788, 789, 813, and 815). These sensitive viewers are residents as well as recreational viewers on the Oregon NHT. The undulating terrain viewed from these KOPs exhibits diversity in form, line, and texture with residential developments and man-made features such as transmission lines in view. From these vantage points it is apparent that Alternative 8A of the proposed Project would be skylined in some instances and partially screened or backdropped in other locations. All of these views include existing man-made developments and, at such distances, would represent a low level of contrast. Views from KOP 815 exhibit somewhat pristine viewing conditions and a higher level of variety in form, line, and texture other than an existing wood-pole H-frame transmission line in the foreground and middleground. The addition of a set of taller lattice transmission structures would increase the contrast with the existing landscape, which would draw more attention from a casual observer and thus not conform to VRM Class I objectives. It is recommended that if Alternative 8A is selected, the area managed with VRM Class I objectives, impacted by the transmission line, be reclassified to conform to VRM Class III objectives.

Scenic views affected by Alternative 9B include Big Pilgrim Gulch and Twenty Mile Butte, south of the Snake River. These views are important to recreational viewers and visitors to the Oregon NHT represented by KOPs C95, 810, 811, and 814. The views of undulating to rocky terrain from KOPs 810 and 811 display some diversity in form, line,

and texture with very few man-made features. KOP 814 has a more pristine view except for a high-voltage steel lattice structure. From these KOPs it is apparent that Alternative 9B would be moderately visible and that screening and other mitigation efforts would not sufficiently lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The additional set of structures and access roads would draw the attention of the casual observer and thus not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It is recommended that if Alternative 9B is selected, the area managed with VRM Class I objectives, impacted by the transmission line, be reclassified to conform to VRM Class III objectives.

5.8.5 AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail (Proposed Route – Segment 8)

The North Oregon Trail AOI is located about 4 miles north of Glens Ferry, Idaho. From Midpoint Substation, the Segment 8 Proposed Route proceeds to the west-northwest following existing transmission lines. As the route approaches King Hill Creek, approximately 3.2 miles of VRM Class I land is crossed, just south of Blair Trail Reservoir. Visually sensitive features in this area include views of Bennett Mountain to the north, Kings Crown to the east, and several Oregon NHT segments. Figure 5.8-13 shows the viewshed of the North Oregon Trail AOI, the location of the Proposed Route and Alternatives, historic trails and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.8-14 shows the AOI and amendment management recommendations.

Alternatives Considered – There are no alternatives in this vicinity that would completely avoid VRM Class I and II land, due to the presence of scenic local features, historic trails, and the Snake River Canyon. The Snake River prevents the Proposed Route from being sited in a more southerly location. Several Segment 8 alternatives were reviewed in locations north of the Proposed Route; however, none of these alternatives were selected due to even greater impacts to sensitive visual resources, steep terrain, and SRMAs and ACECs. The nearest feasible alternative is Alternative 8A, described in Section 5.8.5.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the North Oregon Trail AOI. It crosses the southern half of the area from east to west and leaves the study area just east of the community of Mountain Home. The flat to rolling topography on both sides of the river is cut by numerous drainages, many with steep canyon like walls. The northern part of the area is occupied by steep terrain of the Bennett Hills. Although much of the area is undeveloped, there are large areas of farms and farmland along the Snake River and in other locations such as Indian Cove, Deadman Flat, Black Mesa, and Pasadena Valley. Interstate 84 crosses southeast and then east through the study area. Communities such as Hammett, Glens Ferry, and King Hill are located along local highways and the Snake River. Numerous transmission lines cross northwest to southeast through this area. Potential viewing areas include highways, communities, historic sites and trails, and recreation areas such as Three Island Crossing State Park..

Attachment A, Figure J-5a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1350. The land in close proximity to the alignment is very flat and grass-covered. In such an area there is no topography or vegetation to screen views of the proposed line and thus skylining would occur.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.8-13 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Attachment A, Figure J-5b simulates landscape conditions showing for the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1350.

Scenic views of Kings Crown along the foothills of Bennett Mountain are represented by KOPs 815, 1209, and 1210. KOPs 1209 and 1210 represent local residents whereas KOP 815 represents recreational viewers on the Oregon NHT. The views of the undulating terrain adjacent to these viewpoints exhibit some diversity in form, line, and texture and include numerous man-made features. KOP 815 has a view of a high-voltage transmission line. KOPs 1209 and 1210 have views of numerous high-voltage transmission lines and a wind farm. From these KOPs, Segment 8 of the proposed Project would be moderately visible due to presence of existing transmission lines and structures. Screening and other mitigation efforts would not lower impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The additional set of transmission structures and access roads would be in contrast with the landscape topography, would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture, which would not conform to VRM Class I objectives. It is recommended that, if Alternative 8 is selected, the area now managed to conform to VRM Class I objectives, impacted by the transmission line, be reclassified to be managed by VRM Class III objectives (see Figure 5.8-14).

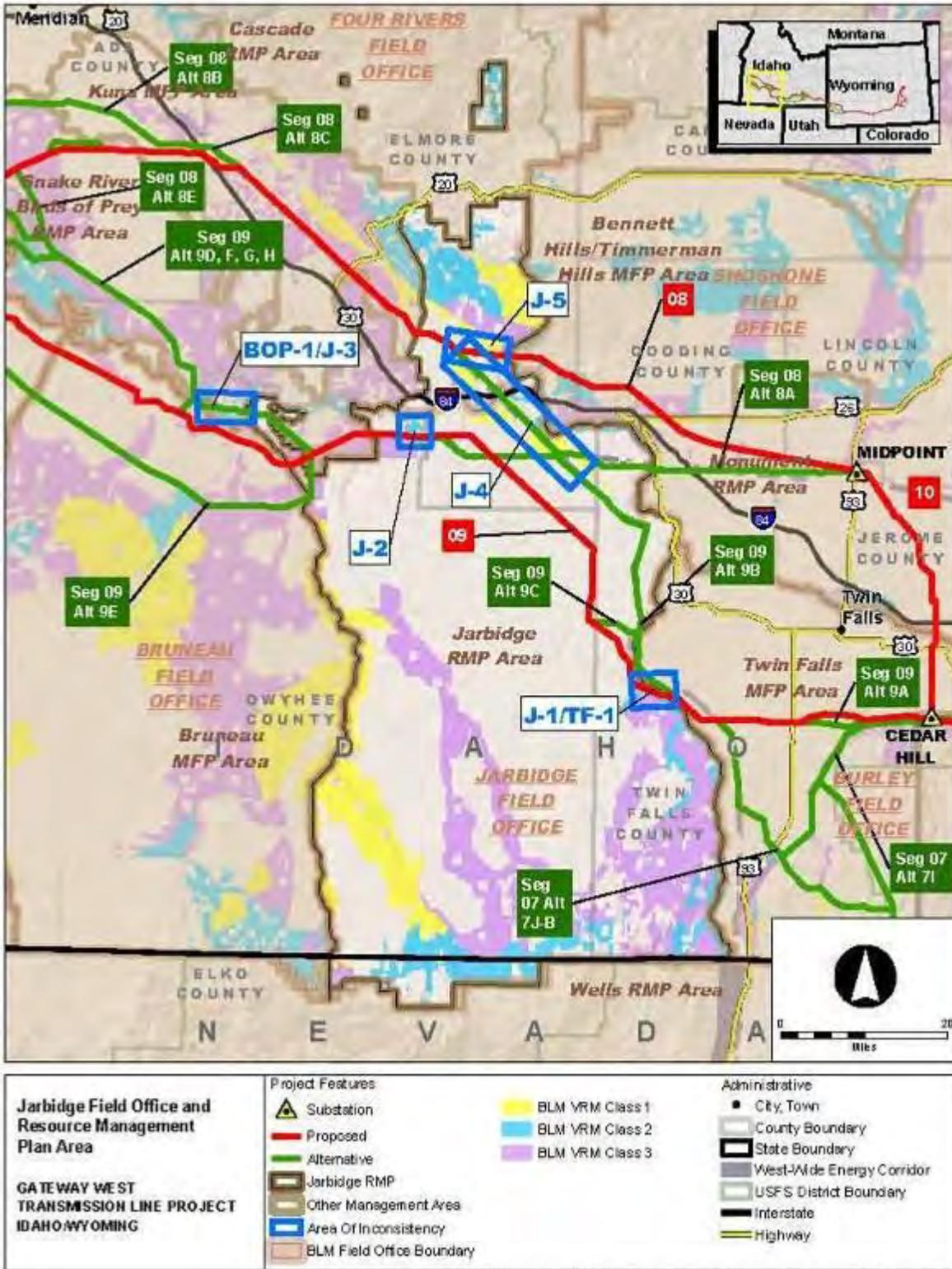


Figure 5.8-1. Jarbidge RMP Boundary Map

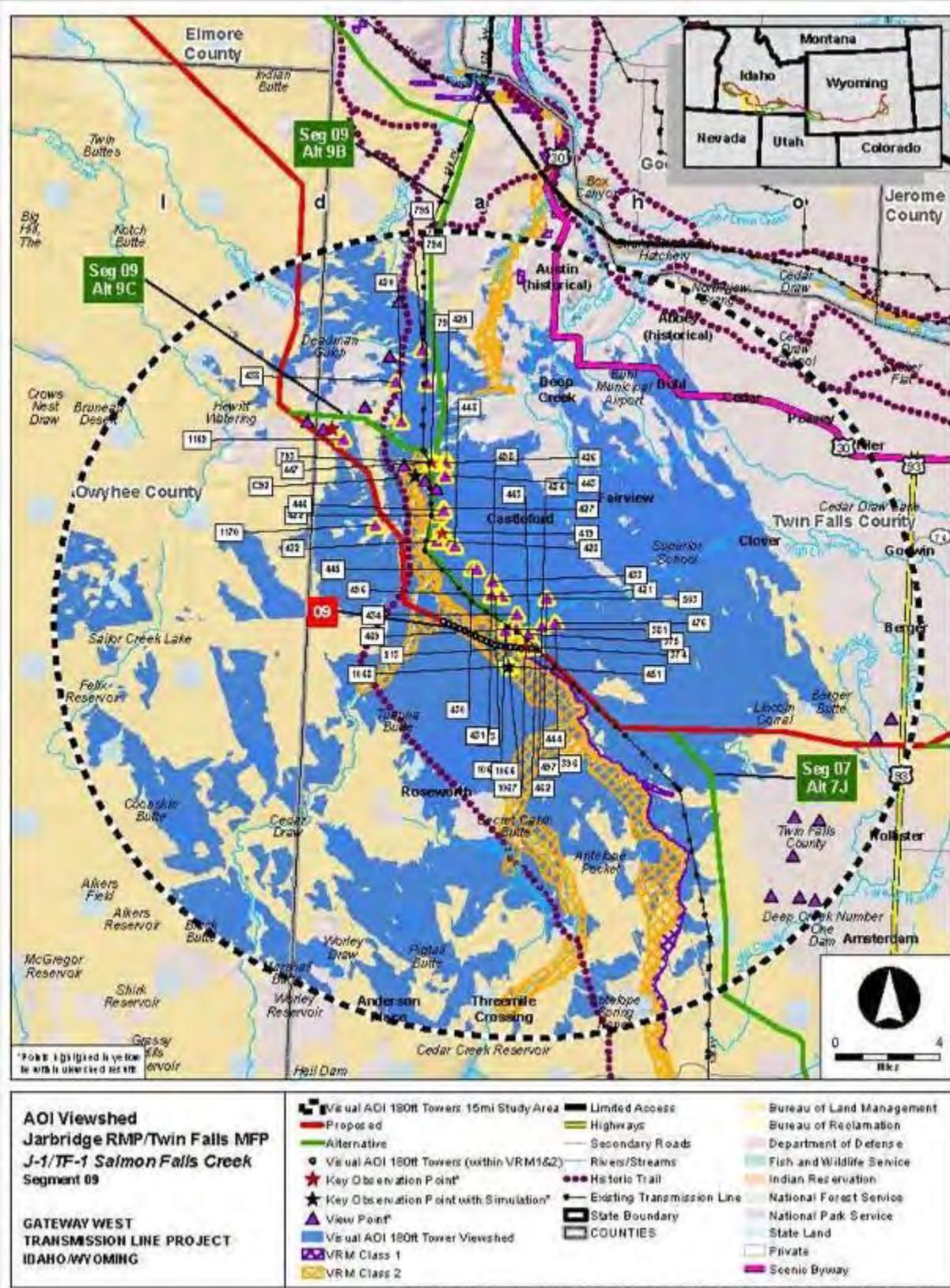


Figure 5.8-2. AOI J-1/TF-2 Salmon Falls Creek AOI Visual Analysis

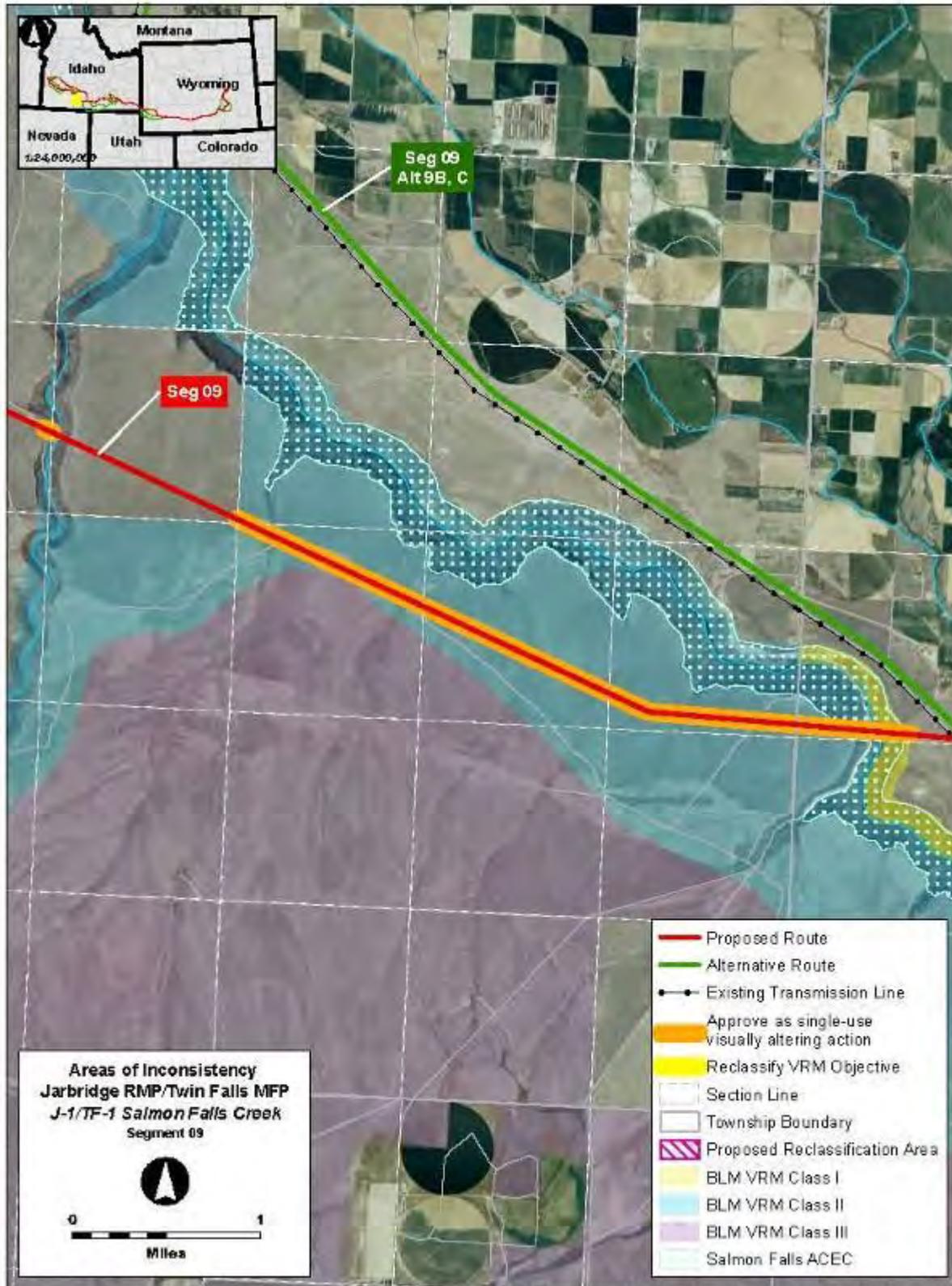


Figure 5.8-3. AOI J-1/TF-1 Salmon Falls Creek AOI Detailed Map

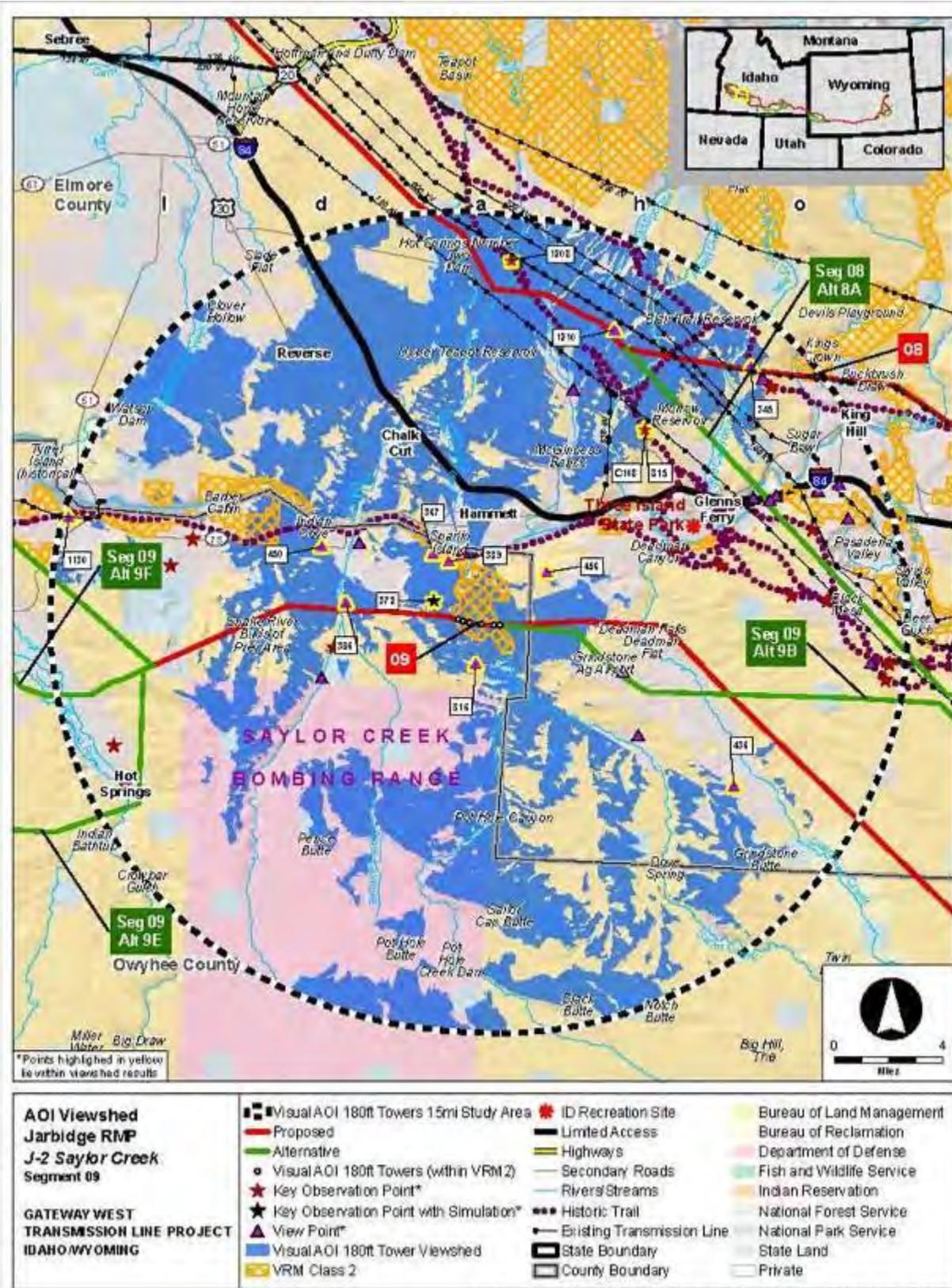


Figure 5.8-4. AOI J-2 Saylor Creek AOI Visual Analysis

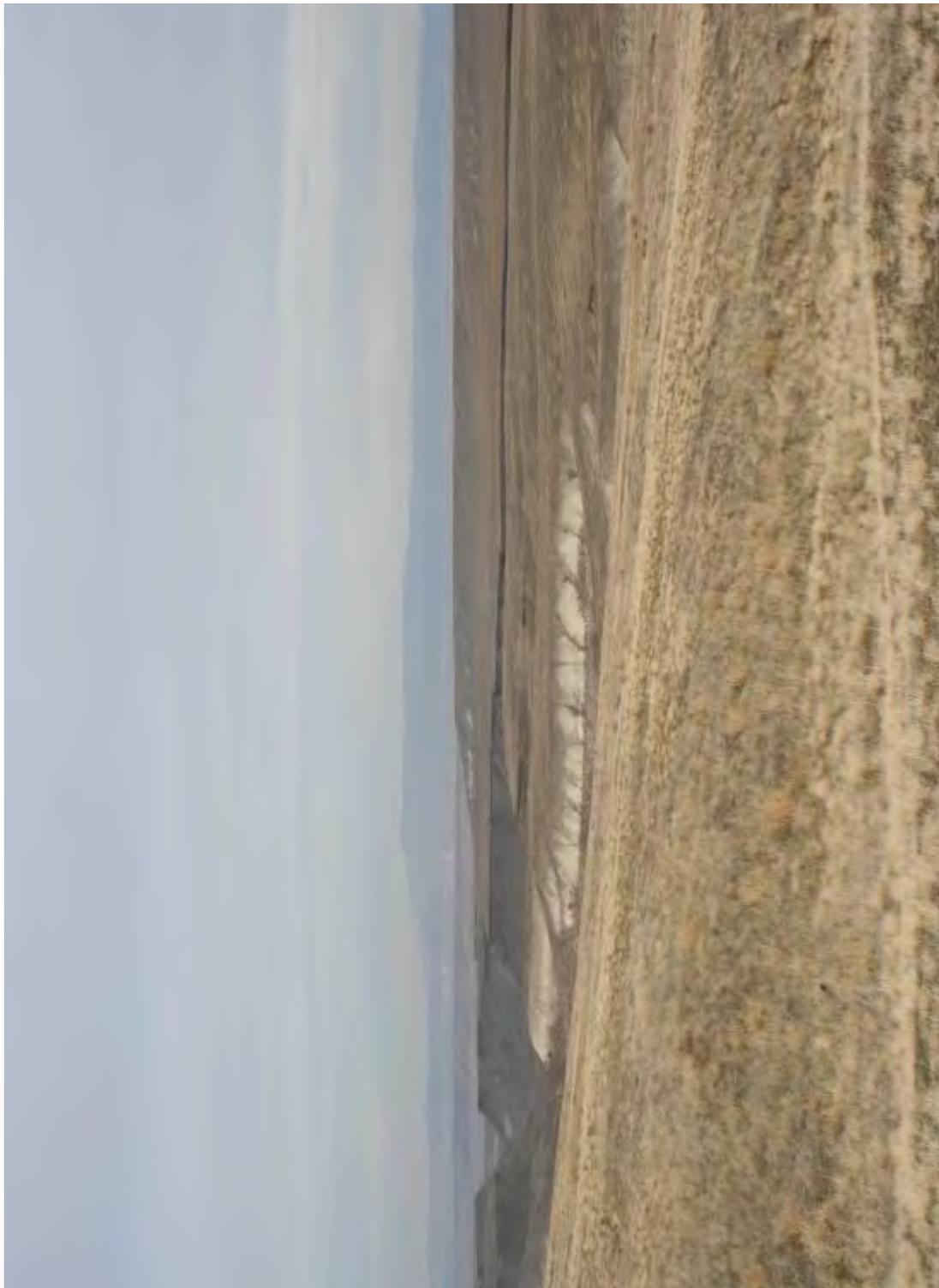


Figure 5.8-5. View from KOP 816 (AOI J-2)

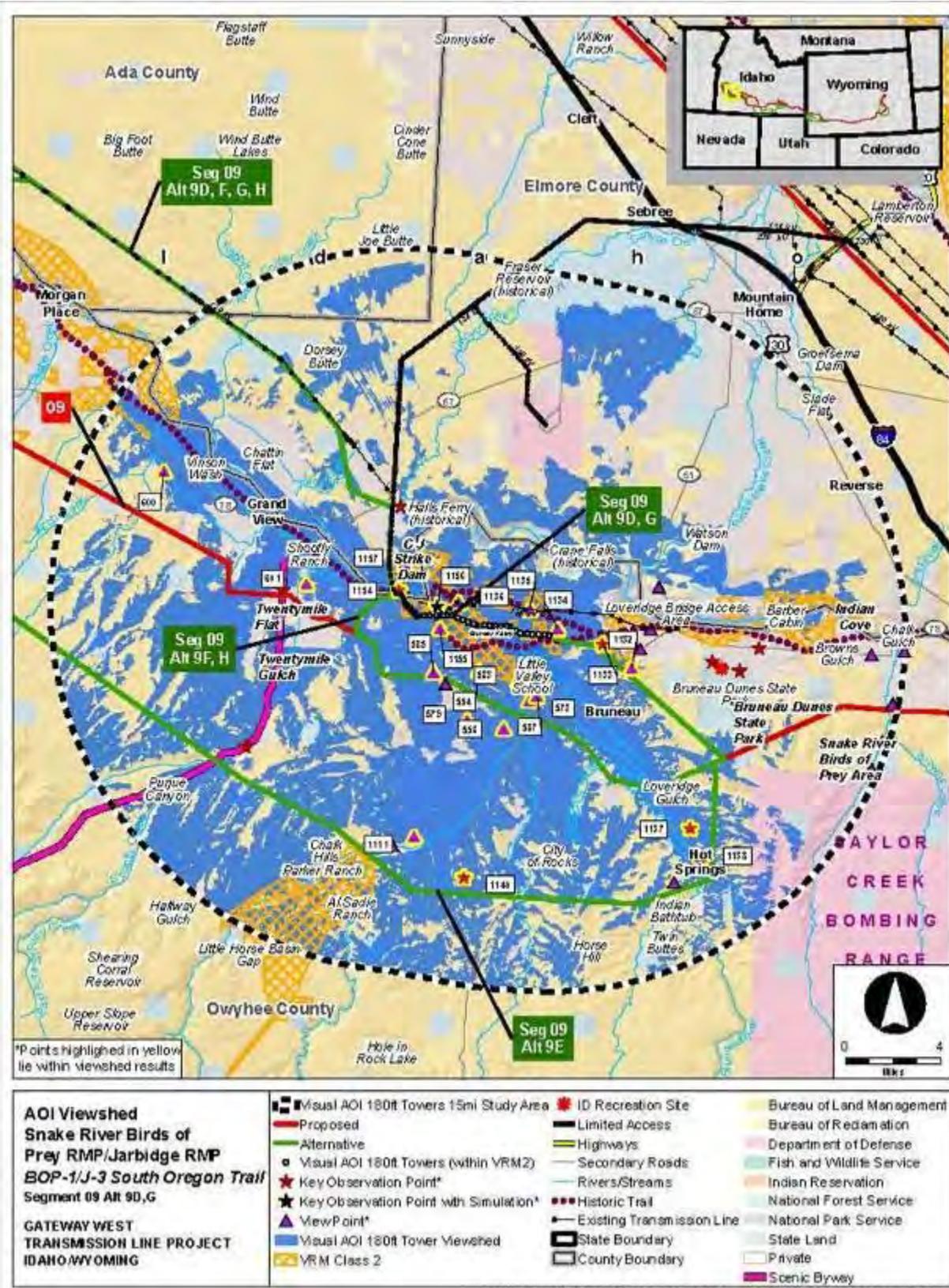


Figure 5.8-7. AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis

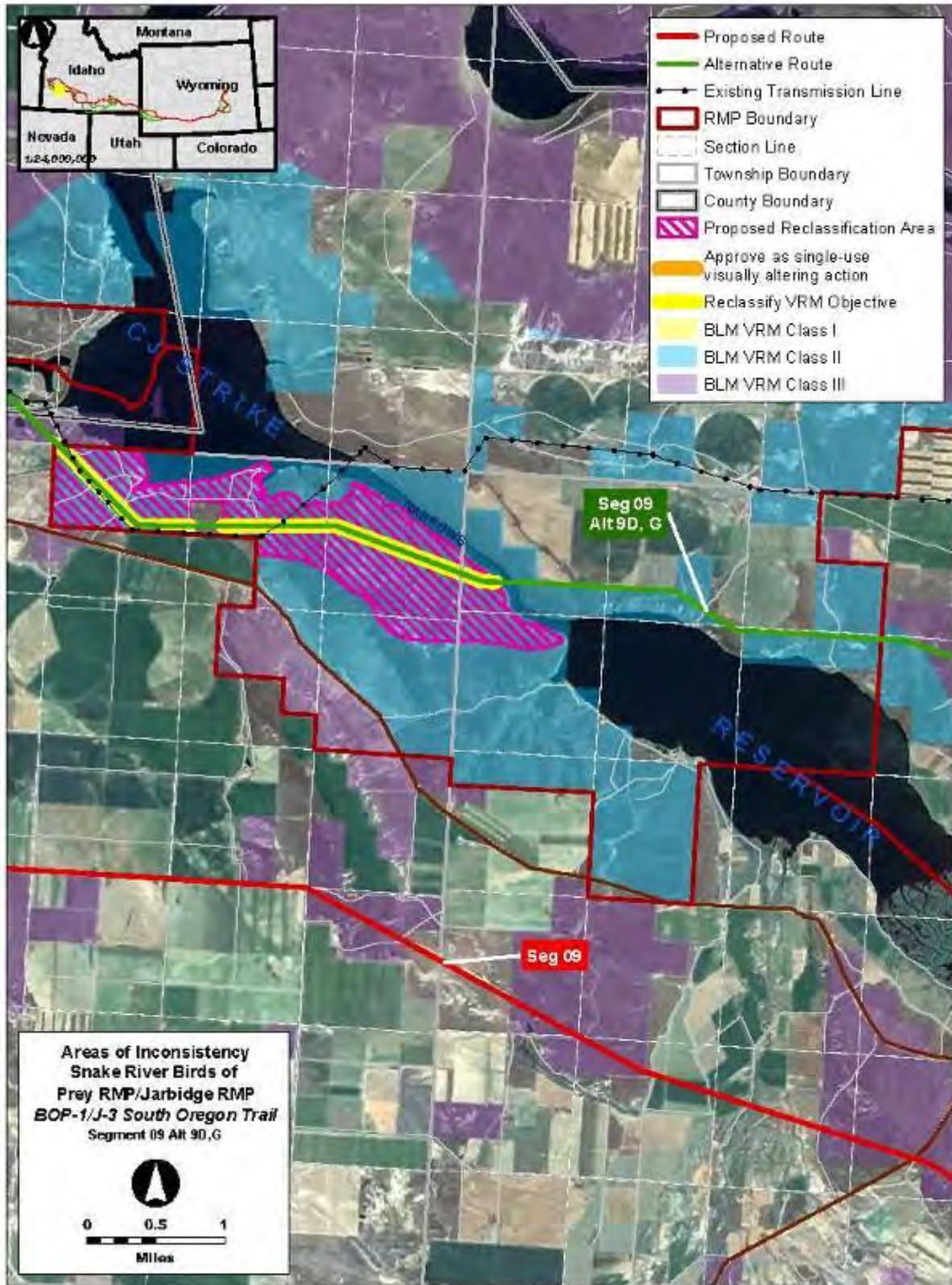


Figure 5.8-8. AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map

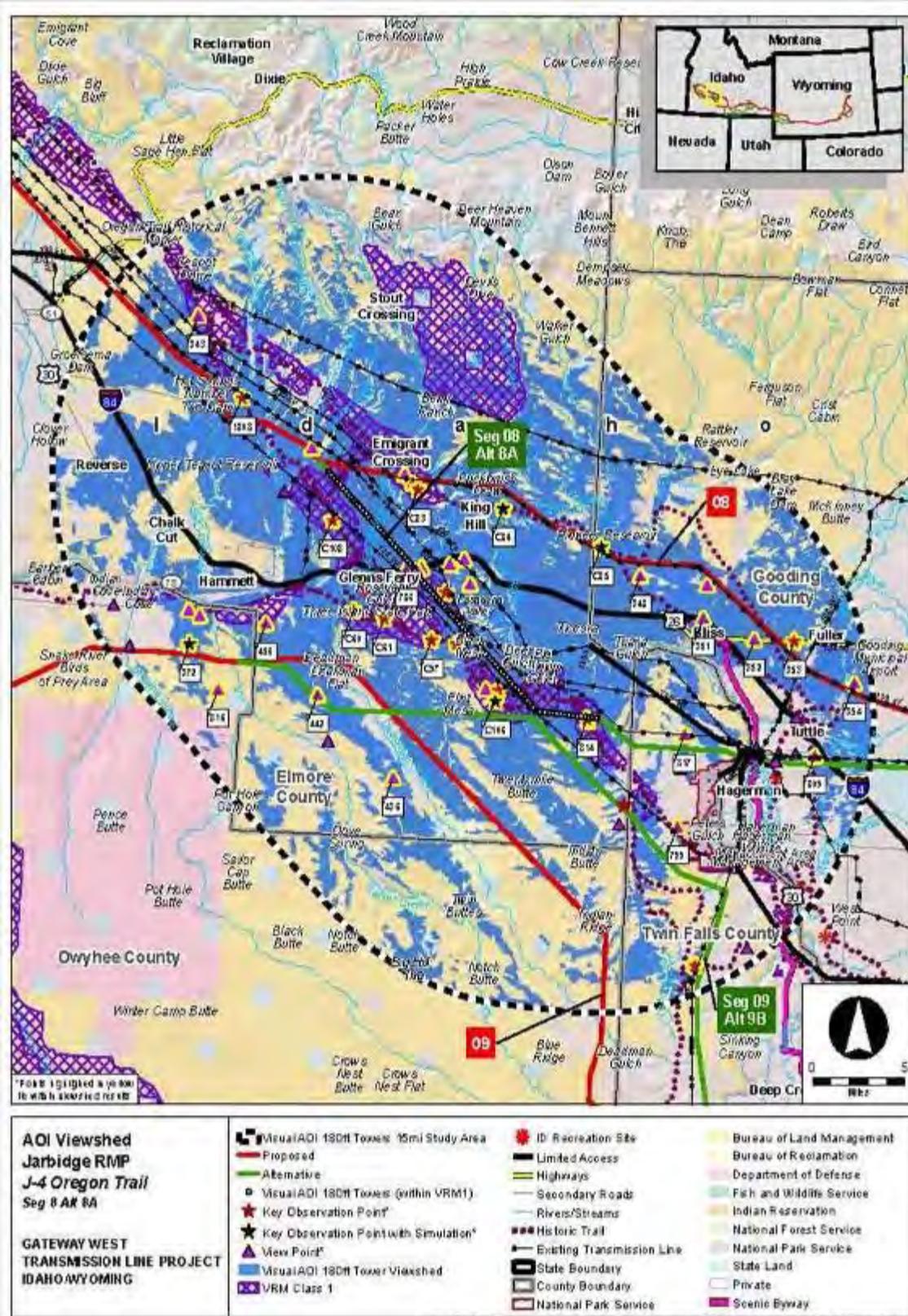


Figure 5.8-9. AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 8A)

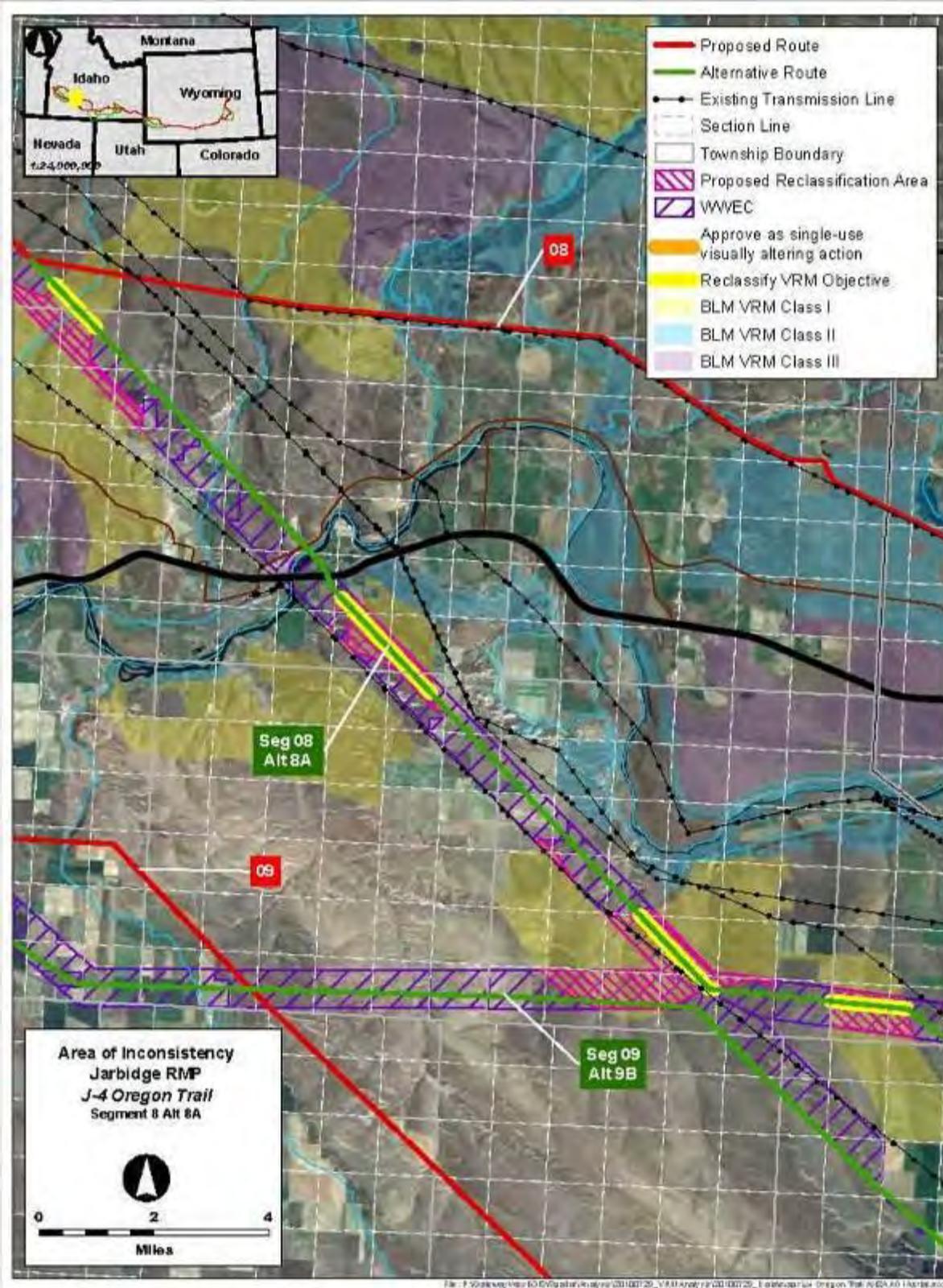


Figure 5.8-10. AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 8A)

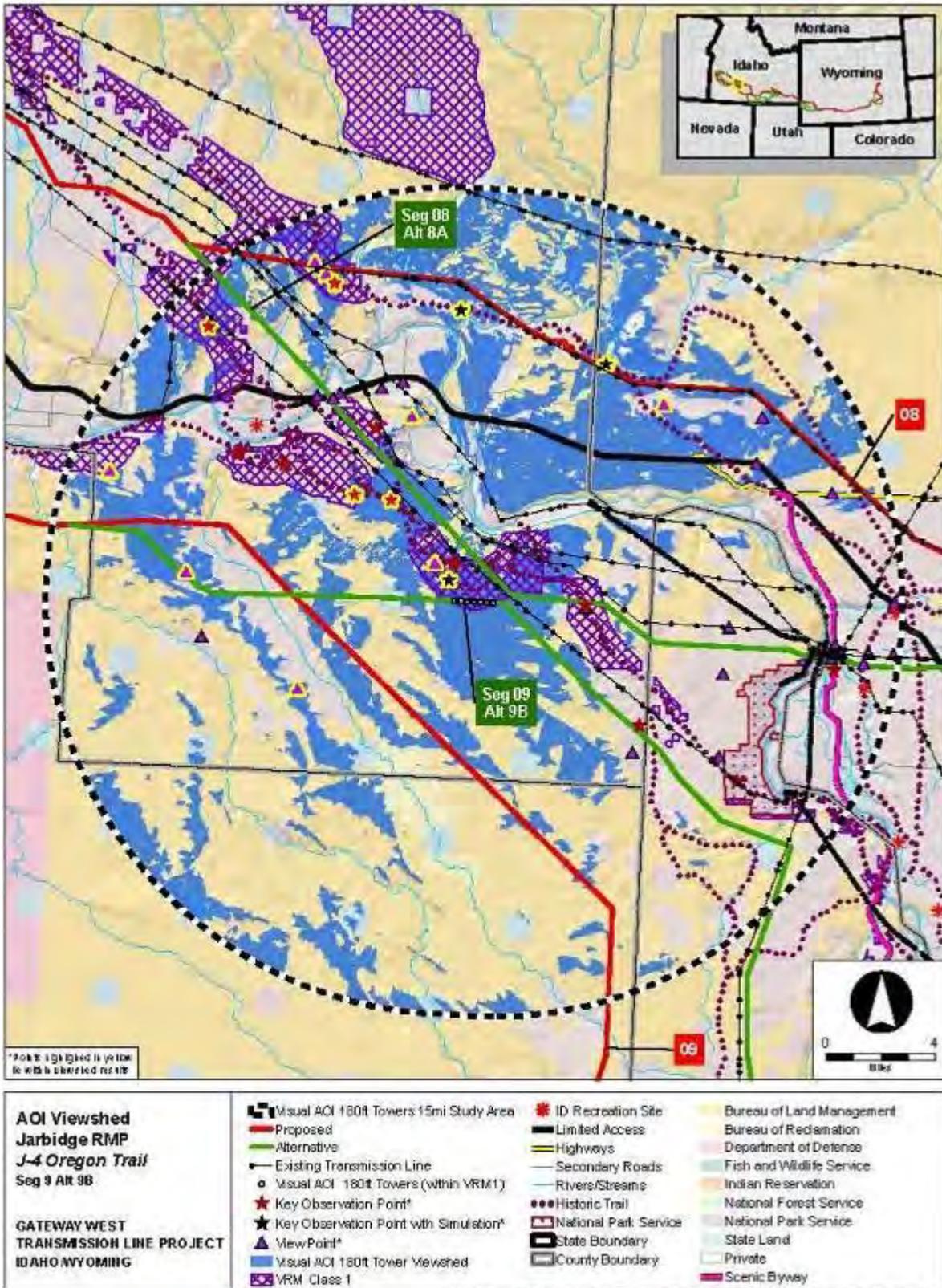


Figure 5.8-11. AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 9B)

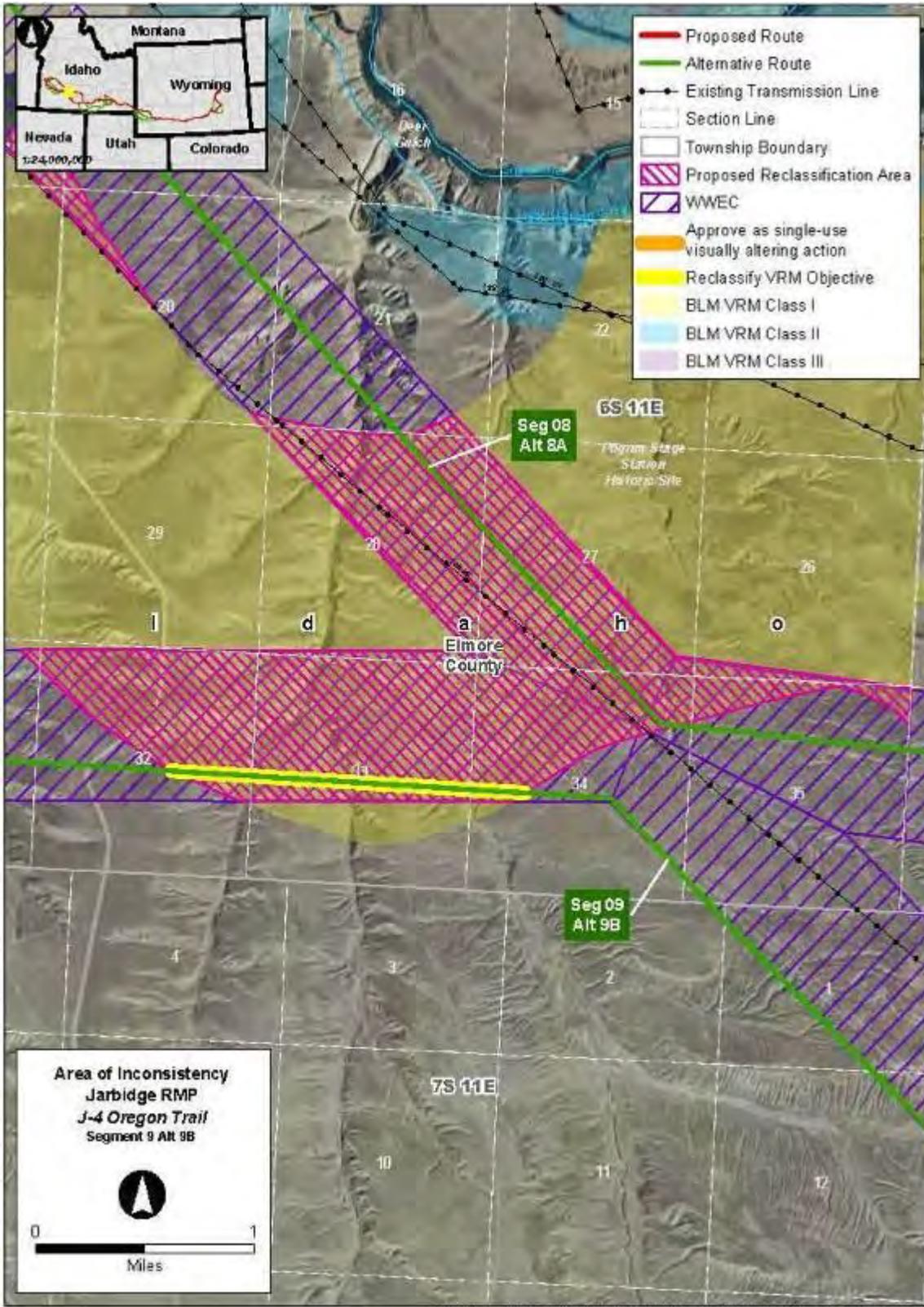


Figure 5.8-12. AOI J-4 Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map (Alternative 9B)

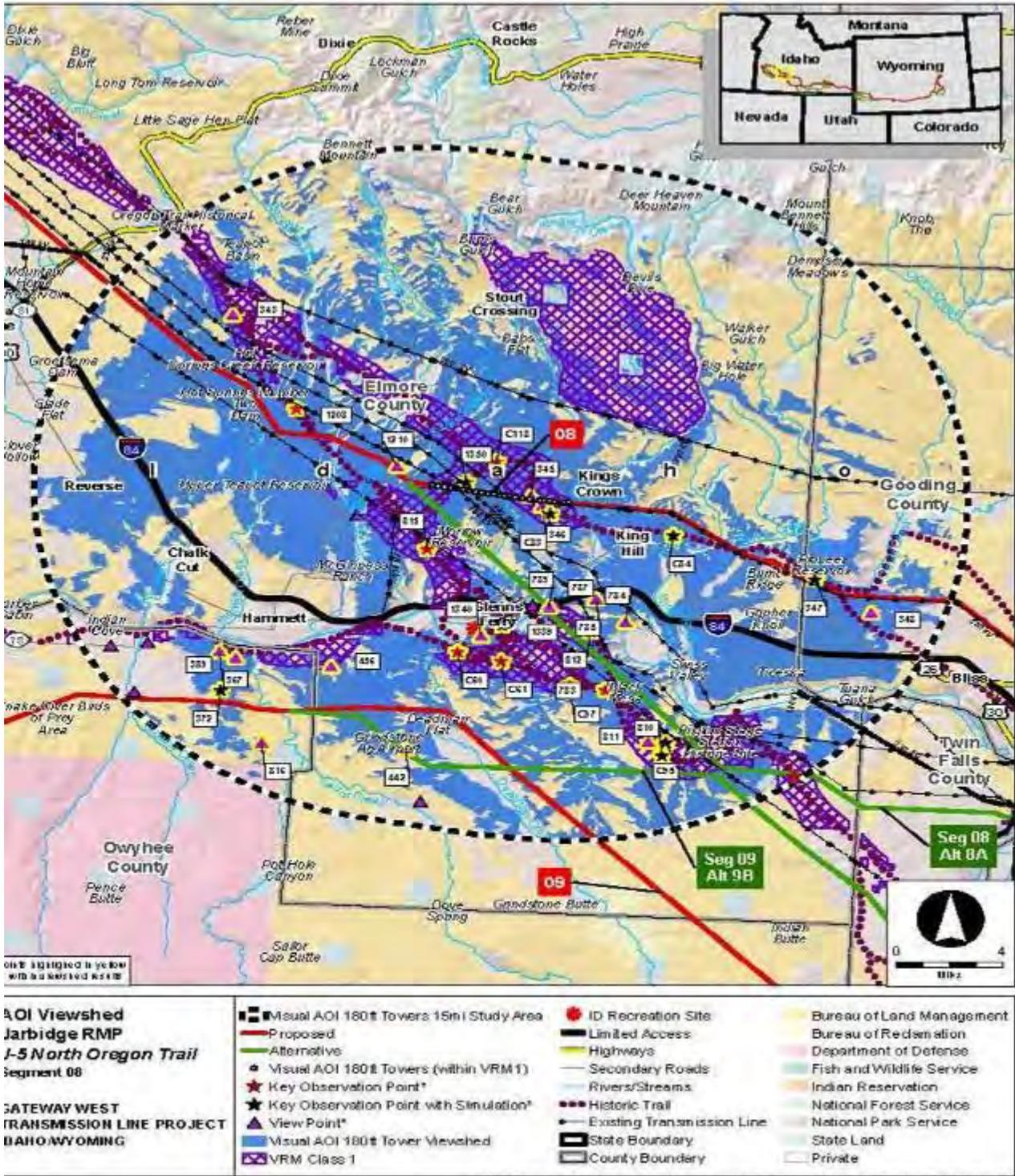


Figure 5.8-13. AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail AOI Visual Analysis

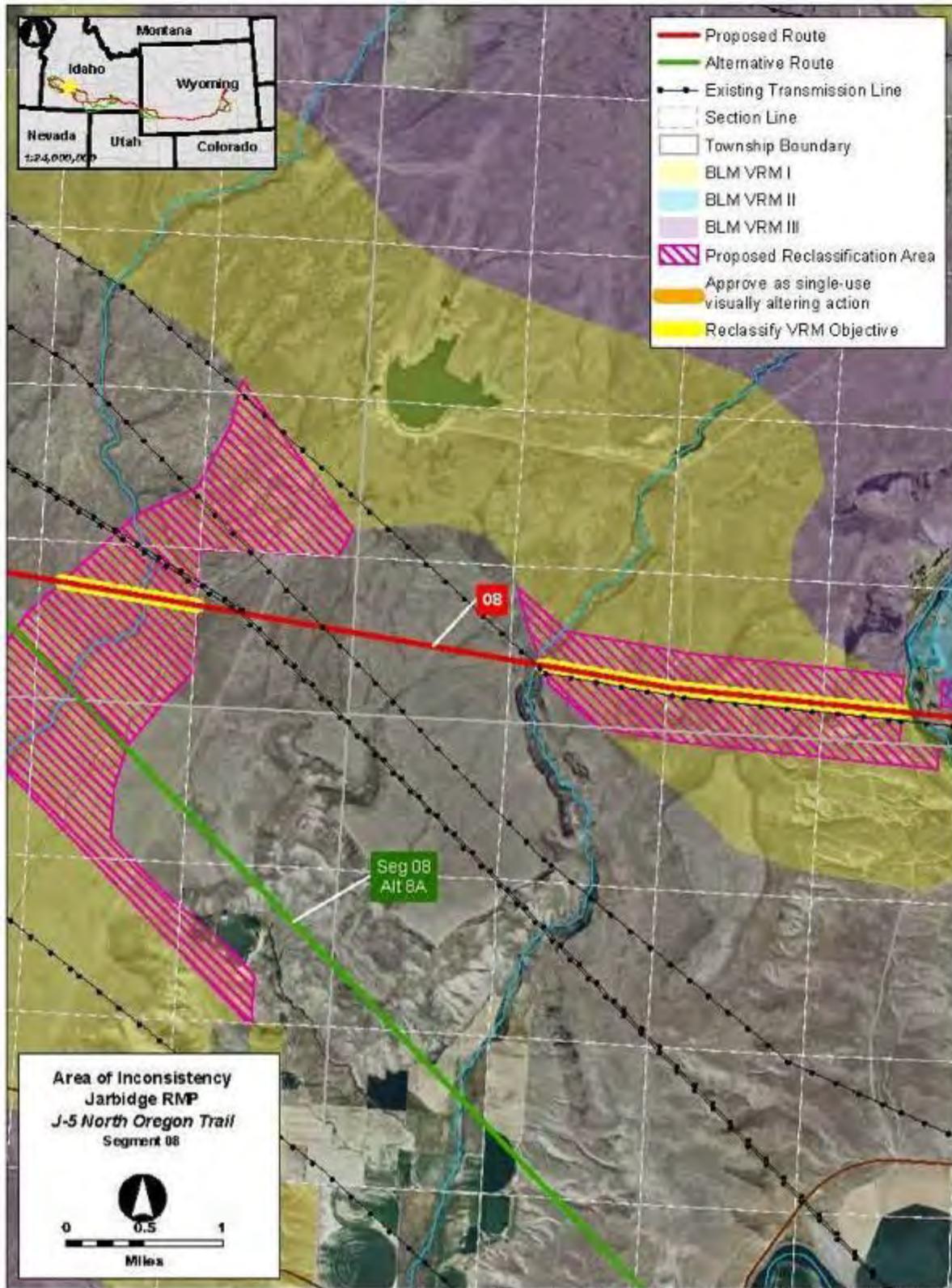


Figure 5.8-14. AOI J-5 North Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map

5.9 SRBOP RMP

The SRBOP RMP (BLM 2008b) provides guidance for the public lands and resources within the SRBOP that are managed as a part of the BLM Four Rivers FO. The SRBOP contains approximately 483,700 acres of public land extending 81 miles along the Snake River in the Idaho counties of Ada, Canyon, Elmore, and Owyhee (see Figure 5.9-1). The SRBOP includes the 138,000-acre Orchard Training Area, used by the Idaho Army National Guard (IDANG) for military training since 1953. The RMP provides for protection of the Oregon NHT as a VRM Class II management area. The RMP further provides direction to “manage the areas along the Oregon Trail and the Snake River Canyon as VRM Class II, the Army National Guard Orchard Training Area (OTA) as VRM Class IV, and remaining areas as Class III. This RMP will provide reasonable protection of the Oregon Trail and flexibility in managing the remainder of the NCA.”

Portions of the proposed and alternative routes for Segments 8 and 9 cross the SRBOP RMP management area. The Proposed Route for Segment 8 is 131.0 miles long and would connect the Midpoint Substation to the Hemingway Substation with a single-circuit 500-kV line. This route follows the WWE corridor for 38.1 miles out of its total 131.0-mile length and follows existing transmission lines for almost its entire length. In addition to the Proposed Route, five Route Alternatives were considered with varying impacts on the SRBOP. Initially, routing in the northwestern portion of Segment 8 focused on avoiding the SRBOP and the Orchard Training Area. Later siting studies identified opportunities to parallel the existing Summer Lake – Midpoint 500-kV transmission line through the SRBOP. An additional alternative was developed for Segment 8, in order to avoid the Halverson Bar Non-motorized Area in the Guffey Butte-Black Butte Archaeological District. Alternative 8E follows the Proposed Route until just east of the Snake River, where it follows an existing transmission line south to the 9D Sinker Butte crossing, sharing the same alignment as 9D from that point until it connects to Segment 8 of the Proposed Route, north of Alternative 9D. Other constraints considered in siting included commercial and residential development, both existing and planned, east, west, and north of the SRBOP in the cities of Kuna and Melba; pivot irrigation; historic trails; wetlands; steep slopes; and raptor nests.

The Proposed Route for Segment 9 is a 161.7-mile-long 500-kV single-circuit line that would connect the proposed Cedar Hill Substation with the Hemingway Substation. Primary siting considerations in the eastern portion of this segment were avoidance of irrigated farmland, dairy operations, and scattered residential development; avoidance of interference with the Jarbidge Military Operating Area; making use of the WWE corridor; and minimizing impacts to visual resources. In the western portion of Segment 9, the area closest to the SRBOP, following the WWE corridor was a primary objective. Other concerns included minimizing impact to Bruneau Dunes State Park and scenic qualities associated with the Bruneau River, avoiding conflicts with the Saylor Creek Air Force Range and Military Operating Area, and crossing the SRBOP. For the entire line segment, placement of the transmission line on public land versus private land was an important issue with local stakeholders. In addition to the Proposed Route, eight Route Alternatives were considered.

Alternative route 9D is an alternate route identified by the Owyhee County Taskforce. Three additional alternatives were developed that incorporate much of the 9D alignment.

Alternative 9F was developed to avoid the Cove Non-motorized Area south of C.J. Strike Reservoir. This alternative follows the Proposed Route until just west of the reservoir, at which point it crosses north and joins with the 9D alignment for the rest of its route. Alternative 9G follows the same alignment as 9D until approximately 4 miles south of the Snake River crossing at Sinker Butte. At this point, 9G crosses the Snake River and takes a more southern route through VRM Class II areas before joining with the Proposed Route at the same location as Alternative 9D. Alternative 9H has the same alignment as Alternative 9F until approximately 4 miles south of the Snake River crossing at Sinker Butte, at which point it then follows the same alignment as Alternative 9G. All four Alternatives would cross the SRBOP in areas that are not compatible with VRM Class II management objectives.

Three VRM Class II management areas are crossed by Segment 8 of the Proposed Route and Alternatives 8E, 9D, 9F, 9G, and 9H. The presence of a transmission line in these landscapes would not meet VRM Class II management objectives. To construct the proposed transmission line and/or the alternative route, BLM action would be necessary to either modify visual classifications or to permit a one-time allowance in order for the Project to be consistent with the RMP. The AOIs are described below in Sections 5.9.1 through 5.9.3.

5.9.1 AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail (Segment 9 Alternative 9D/9G)

The South Oregon Trail AOI is located north and south of the Snake River, beginning at the C.J. Strike Reservoir dam. This AOI overlaps both the SRBOP and Jarbidge RMP boundaries. Alternative 9D leaves the Proposed Route near Bruneau, Idaho, heading northwest for about 6 miles before intercepting the C.J. Strike Reservoir, at the junction of the Bruneau River and the Snake River. Land surrounding the reservoir has been designated as VRM Class II due to its scenic qualities and close proximity to the Oregon NHT. Alternative 9D turns west, paralleling the Oregon NHT, and crossing the Narrows portion of the Bruneau Arm of C.J. Strike Reservoir. The route then continues west on the south side of the reservoir, crossing back to the north side of the Snake River approximately 0.5 mile downstream from the C.J. Strike Reservoir dam. Except for minor detours to avoid agricultural land, the route continues west from the dam then turns to the northwest, crossing the SRBOP before re-joining the Proposed Route east of Hemingway Substation. Although not located within a WWE corridor, Alternative 9D follows existing transmission lines for approximately 37 miles.

The portion of the AOI within the SRBOP RMP crosses a 330-acre parcel for 1.2 miles and a 3,859-acre parcel for 4.9 miles of land managed for VRM Class II objectives. Figure 5.9-2 shows the viewshed of the South Oregon Trail AOI, Alternative 9D, and VRM management classifications. Figure 5.9-3 shows the AOI and amendment management recommendations.

Alternatives Considered – The Proposed Route and eight alternative routes in the western portion of Segment 9 are analyzed in the Draft EIS as a means of connecting the Cedar Hill and Hemingway Substations. The Proposed Route is largely within the WWE corridor but crosses more private land. Alternative 9D was identified by the Owyhee County Task Force and recommended by Owyhee County as its preferred route to avoid private land and maximize the use of public land. The specific alignment has been

developed through consultation between the County Task Force, BLM representatives, and the Proponents. This alternative substantially deviates from the designated WWE corridor and would cross 47.9 miles of the SRBOP. Alternatives 9F, 9G, and 9H are variations on Alternative 9D. Alternatives 9F and 9H would avoid the Cove Non-motorized Area south of C.J. Strike Reservoir by following the Proposed Route farther west and cutting north to join with the 9D alignment west of the reservoir. Alternatives 9G and 9H would cross the Snake River approximately 4 miles south of 9D/9F and cross through approximately 15 miles of the SRBOP in a more southerly route. This alignment crosses much more VRM Class II areas than the other alternatives; however, it was developed in order to provide an alternate route in Segment 9 in case Alternative 8E was selected. Alternative 9E was also identified by the taskforce but was preferred less than Alternative 9D. No VRM Class I or Class II areas are crossed by this portion of the Proposed Route or Alternative 9E.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the South Oregon Trail AOI. The river crosses the middle of the area from west to east and leaves the study area in the vicinity of Indian Cove. C.J. Strike Reservoir is located at the northern end of the Bruneau Valley in the center of the area. The topography is generally flat to rolling with numerous drainages. Although much of the area is undeveloped, there are large areas of farms and farmland along the Snake River, south of Mountain Home, and the Bruneau Valley and Twentymile Flat. SR 78 is the major road and generally follows the Snake River east to west. SR 51 extends north to south through the area. Communities, such as Grandview and Bruneau, are located along local highways and the Snake River. Mountain Home Air Force Base is located in the northeast portion of the study area. Numerous transmission lines cross this area. Potential viewing areas include highways, communities, historic sites and trails, and recreation areas such as Bruneau Dunes State Park.

Attachment A, Figure BOP-1/J-3a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 1156. The area consists of rolling terrain that slopes toward the reservoir. An existing wood pole H-frame transmission line is evident in the view. More distant views toward the north are characterized by water and bluffs.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.9-2 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area. Attachment A, Figure BOP-1/J-3b simulates the landscape conditions showing for Alternative 9D as viewed from KOP 1156.

Scenic views of the CJ Strike Reservoir and the surrounding Snake River Plain are available to sensitive recreational viewers at nearby locations including KOPs 1154 and 1156 and visitors to the Oregon NHT (KOP 1155). The views of the undulating to rocky terrain from these viewpoints exhibit diversity in form, line, and texture. Developments, such as high-voltage transmission lines and a dam, are in view as well. From these KOPs, it is apparent that Alternative 9D would be visible in the foreground and middle ground, sometimes skylined and at other times, backdropped. The Project would often be seen in conjunction with an existing wood pole H-frame line. Screening and other mitigation efforts would be only moderately successful at lowering impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The undulating and rugged terrain with mottled and diverse vegetation and the expansive waters of the reservoir would be moderately contrasted by an additional set of structures. These additions would draw the attention of

the casual observer and represent a deviation from the natural form, line, color, and texture of the surrounding landscape; and therefore would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It would appear that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the Oregon NHT corridor and adjacent landscapes. A 500-kV transmission line would not be compatible with VRM Class II objectives; therefore, the VRM Class II areas associated with the Oregon NHT and Snake River Canyon scenic areas that would be crossed by the transmission line, where the line would not be consistent with VRM Class II objectives, would be reclassified to be managed with VRM Class III objectives (see Figure 5.9-3).

5.9.2 AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte (Segment 9 Alternative 9D/9F and Segment 8 Alternative 8E; Segment 9G/9H)

The Sinker Butte AOI is located about 20 miles south of Kuna, Idaho, on the western portion of Alternatives 9D/9F/8E and Alternatives 9G/9H. Alternative 9D was identified by the Owyhee County Taskforce and recommended by Owyhee County for detailed analysis. Alternative 9F was developed to avoid the Cove Non-motorized Area, and 8E to avoid the Halverson Bar Non-motorized Area. Alternatives 9G and 9H are variations of 9D and 9F, developed as an alternative alignment to the 9D/9F/8E route. The primary County siting criteria were avoidance of private land and maximizing the use of public land. The majority of Alternative 9D (about 48 miles) is within the SRBOP. In the vicinity of Sinker Butte, Alternative 9D crosses Swan Falls Reservoir about 1 mile south of Swan Falls Dam. In this section of the Sinker Butte AOI, the route crosses one 16,759-acre parcel for a distance of approximately 1.3 miles of land managed for VRM Class II objectives to protect scenic views of the Snake River and the area around the Oregon NHT. Alternative 8E crosses the Snake River at this point and joins the 9D/9F alignment in this area. Also within this AOI is the southern portion of the VRM Class II area crossed by Alternatives 9G/9H. The RMP designates that both the Oregon NHT and the Snake River Canyon should be managed as VRM Class II. Figure 5.9-4 shows the location of the Sinker Butte AOI, the location of Alternatives 9D/9F/8E, and the associated VRM Class II lands. Figure 5.9-5 shows the location of the AOI area for Alternatives 9G/9H and the associated VRM Class II lands.

Alternatives Considered – Siting considerations for the part of the AOI crossed by 9D/9F/8E are the same as for the South Oregon Trail AOI described in Section 5.9.1. In addition, the BLM, Owyhee Task Force, and Proponents focused on the specific crossing of the Snake River north of the Swan Falls Dam and closer to an existing transmission line crossing. The selected alignment results in crossing land managed for VRM Class II objectives that could not be avoided. Alternatives 9G and 9H avoid this part of the AOI by crossing at a more southern location; however, this route crosses significantly more VRM II managed areas; the eastern half of which is included in AOI BOP-2. The Proposed Routes for Segment 8 and 9 and Alternatives 8B and 9E avoid the VRM Class II lands surrounding Sinker Butte AOI.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The 15-mile-radius area surrounding the 9D/9F/8E crossing of Sinker Butte AOI is bisected from northwest to southeast by the Snake River and its many buttes (see Figure 5.9-4). North and east of the river, the topography is mostly flat, while to the south and west, it is more rolling and rises up to the Owyhee Mountains. Most of the area is undeveloped; however, there are large irrigated

agricultural areas with many farms in the area where Ada, Canyon, and Owyhee Counties come together near Murphy and at other scattered locations. SR 78 passes northwest to southeast on the west side of the Snake River. SR 45, located on the east side of the river, intersects SR 78 at Walters Ferry. There are a number of small communities such as Murphy and Melba and much of the area on both sides of the river is part of the SRBOP. Sensitive viewers include motorists, local residents, and visitors to the SRBOP, historic trails, and historic sites.

Attachment A, Figure BOP-2a illustrates the landscape in the area as viewed from KOP 1352. As seen from this highway location in the foreground, the topography is flat with a mesa in the middleground and mountains in the background. Man-made modifications include agricultural operations and the highway.

Figure 5.9-5 shows the 15-mile radius area for the part of the AOI that would be crossed by Alternatives 9G/9H. Due to proximity to Alternatives 9D/9F/8E, many of the study area features and landscape conditions are the same. The localized area crossed by this portion of the AOI differs, however, in that after crossing the Snake River, the route travels through the SRBOP where the landscape is flat to undulating, interrupted by buttes and rock features. The route would parallel the Oregon NHT for much of its length within the AOI.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.9-4 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency of the proposed transmission line with the existing VRM Class II land crossed for Alternatives 9D/9F/8E. Attachment A, Figure BOP-2b simulates landscape conditions showing for the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP 1352.

Scenic views along the Snake River adjacent to Sinker Butte, such as those represented by KOPs 1115 and 1352, are important to sensitive residential viewers. As viewed from these KOPs, the landscape around AOI BOP-2 exhibits little diversity in form, line, color, and texture. Views of the Snake River are not apparent from this KOP. The proposed structures and access roads would result in low to moderate contrast with the undulating to flat terrain with blocky mesas and uniform vegetation and would not draw the attention of the casual observer from locations such as KOP 1352 over a mile away from the line. In this particular area, the distance of the Project from the viewer is an important factor impacting contrast levels but would still not meet VRM Class II objectives. If Alternative 9D/9F or Proposed Route 8E is selected, structures should be microsited to minimize the visibility from the VRM Class II area. A 500-kV powerline would not be compatible with VRM Class II objectives. If this route is selected, it is recommended that the VRM Class II areas associated with the Snake River Canyon and Sinker Butte scenic areas that would be crossed by the alternative be reclassified to be managed with VRM Class III objectives.

Figure 5.9-5 shows the viewshed, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency of the proposed transmission line with the existing VRM Class II land crossed for Alternatives 9G/9H. Proximity to Alternatives 9D/9F/8E results in similar features being present in the landscape; however, the viewshed shows differing areas of effect. Due to proximity of the Oregon NHT, there is a potential for a fairly high visual impact from this route and therefore it would not

conform to the VRM Class II objectives. If this route is selected, it is recommended that an area 250 feet from the centerline of the transmission line be reclassified to VRM Class III, after taking into account the 0.5 mile buffer needed around the NHT. Micrositing should be used to lessen visual impact.

5.9.3 AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte (Segment 8 Proposed Route, Alternative 8E, Alternative 9D/9F, and Alternative 9G/9H)

The Guffey Butte AOI is located about 10 miles east of Hemingway Substation where several proposed and alternative routes for Segments 8 and 9 come together. The Proposed Route for Segment 8 and Alternative 9D cross the Guffey Butte AOI. This AOI crosses a 11,517-acre parcel of VRM Class II lands. As these routes come together in the vicinity of the Snake River, the Segment 8 Proposed Route would cross this VRM Class II parcel for approximately 4.2 miles while Alternative 8E would cross this area for 1.1 miles before joining up with the Proposed route (for a total of 3.9 miles crossed in this AOI). Alternatives 9D/9F would cross the same parcel for 3.7 miles, while Alternatives 9G/9H would cross this area for approximately 5.3 miles. Figures 5.9-7 through 5.9-10 show the viewsheds for Proposed Route Segment 8, Alternative 8E, Alternatives 9D/9F, and Alternative 9G/9H. Figure 5.9-11 shows the location of the Guffey Butte AOI, the Segment 8 Proposed Route, Alternative 8E, Alternatives 9D/9F, Alternatives 9G/9H, and the VRM Class II lands with amendment management recommendations.

Alternatives Considered – The alignments for both the Segment 8 Proposed Route and Alternatives 9D/9F were developed, in part, through collaboration of the Owyhee County Task Force, BLM, and the Proponents. The Segment 8 Proposed Route constraints included areas of increasing development north of the Snake River, Celebration Park, and visual impact closer to the Snake River. Alternative 8B would avoid crossing any lands managed for VRM objectives within the SRBOP. For Alternative 9D, the primary County siting criteria have been avoidance of private land and maximizing of the use of public land. Alternative 8E was proposed by BLM to avoid the Halverson Bar Non-motorized Area in the Guffey Butte-Black Butte Archaeological District, while Alternative 9F was developed by the BLM to avoid crossing the Cove Non-motorized Area south of C.J. Strike Reservoir. Alternatives 9G and 9H were developed to provide an alternate alignment for Segment 9 alternatives in case Alternative 8E is selected. Alternative 9G follows the same alignment as 9D through the Cove Non-motorized Area, while Alternative 9H would follow the same alignment as 9F through that area. Alternatives 9G/9H would cross the most land managed for VRM Class II objectives. Crossing of land managed for VRM objectives would be avoided by selecting the Segment 9 Proposed Route or Alternative 9E.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The 15-mile-radius area surrounding the Guffey Butte AOI is bisected from northwest to southeast by the Snake River. North and east of the river, the topography is mostly flat and, while to the south and west, it is more rolling and rises up to the Owyhee Mountains. Most of the area is undeveloped; however, there are large irrigated agricultural areas with many farms in the area where Ada, Canyon, and Owyhee Counties come together near Murphy and at other scattered locations. SR 78 passes northwest-southeast through the area on the west side of the Snake River. SR 45, which is located in the northwestern part of the study area, intersects SR 78 at Walters

Ferry. There are a number of small communities such as Murphy and Melba and much of the area on both sides of the river is part of the SRBOP.

Attachment A, Figure BOP-3a illustrates the existing landscape as viewed from KOP 561 with flat to rolling terrain in the foreground and middleground and mountains in the background. Developments include a small community, distribution lines, and a dirt road. The portion of the AOI crossed by Alternative 9G/9H is south of the Proposed Route and Alternative 9D/9F. This route would cross undulating terrain containing buttes and other rock features. The alignment would cross just north of the town of Murphy as well as land near Murphy Rim. Due to proximity, much of the study area is the same as for the 9D/9F alignment.

Conformance Analysis – Figures 5.9-7 through 5.9-10 show the viewsheds, KOPs, and other features within the 15-mile-radius study area used to establish the degree of consistency of the proposed transmission line with the existing VRM Class II land crossed. Attachment A, Figures BOP-3b and BOP-3c are simulations showing the Segment 8 Proposed Route and Alternative 9D transmission lines, respectively, in the existing landscape as viewed from KOP 561.

Scenic views in the Striker Basin of Guffey Butte and the surrounding mountainous terrain are important to sensitive viewers such as hikers at the BLM trailhead (KOP 561) and the adjacent residences. From this vantage point, Segment 8 of the Proposed Route would interrupt the pristine mountain views that exhibit diversity in form, line, color, and texture. The structures of Segment 8 of the Proposed Route would contrast with the pyramidal forms, jagged terrain with numerous silhouette lines, and mottled rugged vegetation and would draw the attention of the casual observer, thus not conforming to VRM Class II objectives.

Although Alternative 9D/9F would be farther from the viewers at KOP 561 and partially screened, it would still not conform to VRM Class II objectives due to some skylining structures that would be apparent in the middleground of the view. It would also contrast with the undulating silhouette lines and mottled vegetation.

Alternative 9G/9H would cross north of the town of Murphy and could be visible along Murphy Rim. Additionally, the alignment would parallel NHTs and cross VRM Class II lands near historic sites. The structures for Alternatives 9G/9H would contrast with the pyramidal forms as well as the flat to rolling expanse of the existing landscape. Contrast with form and texture as well as proximity to historic sites would draw the attention of the casual observer, thus not conforming to VRM Class II objectives.

If the Segment 8 Proposed Route, Alternative 8E, Alternatives 9D/9F, or Alternatives 9G/9H is selected, an amendment would be needed for the project to comply with the SRBOP RMP. A 500-kV powerline would not be compatible with VRM Class II objectives, therefore, the VRM Class II areas associated with the Striker Basin scenic areas that would be crossed by the Alternative(s), would be reclassified to be managed with VRM Class III objectives. If Alternative 9G or Alternative 9H is selected, an area within 250 feet of the route centerline, taking into account the need for NHT buffers, would be reclassified to VRM Class III. Micrositing may be needed to ensure a proper buffer distance from the NHTs. If any of these routes are selected, it is recommended that the Proponents be required to microsite structures to minimize the visibility.

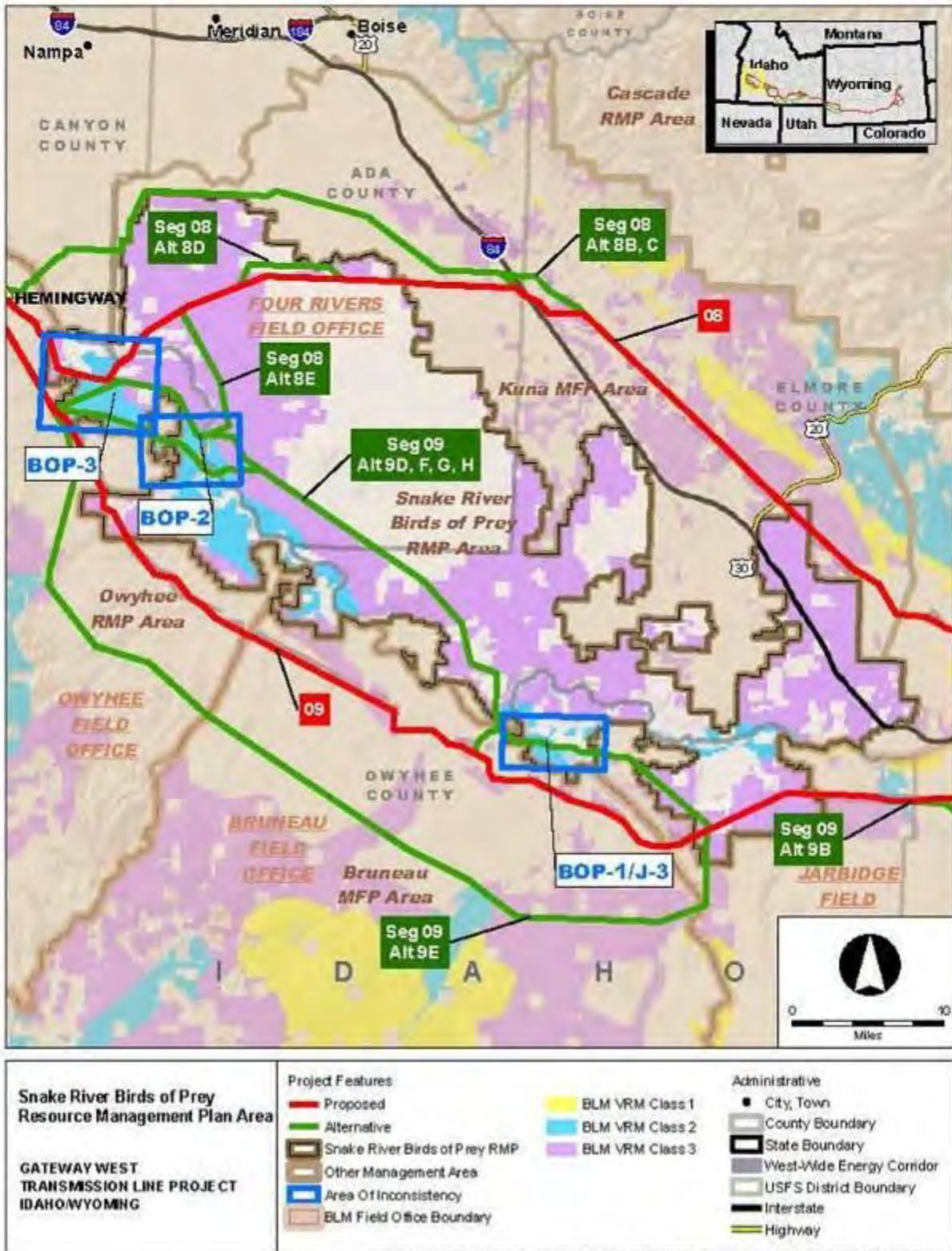


Figure 5.9-1. SRBOP RMP Boundary Map

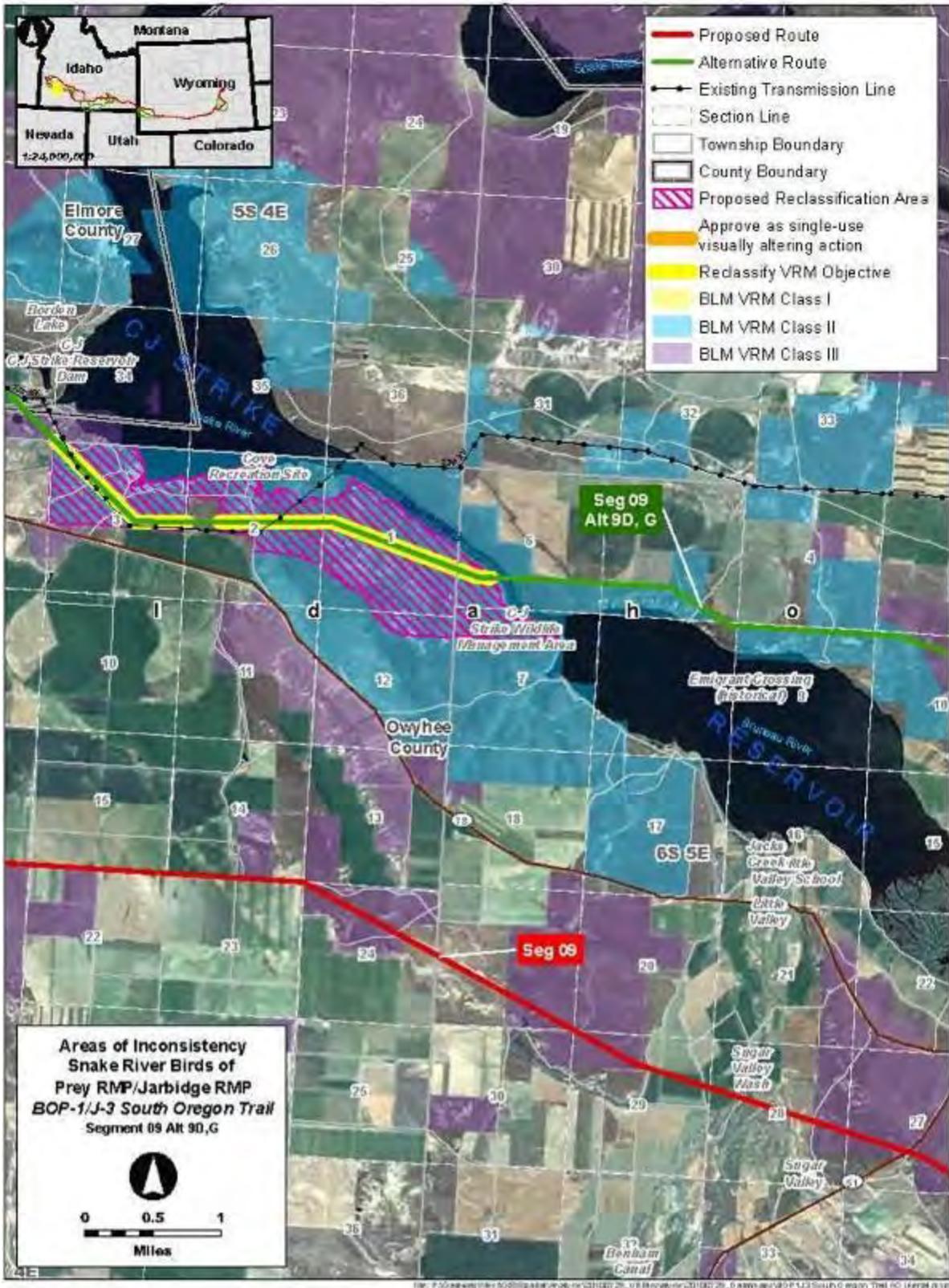


Figure 5.9-3. AOI BOP-1/J-3 South Oregon Trail AOI Detailed Map

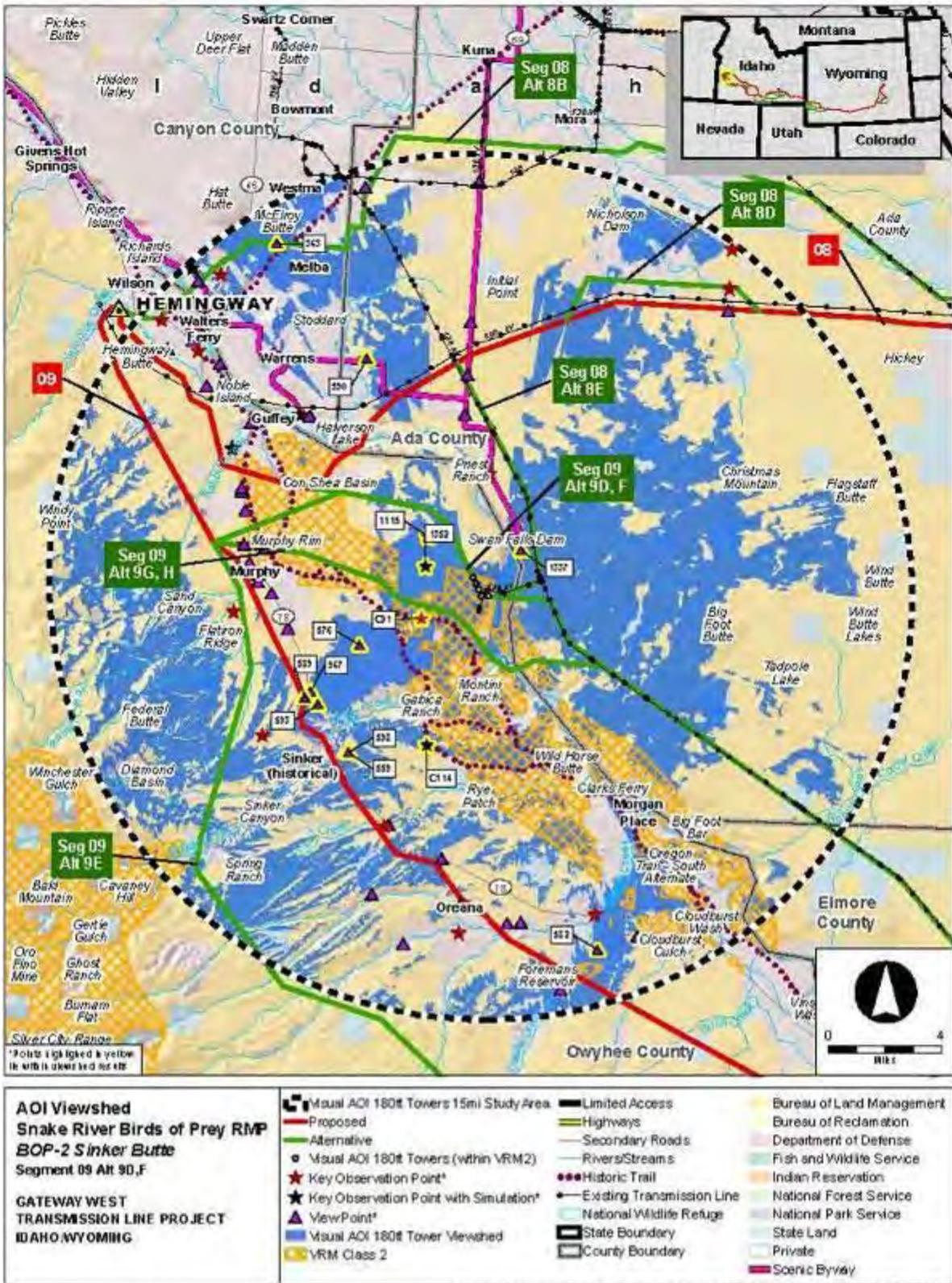


Figure 5.9-4. AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternatives 9D/9F/8E)

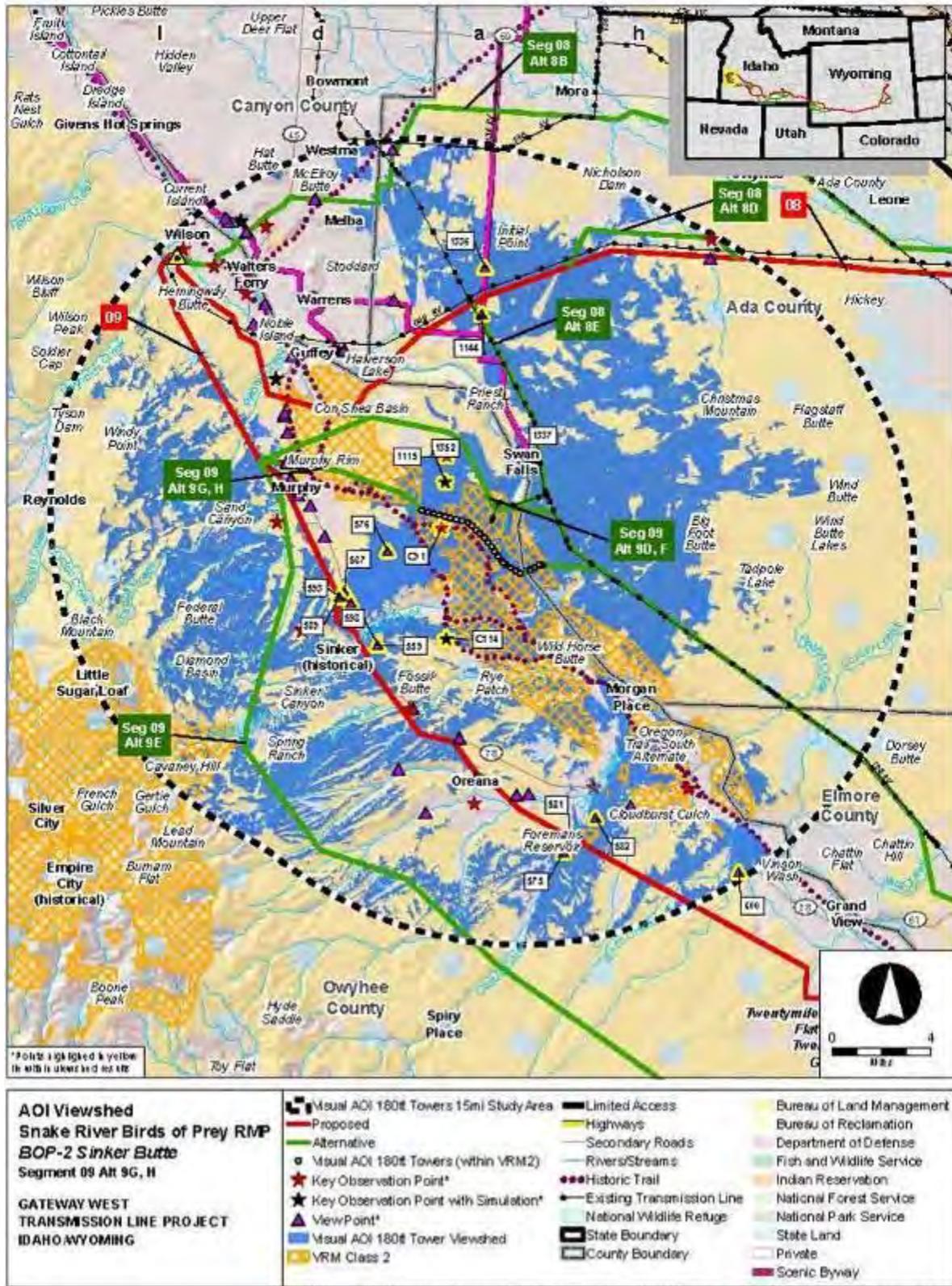


Figure 5.9-5. AOI BOP-2 Sinker Butte AOI Visual Analysis (Alternative 9G/9H)

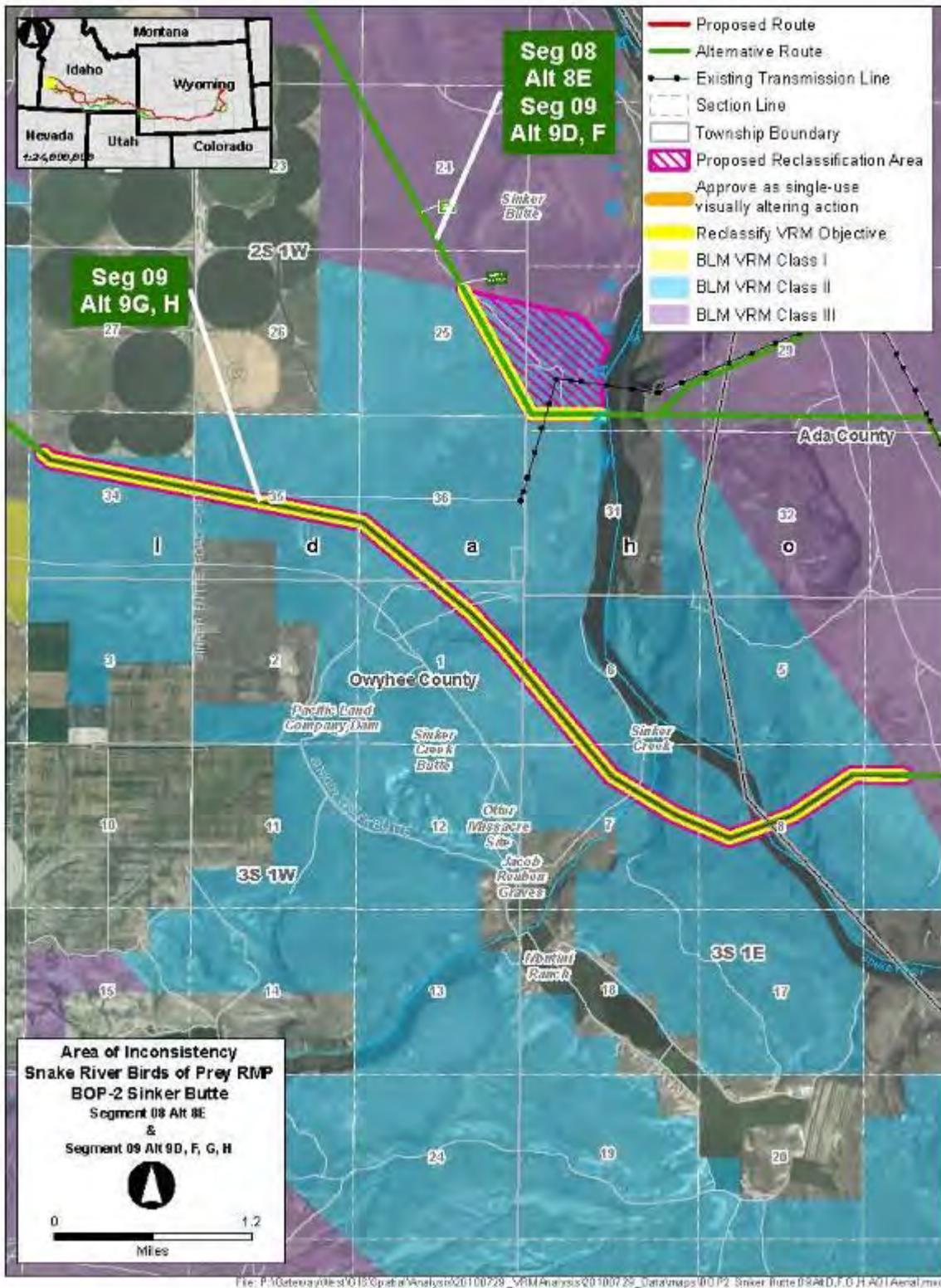


Figure 5.9-6. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Detailed Map

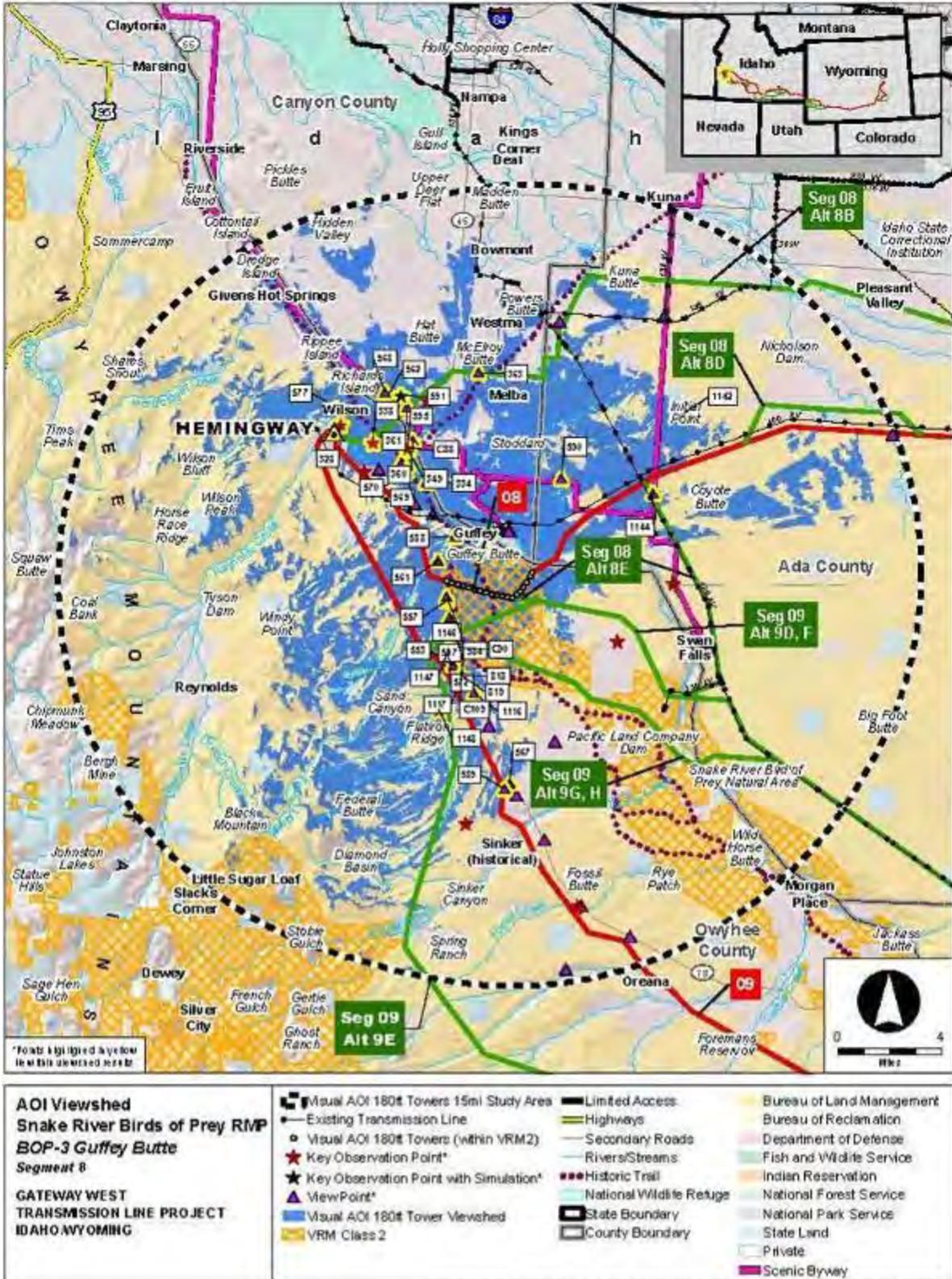


Figure 5.9-7. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Segment 8

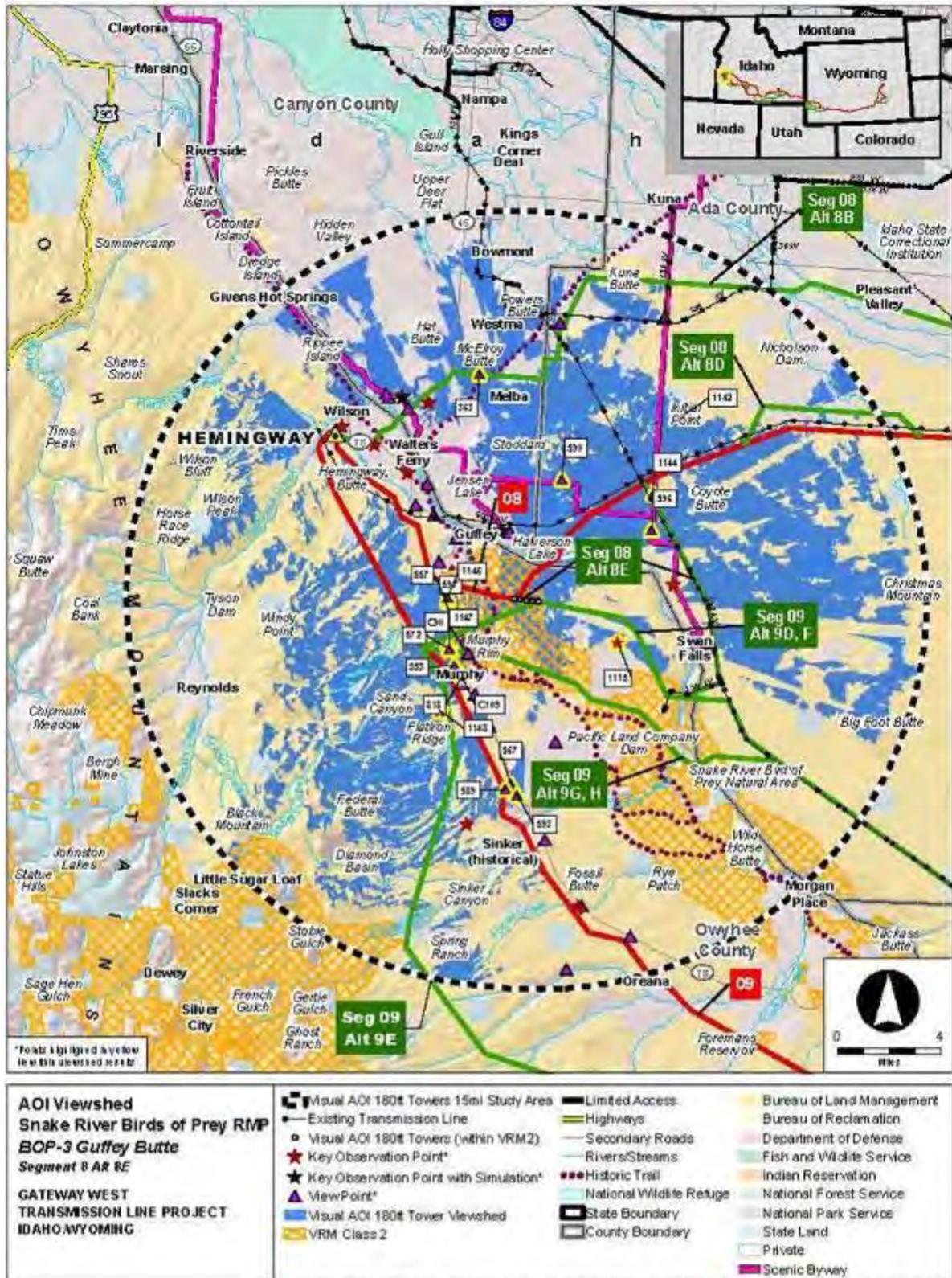


Figure 5.9-8. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Alternative 8E

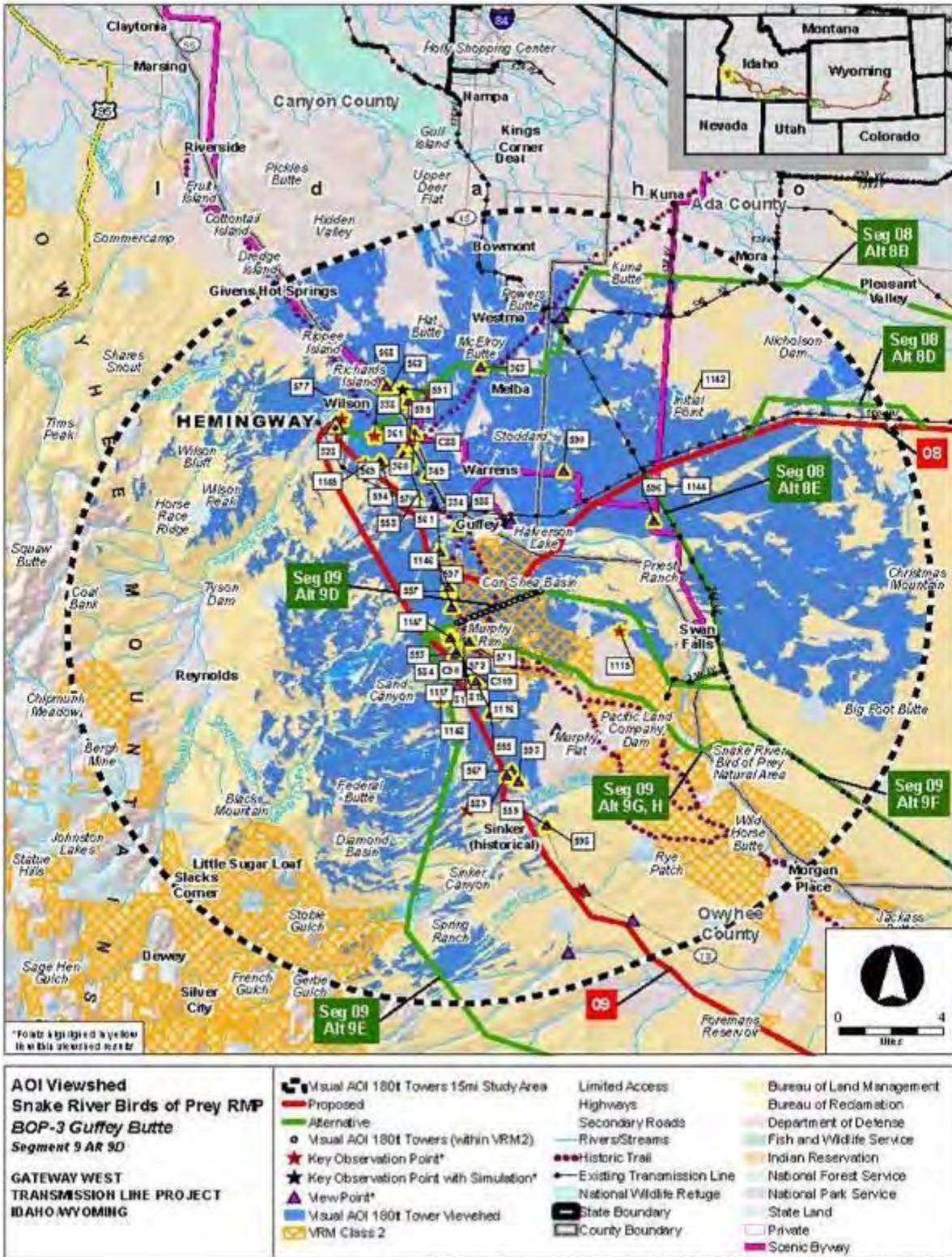


Figure 5.9-9. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Alternative 9D/9F

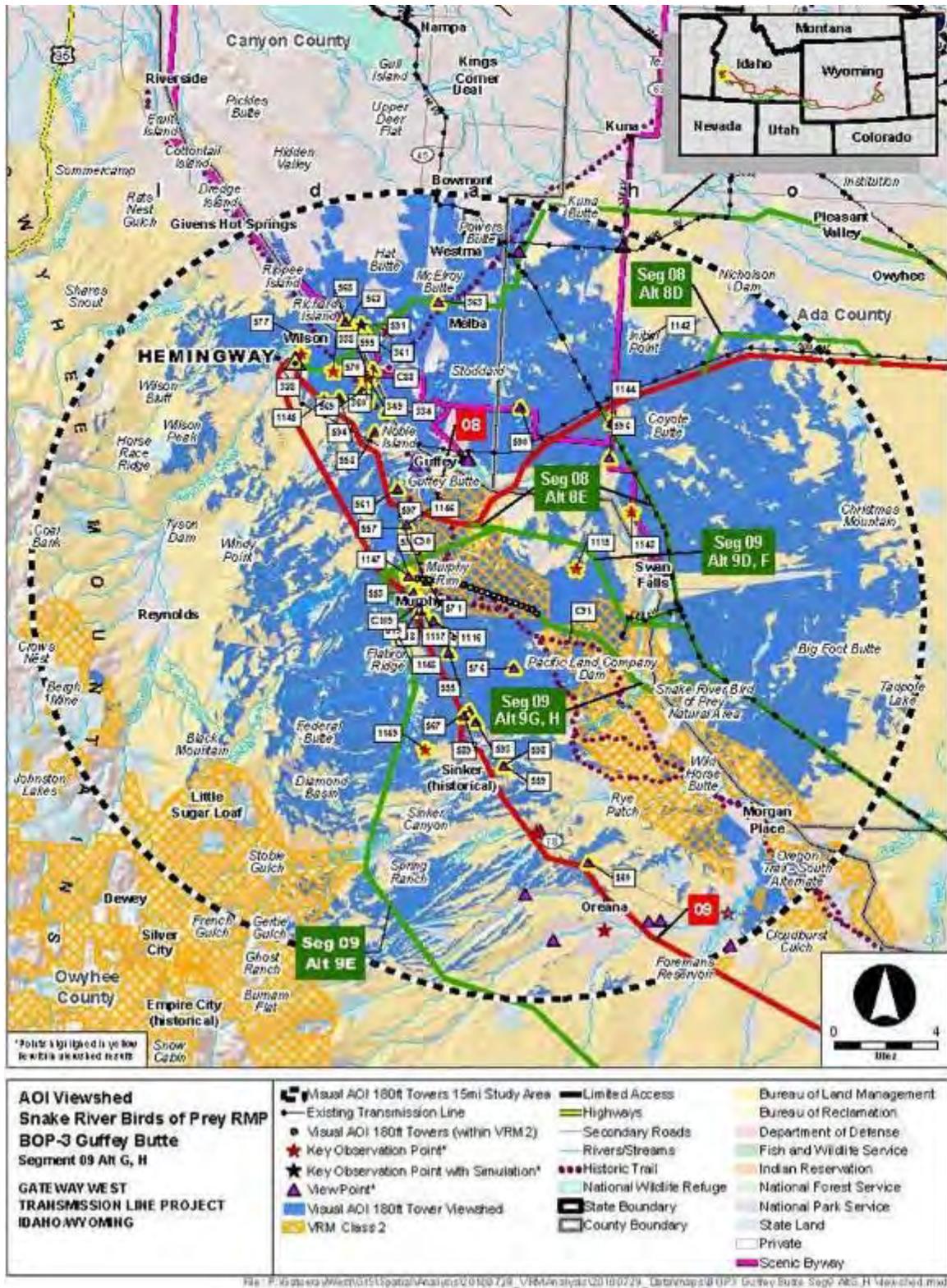


Figure 5.9-10. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Visual Analysis – Alternative 9G/9H

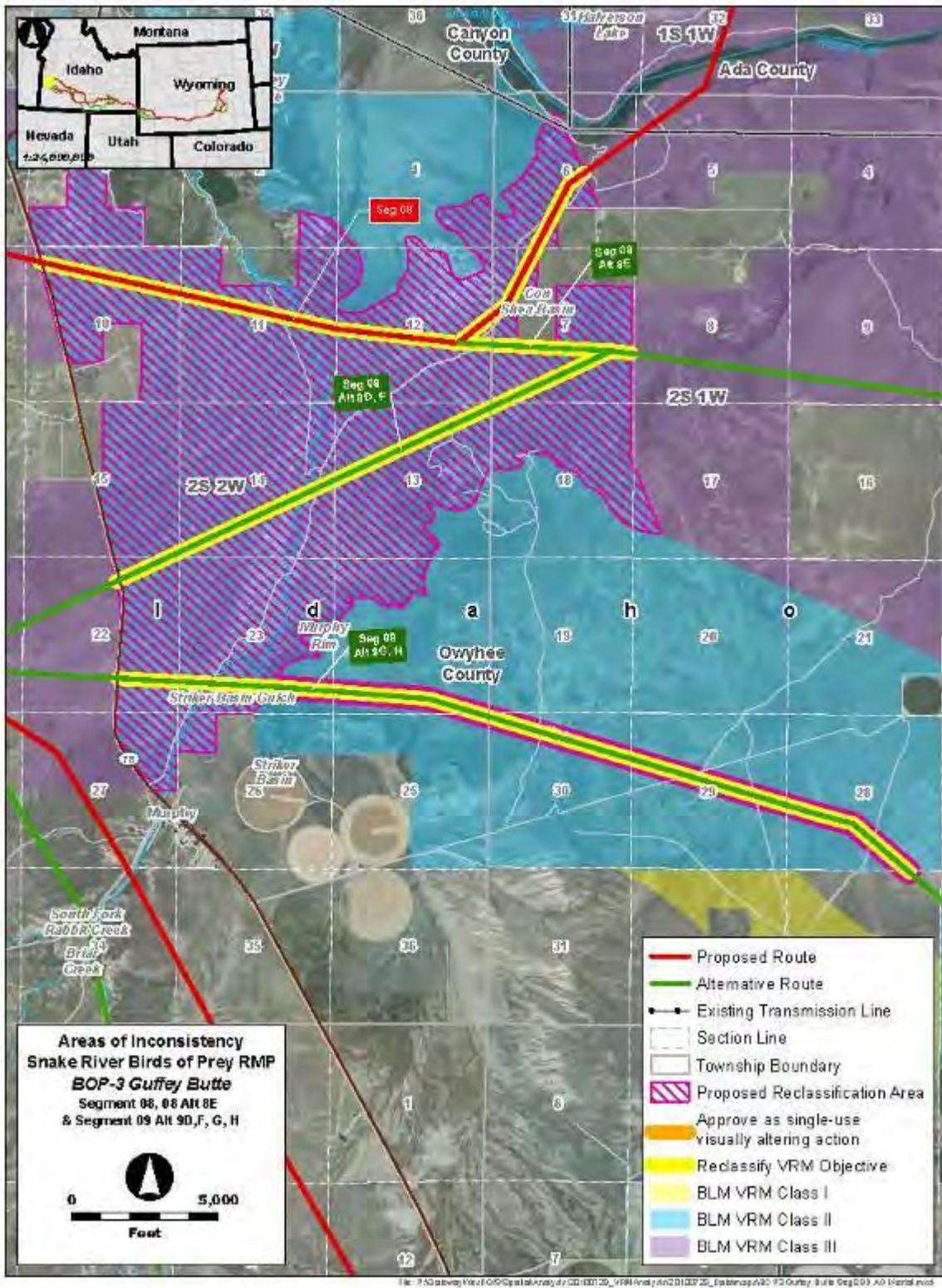


Figure 5.9-11. AOI BOP-3 Guffey Butte AOI Detailed Map

5.10 Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP

The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP (1980) provides direction for management of public land within its boundaries under the jurisdiction of the Shoshone FO in south-central Idaho. The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP planning area consists of approximately 892,000 acres in Blaine, Camas, Elmore, Gooding, and Lincoln Counties (see Figure 5.10-1). The Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP includes objectives and recommendations for the following activities: lands, minerals, recreation, wildlife, range management, and watershed management.

The MFP includes Recreation Objective R-4, with a stated goal to “Manage the visual resources within the Planning Area in conformance with the guidance in BLM Manual 6310.18 B-E.” BLM Manual 6310.18 states that the cited guidance is to be used as tentative minimum management objectives. If these objectives can be met, no further or more detailed objectives are considered necessary. The following Classifications appear in the MFP, which are equivalent to the BLM Visual Classes presented in Section 1.0 of this report.

“R-4.1 VRM Class II As a guideline, no management activity should be allowed to cause any evident changes in the form, line, color, or texture that is characteristic of the landscape within Class II areas, utilizing concealment, repetition of elements, minimizing surface disturbance, etc. to meet the goal.

R-4.2 VRM Class III As a goal, management activities may cause changes in the basic elements (form, line, color, texture) of the characteristic landscape, but the changes should remain subordinate to the existing visual character. Incorporate the methodology outlined in BLM Manual 6320 Visual Resource Contrast Rating.

R-4.3 VRM Class IV Changes caused by management activities may subordinate the original character but should reflect what could be a natural occurrence within the characteristic landscape.”

Proposed Segment 8 is a 131-mile route north of the Snake River that connects the Midpoint and Hemingway Substations. Segment 8 would be constructed as single circuit 500 kV line. A key issue in Segment 8 is balancing between disturbing private agricultural land and publicly managed land with more resource constraints. Constraints on publicly managed land include historic trails, wetlands, steep slopes, and raptor nests. An important siting factor was following existing transmission line corridors. Of the several existing east-west transmission lines the proposed route follows the existing transmission line with the least overall impact.

Approximately 13 miles of Proposed Route 8 cross BLM-administered land managed under the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP, 8.2 miles of which cross VRM Class II lands. VRM objectives within the Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills MFP would not be met by the Project in this area. AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge was identified as an AOI because the Project would not conform to VRM Class II objectives for this area. Typically the level of change to the characteristic landscape in VRM Class II areas would not allow for the presence of a transmission line.

5.10.1 AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge (Proposed Route – Segment 8)

The Burnt Ridge AOI is in the vicinity of King Hill, Idaho. It is located approximately 30 miles northwest of Midpoint Substation and approximately three miles north of Interstate 84. Much of the Segment 8 Proposed Route in this area was located parallel to existing 230 kV transmission lines. This section of the route, however, also follows portions of the Oregon NHT. The Burnt Ridge AOI passes through four separate parcels of BLM-administered land managed for VRM Class II, ranging in size from 27 acres to 8,249 acres. The Project crosses a total of 8.2 miles of VRM Class II-managed land within the AOI. Figure 5.10-2 shows the location of the Burnt Creek AOI, the location of the Proposed Route, and the VRM management classification.

Alternatives Considered – Segment 8 consists of the Proposed Route, and four feasible alternatives. Four additional alternatives were considered in detail, but were eliminated due to various constraints. The Proponents attempted to avoid residential and agricultural land and to follow the WWE corridor or existing transmission lines when determining the route for Segment 8. Alternative 8A follows a WWE corridor and would not cross the area managed under the MFP. In making a balanced routing decision that led to the selection of the proposed and alternative routes, crossing VRM Class II areas was unavoidable without causing greater overall effects.

Existing Landscape Conditions – The Snake River is the major water feature in the 15-mile-radius area surrounding the Burnt River AOI. It crosses the southern half of the area from west to southeast, leaving the Study Area in the vicinity of the Hagerman Wildlife Management Area. The flat to rolling topography on both sides of the river is cut by numerous drainages; some with steep, canyon-like, walls. The northern part of the area is occupied by the steep terrain of the Mount Bennett Hills. Much of the area in the north is undeveloped. There are large areas of farmland along the Snake River in the southeast as well as Deadman Flat, Black Mesa, and Pasadena Valley. Interstate 84, the major road in the area, passes east and then southeast through the Study Area. U.S. Highway 26 crosses the study area from east to west and U.S. Highway 30 crosses north to south. Along these highways and the rivers there are a number of communities including Glens Ferry, Bliss, and Hagerman. Numerous transmission lines run southeast to northwest through this area. In addition to the highways and communities, potential viewing areas include recreation areas such as Three Island Crossing State Park.

Attachment A, Figure BH-1a shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP C84. The topography along the western portion of AOI BH-1 along Segment 8, ranges from essentially flat to more severe and canyon-like along King Hill Creek. Figure BH-1c shows the existing wood pole H-frame transmission line that would be paralleled, as viewed from KOP 347. South of Segment 8 of the Proposed Route, and moving east, there is a substantial amount of irrigated agriculture and development while north of the segment there is more undeveloped land.

Conformance Analysis- Figure 5.10-3 shows the viewshed, KOPs and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to determine the degree of consistency with the existing VRM classification. Attachment A, Figure BH-1b simulates landscape conditions showing the Proposed Route as viewed from KOP C84. This KOP, as well as C85, were selected because they are located on the Oregon NHT where VRM Class II objectives

were assigned to protect from visual intrusion. Thus consistency between the project and visual management goals may be directly assessed.

Scenic views of Kings Crown and the surrounding area north of King Hill are important to the surrounding sensitive viewers such as sensitive viewers along the Oregon NHT at KOPs C84 and C85. Many of the views in this area, including these particular KOPs, are interrupted by development and man-made features such as high voltage transmission lines and wind towers. Man-made development has changed the surrounding form, line, and texture of the adjacent views, representing a deviation from the natural setting. Attachment A, Figure BH-1d shows the Proposed Route in relation to an existing H-frame transmission line from KOP 347. From these KOPs it is apparent that there will be some skylining and that screening and other mitigation efforts would not substantially lower the impacts to scenic resources in the surrounding area. The sweeping terrain, undulating forms, strong horizon line, and mottled vegetation are interrupted by existing man-made development. However, from views in the foreground and middleground, the Proposed Project structures and access roads would draw the attention of the casual observer and thus, not conform to VRM Class II objectives.

Due to the number of transmission lines and other development in the vicinity, it is recommended that the area within 3,000 feet north of the existing transmission line ROW will be reclassified from VRM Class II to VRM Class III (including the existing ROW). This VRM designation will better reflect the visual resource conditions of the area and allow the Gateway West Project to be consistent with the MFP visual objectives.

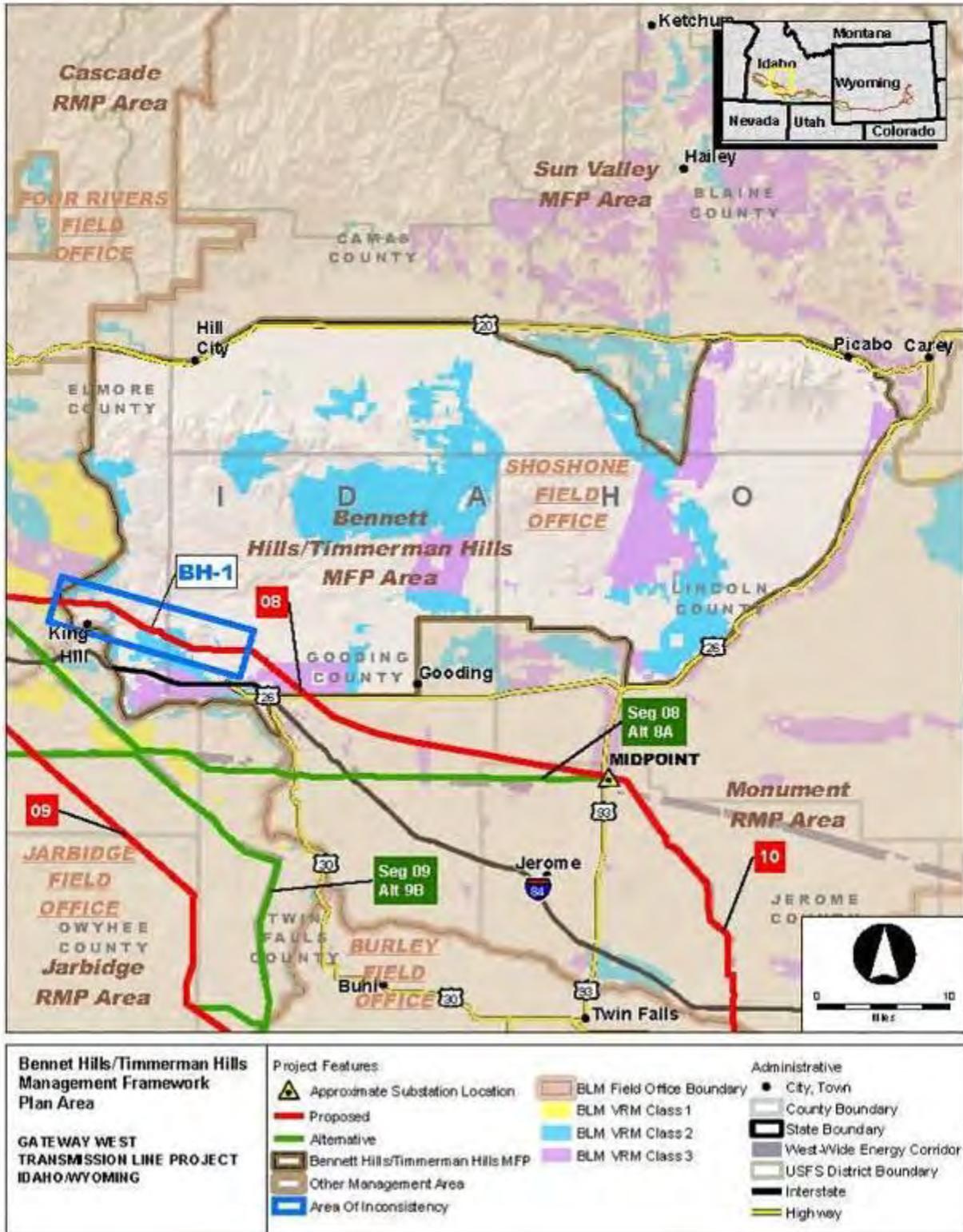


Figure 5.10-1. Bennett Hills/Timmerman Hills RMP Boundary Map

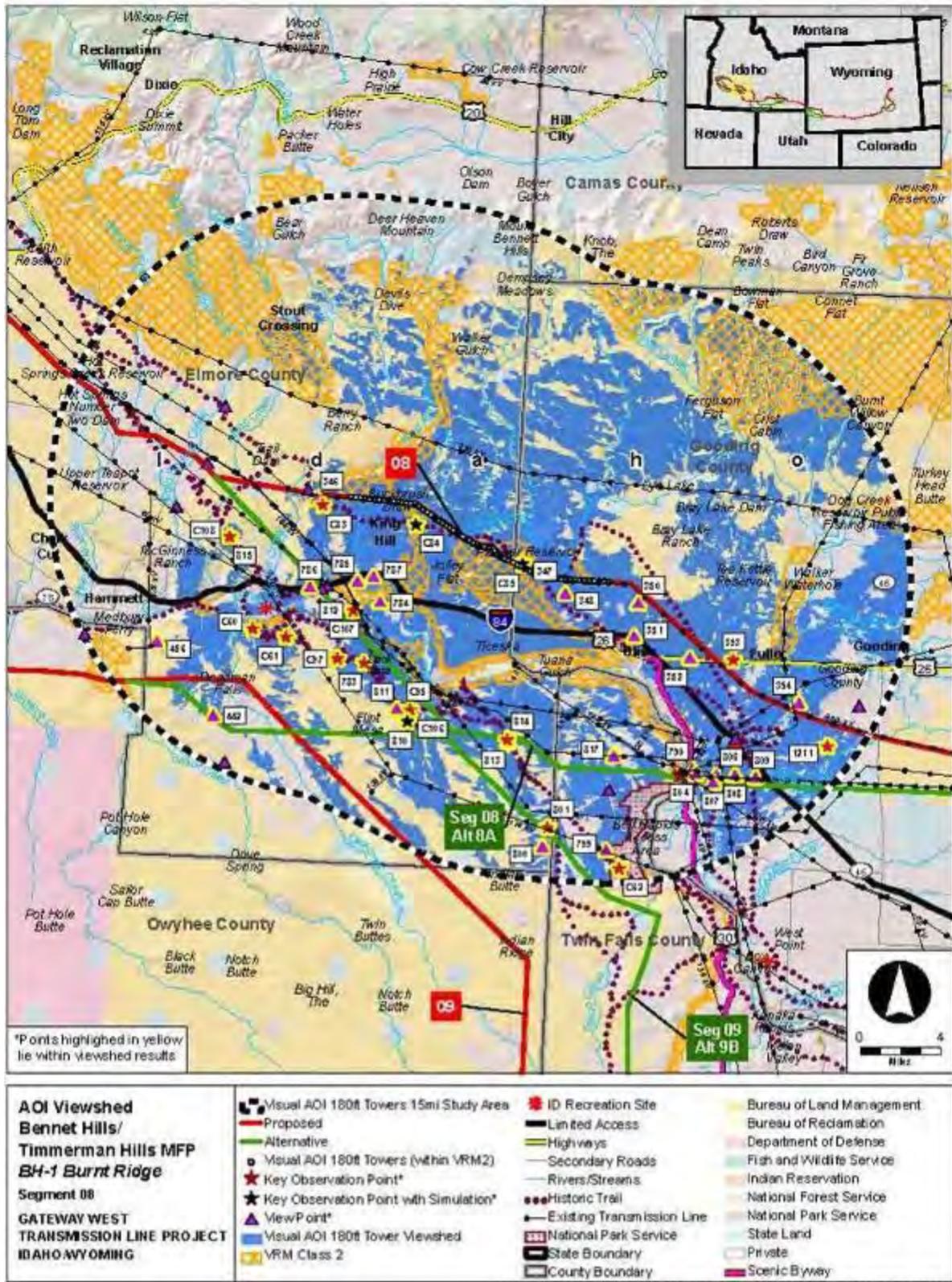


Figure 5.10-2. AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge Visual Analysis



Figure 5.10-3. AOI BH-1 Burnt Ridge Detailed Map

5.11 Wells RMP

The Wells RMP (BLM 1985b) provides direction for management of public lands in a planning area of approximately 5.7 million acres in northeast Nevada (see Figure 5.11-1). The area is managed by the Wells FO of the Elko District. Public land occupies approximately 83 percent of the planning area, with the remainder consisting of private parcels, including checkerboard lands (alternating public/private sections). A management objective in the RMP is to determine designated utility corridors in coordination with other multiple uses, including scenic resources. One management action is to locate utility corridors on existing rights-of-way wherever possible. Other planning criteria include following existing roads or highways, including Interstate highways. Scenic views of the north-south trending mountains were viewed as high quality visual resources, while valley areas were considered lower quality scenic resources. One VRM Class II management is crossed by Alternative 7I.

5.11.1 Segment Alternatives

Segment 7 of the Proposed Route consists of 118 miles of single-circuit 500-kV transmission line. It leaves Populus Substation and proceeds northwest for about 15 miles, following existing transmission lines and Segment 5, before turning due west and proceeding through about 103 miles of mainly private irrigated agriculture to Cedar Hill Substation. There is significant local opposition to the Proposed Route due to proximity to residences and potential economic effects on a number of agricultural lands, including loss of prime farmland and CRP land, disruption to existing crops and surface irrigation patterns, interference with center pivot irrigation, and potential electrical effects on confined animal feeding operations. As a result, a multi-county task force consisting of residents, county officials, and state legislators, have recommended alternatives well south of the Proposed Route, mainly on NFS lands or BLM-managed lands. Constraints in the southern alternatives include high-quality forested land, historic trails, wetlands, steep slopes, designated big game range, sage-grouse, and raptor nests.

In all, there are 10 feasible alternatives for this segment and eight segments that were reviewed, but are no longer under consideration. Alternatives 7A through 7G are short alternatives that diverge from the Proposed Route to avoid local features, such as dairies, raptor nests, more concentrated agriculture, and so on. There are three alternatives located to the south of the Proposed Route. Alternative 7H is located approximately 10 to 15 miles south of the Proposed Route. It passes through a mix of private land, BLM-managed land, and the Caribou-Targhee and Sawtooth NFs. Total length of Alternative 7H is 127 miles. The multi-county task force recommends Alternative 7I, a 173-mile route located near the Idaho/Nevada state line, approximately 25 to 30 miles south of the Proposed Route. The Proponents prepared Alternative 7H in response to comments from the Counties. Alternative 7J was identified by the multi-county task force in August 2010. The route follows the same alignment as 7I until milepost 137.2. From here, Alternative 7J continues west and northwest before branching into two lines; one of which travels northeast to meet up with the start of Proposed Route 9, the other continuing northwest and north before meeting up with Proposed Segment 9 near the western border of the Burley FO.

5.11.2 AOI W-1 Goose Creek (Alternative 7I/7J)

The Wells AOI is located on Alternatives 7I/7J, immediately south of the Nevada/Idaho state line, beginning approximately 10 miles west of the Nevada/Utah border. The Nevada alignment for Alternatives 7I/7J was proposed because it would avoid a designated roadless area in the Sawtooth NF that extends to the Idaho/Nevada border. Alternatives 7I/7J pass east to west through several miles of land managed for VRM Class III objectives, before crossing 0.25-mile of VRM Class II land (a single parcel totaling 48.4 acres), located on the east side of Goose Creek. Figure 5.11-1 shows the viewshed for the Goose Creek AOI, Alternatives 7I/7J (the green line along the state boundary), and the VRM classifications lands.

AOI Alternatives – The route could not be moved north in the vicinity of the AOI without entering the designated roadless area within the Sawtooth NF. The route could be moved south to avoid the VRM Class II parcel (see below). Selection of the Segment 7 Proposed Route would avoid the Wells AOI, all of the NFS land, and most BLM-managed land. Selection of any route except 7I or 7J also keeps the transmission line out of Nevada. However, the Proposed Route is closer to residential areas, and would meet with determined local opposition and probable economic losses to agriculture. Alternative 7I is 55 miles longer than the Proposed Route and 46 miles longer than Alternative 7H, much of it in high-quality natural areas, two geothermal resources, and other NFS and BLM-managed land with sensitive visual resources. Much of the route for Alternative 7J follows the same alignment as Alternative 7I. It was proposed as an alternative routing for 7I. The different alignment at the western end of the segment moved the substation southwest of the Proposed Route substation location.

Landscape Conditions – The 15-mile study area centered on AOI W-1 is located on the border of Idaho and Nevada, but includes a small part of northwestern Utah. There is little development and much of the area comprises rugged topography especially in the Sawtooth NF. Forests are scattered throughout the 15-mile study area in the more mountainous areas, especially in the NF. No major roads or transmission lines cross the area and there are no large communities. The local landscape comprises rolling topography, sagebrush and grasses with little or no manmade features and more mountainous areas in the background. Sensitive viewing areas include the many trails and campgrounds in the area.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.11-2 shows the viewshed from AOI W-1, VRM II managed lands, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to assess the consistency of the proposed project with the existing VRM class. Scenic views of Goose Creek between Fivemile Gulch and Deadline Ridge are important to sensitive viewers visiting portions of the California NHT or the Sawtooth NF located directly north of this AOI. These sensitive viewers are represented by KOPs 1089 and 1090 (Attachment A, Figures W-1 and W-2) located approximately 2.0 miles east of the VRM Class II parcel crossed by the Alternative 7I alignment.³ General views are illustrated in Attachment A,

³ A field trip to area was undertaken in November 2010. However, a snow storm prevented taking a photo at the actual AOI location. Establishing a photo point in the spring of 2011 was also prevented by snow. Therefore, a simulation could not be prepared for the Draft EIS.

Figures W-1 and W-2, landscape character pictures from KOPs 1089 and 1090. The views of undulating terrain and background mountainous silhouettes, such as Sugarloaf Peak and Rocky Peak, with mottled vegetation exhibits diversity in form, line, color, and texture with little or no visible man-made features. The setting is undisturbed and diverse in form, line, and texture but very common within the surrounding region of sagebrush steppe landscapes.

While a transmission line following the Alternative 7I route would be partially screened by the surrounding topography, it would still introduce new structural elements to this landscape. As a result, a transmission line in this area would draw the attention of the casual observer, would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture and would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. The distance of Alternative 7I from sensitive viewers would not allow project elements to blend in with the surrounding landscape features; therefore, the visual contrast would be high.

Plan Amendment – It is assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area to protect the scenic values of the landscape adjacent to Goose Creek, and adjacent scenic resources. During the original Visual Resource Inventory for the Wells FO, private lands were not considered when determining inventory class polygons. A VRM Class II polygon was created along the Goose Creek drainage. Surrounding lands were classified as VRM Class III. When private lands were removed from the polygons, specifically those private lands within the VRM Class II polygon along Goose Creek, a small 48.4-acre piece of public land abutting Idaho was left in as VRM Class II. Alternative 7I would cross this isolated VRM II parcel for approximately 0.25 mile. The Draft Wells RMP and EIS discuss how projects that would exceed recommended contrast maximum for area will be addressed and states that the “decision as to whether mitigating measure must be implemented rests with the District Manager and will be made on a case-by-case basis.” If this route is selected, an amendment has been determined to be necessary. The recommended amendment would be to allow the Project to cross the area classified as VRM II as a one-time, visually altering action without reclassifying the area (Figure 5.11-3).

There would be two additional options. The first would be to re-align the route to avoid the area classified as VRM II by moving the line approximately 0.25 mile south onto private land. Re-alignment of this route further south would impact similar natural resources and would cross higher ground, thereby increasing visibility. It would also impact a private landowner. The second option would be to reclassify the area of VRM Class II crossed by Alternative 7I to a VRM Class III objective, which would conform to the surrounding VRM Class III landscapes. This would have less effect on scenery than shifting the route onto private land immediately south of the parcel to avoid crossing VRM Class II. It also would avoid impacts to private land.

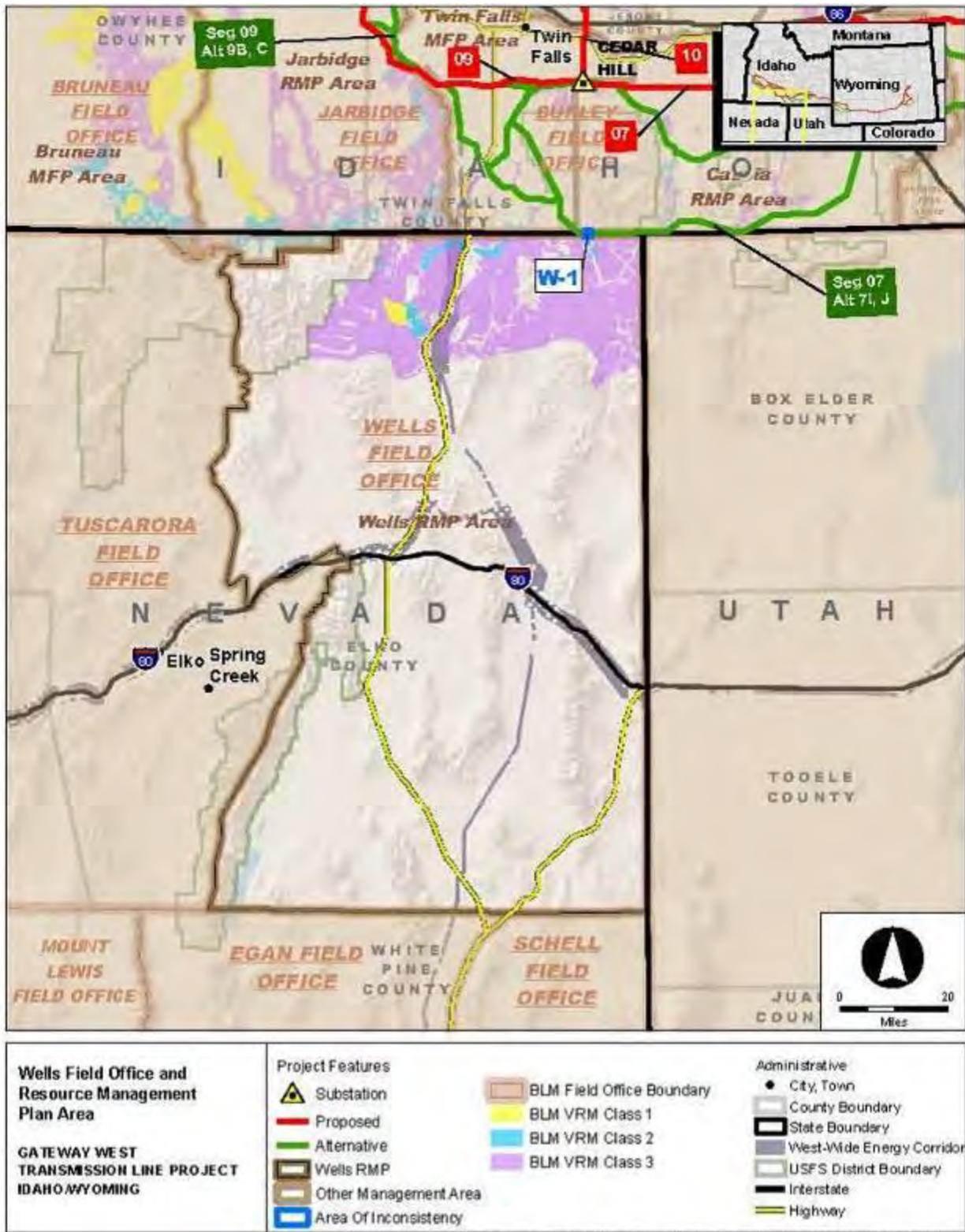


Figure 5.11-1. Wells Field Office and Resource Management Plan Area

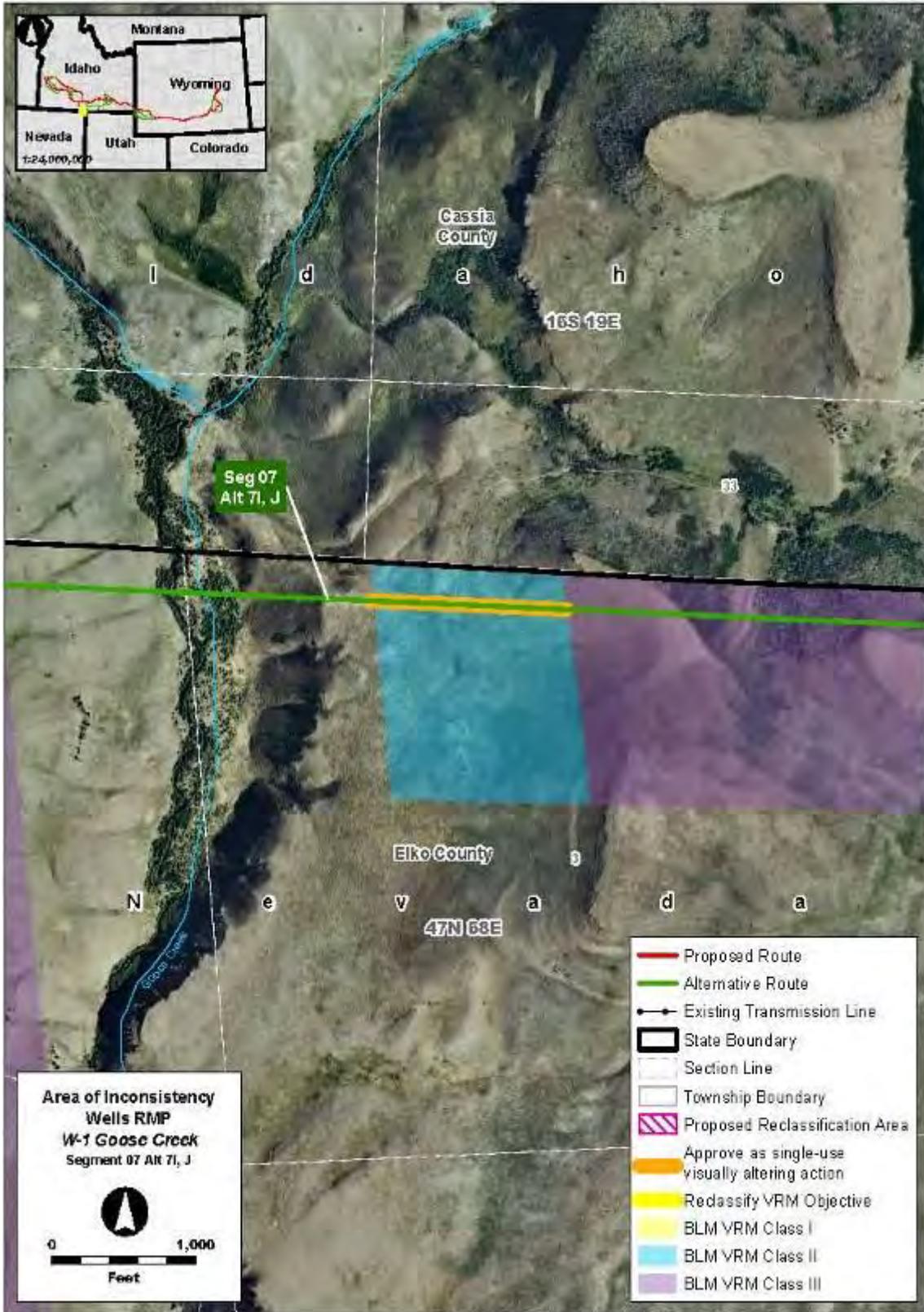


Figure 5.11-3. Area of Inconsistency

5.12 Bruneau MFP

Actions that occur on lands managed by the Bruneau FO, including the granting of ROW under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, are guided by decisions recorded in the Bruneau MFP (1983b). The Bruneau MFP currently restricts impacts to visual resources. Thus, the proposed Gateway West Project does not conform with the Bruneau MFP as currently written:

“Manage all public lands in a manner which will protect and maintain the existing visual qualities, provide for enhancement where consistent with management policies, and provide for rehabilitation of land which presently do not meet the visual quality standards of surrounding lands. Use VRM contrast rating and project application design process for all management activities without unduly reducing commodity production or limiting program effectiveness.”

5.12.1 Segment Alternatives

Segment 9 of the Proposed Route consists of 161.7 miles of single-circuit 500-kV transmission line between the proposed Cedar Hill and planned Hemingway Substations. The route proceeds generally west through private and public land through the Twin Falls MFP planning area and the northwest through Jarbidge RMP, SRBOP RMP, Bruneau MFP, and Owyhee MFP planning areas. The route crosses the Salmon Falls Creek ACEC, WSR-eligible sections of Salmon Falls Creek, as well as multiple SRMAs throughout its length.

In all, there are eight feasible alternatives for this segment and four alternatives that were reviewed but not studied in detail. . Alternatives 9A and 9C are short alternatives that diverge from the Proposed Route in the Twin Falls MFP management area. Alternative 9B is a 53-mile-long segment developed to follow the nearby WWE corridor and diverges from the Proposed Route within the Jarbidge and Twin Falls planning areas. Alternative 9D diverges from the Proposed Route in the Jarbidge RMP planning area and parallels the Proposed Route to the north, through the SRBOP RMP planning area, joining with the Proposed Route approximately 20 miles northwest of the Bruneau planning area. Alternative 9E parallels the Proposed Route approximately 7 miles to the south, leaving and joining the Proposed Route at the same locations as Alternative 9D. Alternative 9F follows the Proposed Route until MP 113.3, avoiding the C.J. Strike SRMA and the Cove Non-motorized Area, and then crosses in a northeast direction to join up with the 9D alignment at MP 16.6, following this alignment until it joins with the Proposed Route. Alternative 9G follows the 9D alignment until MP 41.2, where it crosses the Snake River, approximately 4 miles south of the Alternative 9D crossing. Alternative 9G then crosses in a northwest direction through the SRBOP for approximately 15 miles before joining the Proposed Route, paralleling the Oregon NHT for much of its length. Alternative 9H follows the same alignment as Alternative 9F, avoiding the Cove Non-motorized Area, until it crosses the Snake River at the same point as Alternative 9G and follows the Alternative 9G alignment through the SRBOP for the rest of its length.

Approximately 33 miles of Segment 9 of the Proposed Route cross the area within the Bruneau FO boundaries, 17.6 miles of which is on BLM-managed land. One Route Alternative for Segment 9, 9E, is present within the Bruneau MFP planning area, and

avoids the VRM class II areas. Alternative 9D is also avoids this area, traveling through the SRBOP to the north instead. Neither of these routes follow an existing utility corridor.

5.12.2 AOI B-1 Castle Creek (Segment 9 Proposed Route)

The Bruneau AOI is located on Segment 9 of the Proposed Route to the east of Castle Creek, approximately 2 miles south of the SRBOP management boundary. The route would cross a 282-acre VRM Class II parcel for approximately, 0.25-mile. Figure 5.12-1 shows the viewshed for the Castle Creek AOI, Segment 9 of the Proposed Route and the VRM classifications lands.

Existing Conditions – The topography in the area within 15 miles of AOI B-1 is defined by undulating to dominant ridges and buttes such as Sinker Creek Butte dissected by broad, open valleys and meandering water bodies such as Castle Creek and the Snake River. The central and northern portions of the area have a series of drainages and ridges running north and south into the Snake River. The areas to the southwest of the Snake River Valley are more rugged with severe slopes such as near Red Mountain and Hayden Peak. The majority of the area is extensively farmed with pivot irrigation. Murphy, the most significant community in the area, is located in the north quadrant on the west side of the Snake River. Highway 45 crosses the area from northwest to southeast and generally parallels the Snake River. One transmission lines proceeds north to south through the area. Sensitive viewing areas include the Oregon NHT, the Snake River, Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway, Western Heritage Historic Byway, Owyhee Uplands Back Country Byway, Celebration Park, Swan Falls, and residences in Murphy and in the adjacent agricultural areas along the Snake River Plain.

Figure 5.12-4 shows existing landscape conditions as viewed from KOP 581. The landscape in the foreground is flat to gently sloping and covered with grasses and riparian vegetation adjacent to Castle Creek. Rolling to rugged hills, such as Red Mountain, are seen in the background. There are visible water elements and a few man-made modifications in view, including Castle Creek Road and farm outbuildings immediately adjacent to the viewer.

Conformance Analysis – Figure 5.12-2 shows the viewshed from AOI B-1, VRM II managed lands, and other features within the 15-mile radius study area used to assess the whether the proposed project conforms the existing VRM class. Scenic views of the various buttes throughout the Snake River Plain as well as distant mountain ranges are important to sensitive residential viewers or recreational users visiting portions of the Oregon NHT adjacent to KOP 581. KOP 581 is located on a segment of the Oregon NHT approximately 280 feet north of Segment 9 of the Proposed Route as it follows the Snake River in a southeast to northwest direction. The view from KOP 581 provided in Figure 5.12-4 is not facing the AOI, but is viewing adjacent lands. The views of the flat to undulating terrain, background mountain silhouettes with mottled to clumped vegetation, and meandering waterbody exhibits diversity in form, line, color, and texture with few man-made features. The setting at this KOP is relatively undisturbed in all directions, except for roadway and a few adjacent wooden structures. From this KOP, the proposed Project would be partially screened by the ridge but would still skyline the mountainous views. The close distance of the Project from KOP 581 results in the features dominating the landscape with such prominence that the visual contrast would be strong. The

Proposed Route would introduce new dominant structural elements into this view to the north which would draw the attention of the casual observer, and would deviate from the natural form, line, color, and texture; therefore, it would not conform to VRM Class II objectives. It is assumed that VRM Class II objectives have been assigned to this particular area in order to protect the Oregon NHT corridor as well as adjacent scenic resources.

5.12.3 Plan Amendment

This AOI is a relatively isolated parcel of VRM Class II management within a larger landscape of extensive agriculture, including pivot-irrigation. It is proposed that, if this route is selected, the entire 282-acre parcel be reclassified from VRM Class II to Class III (Figure 5.12-3). This would prevent the creation of two relatively small and isolated VRM Class II parcels that would occur if just the 177 acres within the WWE corridor were reclassified. This amendment would be consistent with the use of the land for a high-voltage transmission line ROW.

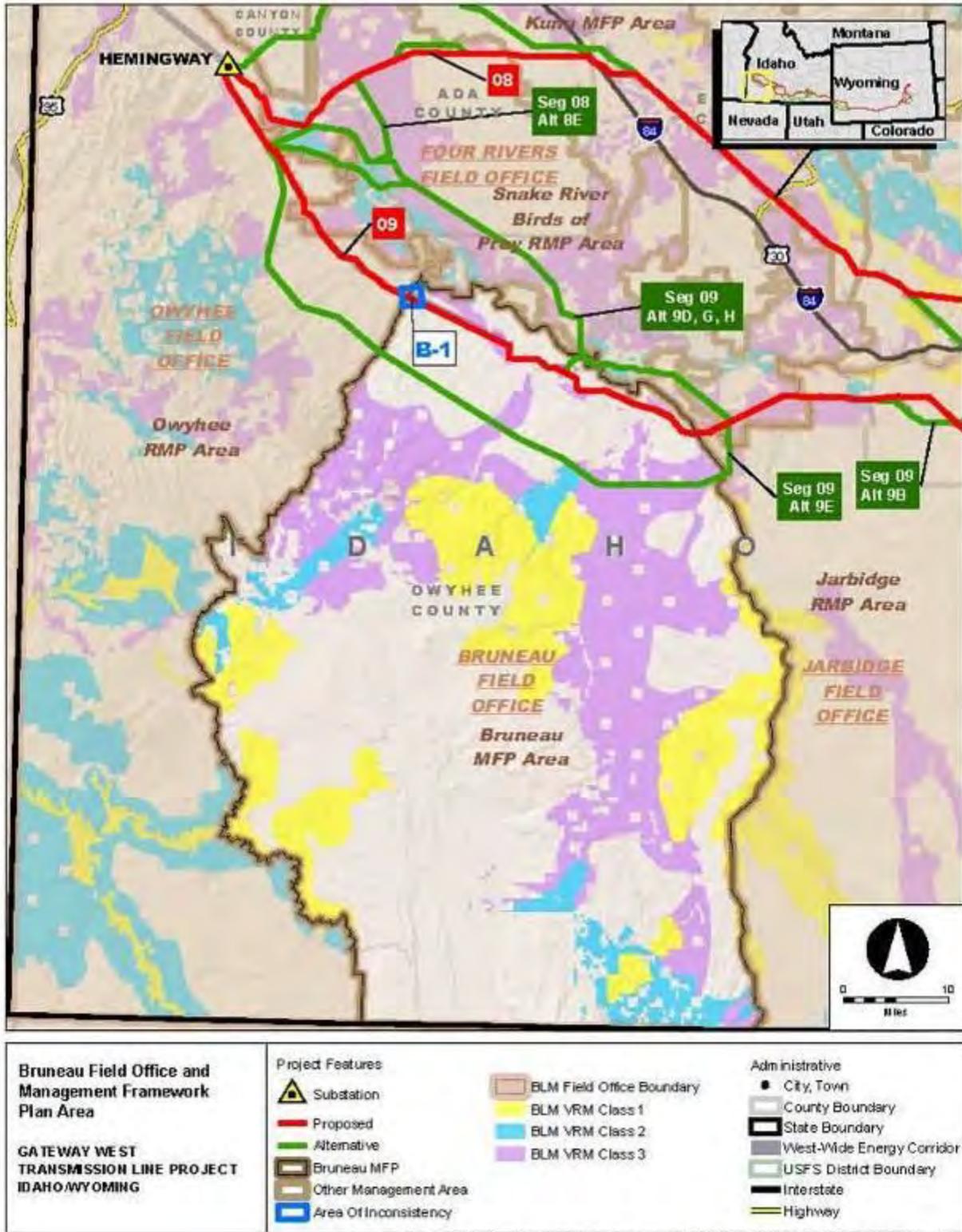


Figure 5.12-1. Bruneau Field Office and Resource Management Plan Area

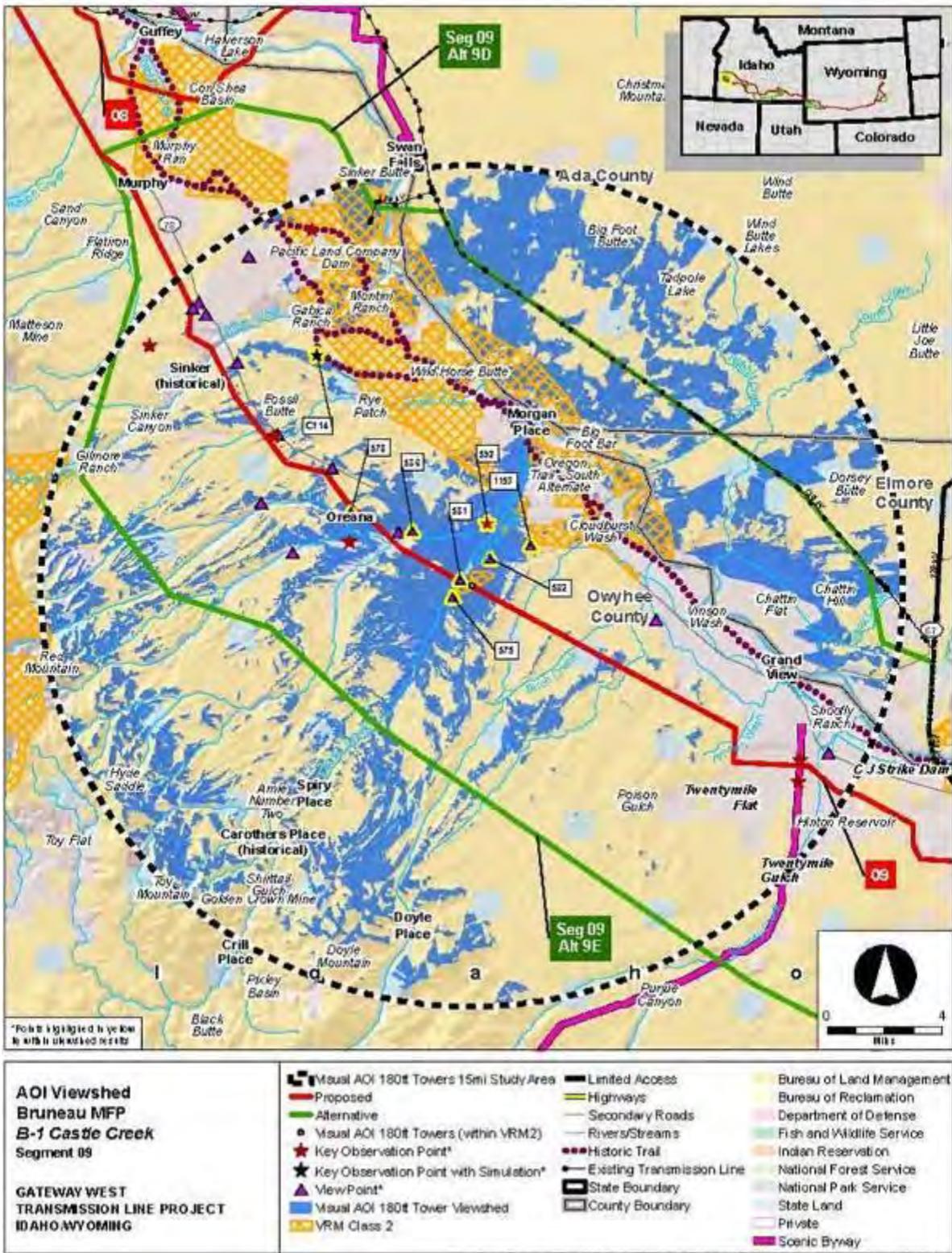


Figure 5.12-2. AOI B-1 Castle Creek Visual Analysis

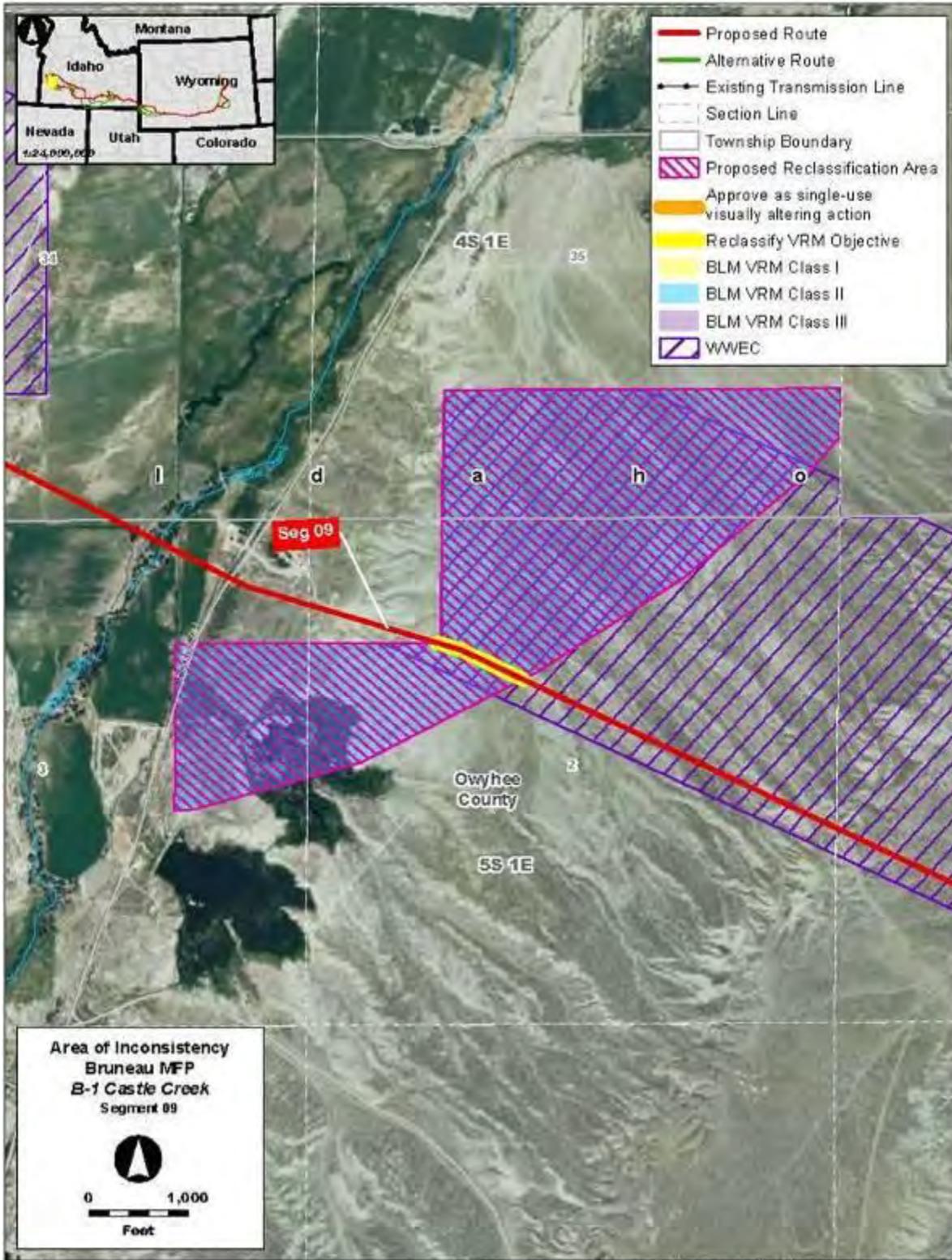


Figure 5.12-3. AOI B-1 Castle Creek Detailed Map



Figure 5.12-4. View of Lands Adjacent to AOI B-1 from KOP 581