Federal Lead Agency:
United States
Department of Commerce
National Telecommunications
& Information Administration
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Grant Award:
American Recovery and
Reinvestment Act

State Lead Agency:
California Public Utilities
Commission
Energy Division
505 Van Ness Avenue,
4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Assessment
ARRA Award: NT10 BIX 5570125

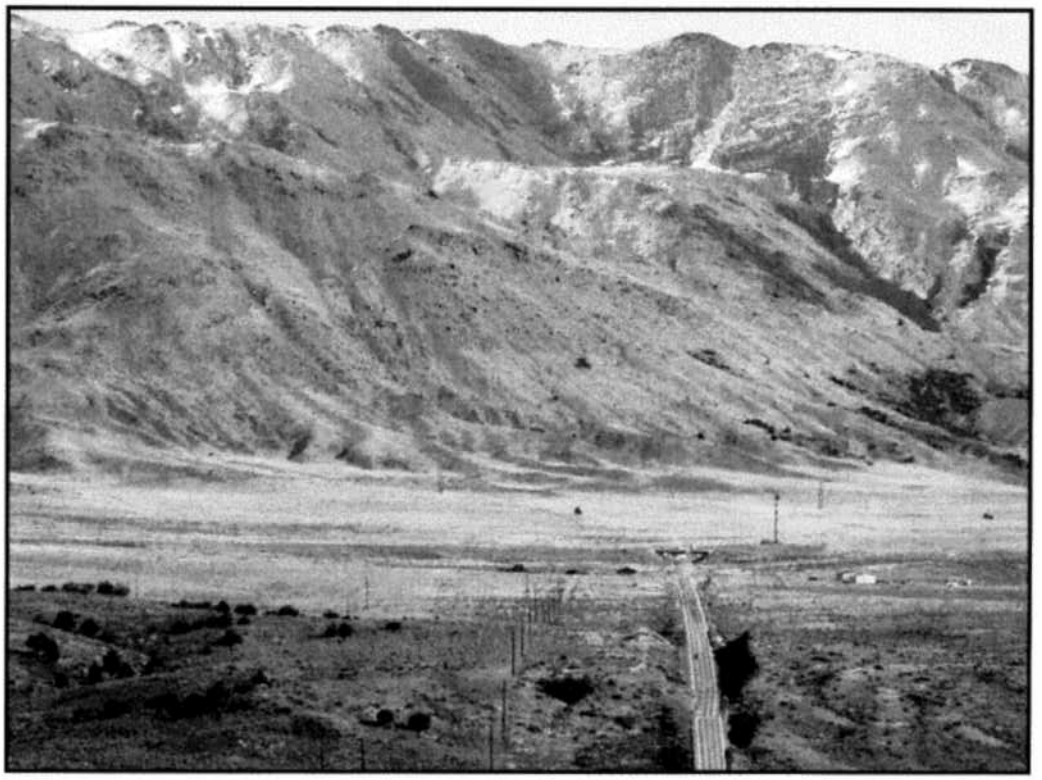
California Environmental Quality Act
Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration
SCH: 2011052083

PSREC-PST
Mid-Mile Fiber Project

Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative

Lassen, Plumas and Sierra Counties, California and Washoe County, Nevada

Final - October 2011



PLUMAS SIERRA RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
PSREC-PST MID-MILE FIBER PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents (Continued):

Table of Contents (Continued):

Table of Contents (Continued):

Table of Contents (Continued):

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MAPS

Table of Contents (Continued):

LIST OF PHOTOS

Table of Contents (Continued):

LIST OF APPENDICES

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronym	***Description***
A.D.	After Death
AAQS	Ambient Air Quality Standards
AB	Assembly Bill
AGL	Above Ground Level
AN	Audible Noise
APE	Area of Potential Effects
AQMD	Air Quality Management District
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
AUM	Animal Unit Months
B.C.	Before Christ
BA	Biological Assessment
Backhaul	The portion of a network that comprises of the intermediate links between the core network, or backbone, of the network and the small sub networks at the "edge" of the entire hierarchical network.
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	Best Management Practice
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
Broadband	Of, relating to or being a high speed communications network and especially one in which a frequency range is divided into multiple independent channels for simultaneous transmission of signals (as voice, data, or video)
BRWM	Bureau of Remediation and Waste Management
BTOP	Broadband Technology Opportunities Program
CA	California
CAFO	Confined Animal Feeding Operation

Acronym	*Description*
CAI	Critical Anchor Institution: Universities, hospitals, sports facilities, performing arts and other cultural facilities (like museums and libraries), public utilities, and some large churches and corporations within a city or state.
CAISO	California Independent System Operator
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CCA	Chromate Copper Arsenate
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDC	Conservation Data Center
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEC	California Energy Commission
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CH	Methane
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNEL	Community Noise Exposure Level
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	Carbon Monoxide
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
CoE	Plumas County Office of Education
CPUC	California Public Utilities Commission
CSLC	California State Lands Commission
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
Dark Fiber	A fiber optic cable that is not being used

Acronym	*Description*
dB	Decibels
dBA	A-Weighted Decibels
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DWDM	Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing
EA	Environmental Assessment
EDMS	Emissions and Dispersion Modeling System
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
End User	The end user is the individual who uses the product after it has been fully developed and marketed.
EO	Executive Order
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FCAA	Federal Clean Air Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Administration
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FM	Fuel Model
FMU	Fire Management Unit
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FRCC	Feather River Community College

Acronym	*Description*
FS	Forest Service
FSC	Full-Service Capability
g/m3	Micrograms per Cubic Meter
Gbps	Gigabits per second
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIBA	Globally Important Bird Area
Gigabit	One billion bits
GIS	Geographic Information System
H_2S	Hydrogen Sulfide
HC	Hydrocarbon
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drill
ILEC	Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier
IRU	Indefeasible Right to Use
IS	Initial Study
KOP	Key Observation Point
kV	Kilovolt
kW	Kilowatt
LBP	Local broadband providers
LCAPCD	Lassen County Air Pollution Control District
LCT	Lahontan Cuthroat Trout
Ldn	Day Night Level
LLC	Limited Liability Corporation
Lmax	Lmax refers to the maximum A-weighted noise level recorded for a single noise event.
LMUD	Lassen Municipal Utility District

Acronym	*Description*
LOS	Level of Service
LSC	Limited Service Capability
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank
Mbit	Megabit – one million bits
Mbps	Megabits per second
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MEL	Most Efficient Level
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPE, Inc.	MPE, Incorporated
Mph	Miles Per Hour
MW	Megawatts
N0x	Oxides of Nitrogen
N2O	Nitrous Oxide
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service
NCCP	Natural Community Conservation Planning Tool
ND	Negative Declaration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NEPDG	National Energy Policy Development Group
NESC	National Electrical Safety Code
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places

Acronym	*Description*
NLA	Native Languages of the Americas
NLCD	National Land Cover Database
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NNHP	Nevada Natural Heritage Program
NO2	Nitrogen Dioxide
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association
NOFA	Notice of Funding Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOX	Nitrogen Oxides
NPDES	National Pollution Discharge Elimination System
NPL	National Priorities List
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRPA	National Resource Protection Act
NSR	New Source Review
NTIA	National Telecommunications and Information Administration
NV	Nevada
NWCC	National Wind Coordinating Committee
NWI	National Wetland Inventory
NWPCC	Northwest Power and Conservation Council
NZDSF	Non-Zero Dispersion Shifted Fiber
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
O3	Ozone

Acronym	*Description*
OCTA	Oregon-California Trails Association
ODTR	Optical time domain reflectometer
°F	Degrees Fahrenheit
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
ORV	Off-Road Vehicle
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Pb	Lead
PCBs	Polychlorinated biphenyls
PCP	Pentachlorophenol
PDH	Plumas District Hospital
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric
PM	Particulate Matter
PM10	Particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than 10
Pmd	Polarization mode dispersion
PNF	Plumas National Forest
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
ps	Picosecond
ps/km	Picosecond per kilometer
ps/km1/2	Picosecond per kilometer divided by 2
ps/nm	Picosecond per nanometer
PS/nm.km	Picosecond per nanometer times kilometer
PSC	Partial Service Capability
PSD	Prevention of Significant Deterioration
PSREC	Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative
RAC	Resource Advisory Council

Acronym	*Description*
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RCRC	Regional Council of Rural Counties
RDUP	Rural Development Utilities Program
RFP	Request for Proposal
RMP	Resource Management Plan
ROD	Record of Decision
ROG	Reactive Organic Gas
ROS	Recreational Opportunities Spectrum
ROW	Right of Way
RQD	Rock Quality Designation
RSA	Rotor-Swept Area
RUS	Rural Utilities Service
S0x	Oxides of Sulfur
SB	Senate Bill
SCS	Soil Conservation Service
sf	Square Feet
SH	State Highway
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SMS	Scenery Management System
SMZ	Streamside Management Zone
SO2	Sulfur Dioxide
SPCC	Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure
SQRU	Scenic Quality Rating Units
SRMA	Special Resource Management Areas

Acronym	*Description*
SWA	State Wildlife Area
SWH	Significant Wildlife Habitat
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
Tbps	Terabits per second
TES	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load
U.S.	United States
U.S.C.	U.S. Code
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
USACOE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDI	United States Department of Interior
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
UST	Underground Storage Tank
VOC	Volatile Organic Compound
VRAP	Voluntary Response Action Program
VRM	Visual Resource Management
WAN/LAN	Wide Area Network/ Local Area Network
WAPA	Western Area Power Administration
WCB	California Wildlife Conservation Board
WCRM	Western Cultural Resources Management, Inc.

Acronym	*Description*
WHR	Wildlife-Habitat Relationships

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROPONENT

Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative (PSREC) is a member-owned electric cooperative that is required to provide electric and related services to its member owners in accordance with the reliability standards defined by the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), North American Electric Reliability Corporation, and Western Electric Coordinating Council. It also must comply with the regulations of the California Independent System Operator (CAISO), under the direction of FERC. PSREC serves 6,500 customers in Lassen, Plumas, and Sierra counties in California, and the western edge of Washoe County in Nevada.

PSREC, through its wholly owned subsidiary, Plumas Sierra Telecommunications (PST), provides a multitude of telecommunication services to this rural area, and has delivered internet service for more than 14 years.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area is located in northwestern Nevada and northeastern California, within the Diamond Mountains, which form the northeastern edge of the Plumas National Forest just as the Forest transitions into the Honey Lake/Long Valley high desert environment along the US395 north-south corridor. The northeastern edge of the Plumas National Forest is coterminous with the northeastern edge of Plumas County and the western edge of Lassen County. Susanville, California, is located on the northern boundary of the project area; Reno, Nevada forms the southern boundary; Quincy, California is located on the western boundary, and Red Rock Valley, Nevada is located on the eastern boundary of the Proposed Project Area.

The project area is rural in character and there is little evidence of a built environment in the surrounding area. Farm houses, ranches and small settlements are scattered throughout the Honey Lake Valley, mostly concentrated along US 395. The area north of the Forest land is high desert, and though it includes grazing land, the California Correctional facilities, and the Sierra Army Depot, in views north and northeast from within the project area it appears mostly undeveloped, arid and flat with large playa. Many of the community Critical Anchor Institutions (CAIs) in this rural area of northeastern California currently lack adequate access to the bandwidth required to support e-healthcare, advanced learning opportunities, economic development opportunities, and communication needs. PSREC plans to meet the broadband needs of these institutions by constructing 183 miles of new fiber for a middle mile network to deliver broadband speeds between 45 Mbps and 10 Gbps to anchor institutions and local internet service providers. Among the 18 CAIs currently committed to connect to the PSREC-PST Mid-Mile Fiber Project's network are seven government facilities, two community colleges, county offices of education, two healthcare providers, an Indian Reservation Corporation, and state correctional facilities.

For these reasons, PSREC applied to the federal government through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for a grant to build and to operate the Middle Mile Fiber System to construct sufficient fiber to meet foreseeable demand to all carriers and institutions at a standard, cost-based rate on "just, reasonable and not unreasonably discriminatory" terms. The Project involves implementing a regional middle mile network, which would be the foundation for intra- and inter-state connection and cooperation, as well as the core from which to extend broadband access to remote areas and enterprises in California's northeastern rural area. The Project would support the intent of ARRA to protect existing employment and to promote additional job opportunities.

Awarded the Grant in September 2010, Plumas Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative (PSREC) is proposing to build, operate, and maintain a 183-mile fiber optic communications network in northeastern California and northwestern Nevada. The proposed network would provide access capabilities for the following three California counties: Plumas, Sierra, and Lassen Counties, California. The proposed network would also accommodate future statewide interconnection of major Public Safety Answering Points, a future California statewide and Nevada public safety network.

Of the approximately 183 miles of proposed new fiber cable installation, 162 miles would be placed on existing pole infrastructure, the remaining 21 miles would be installed underground in conduit. New underground construction will occur for eight miles in the CALTRANS US395/SH70 ROW from Bordertown, Nevada to one-quarter mile west of Hallelujah Junction, California; for approximately one mile in existing NDOT US395 ROW on BLM-administered lands (if existing conduit is not utilized); and for seven miles in existing city/county/state ROWs within existing developed areas in California. For approximately five miles in the City of Reno, new fiber is proposed to be placed in existing conduits.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED

On September 22, 2010, the California Governor's Office convened a meeting of the directors of most California State Agencies and the Round 2 Grant Recipients. At this meeting, the Governor's Chief of Staff formally requested the expedited cooperation of applicable state agencies to ensure a seamless and timely coordination that would allow the ARRA Grant Recipients to complete the requisite Environmental Assessment.

Since the September meeting, PSREC has had on-going meetings and coordination with the BLM, Eagle Lake and Carson City Field Offices, the Plumas National Forest, other federal and state regulatory and trustee agencies.

Issues identified during project scoping included the following:

- Cultural and historic resources protection
- Native American Religious Concerns

Other primary issues and concerns addressed:

- Air quality (fugitive dust and greenhouse gas [GHG] emissions during construction)
- Vegetation restoration
- Noxious and/or invasive weeds control
- Direct, indirect, short-term, and long-term impacts to wildlife resources
- Traffic control on federal, state, and local roads during construction

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

No-Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, NTIA would not fund the Proposed Action and CPUC would not approve or fund the Proposed Action. The construction of the Proposed Action would be infeasible without federal and state funding: thus, it is likely that the proposed fiber optic network would not be constructed and operated in the near future. The rural areas of Plumas, Sierra, Lassen, and Washoe Counties would continue to be unserved or underserved by a wireless broadband network. Other communities and anchor institutions that would be served by the Proposed Action would likely continue to be unserved or underserved by high-speed broadband. Future California and Nevada interconnection of major Public Safety Answering Points, future statewide public safety networks, and a future California Telehealth Network connection of health facilities in the Proposed Action's 4-county service area would

not be possible. Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM's Sierra Front Field Office in Carson City, NV, and the Eagle Lake Field Office in Susanville, CA would not amend or issue new right-of-way authorizations under the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA). The U.S. Forest Service's Plumas National Forest, Beckwourth Ranger District in Blairsden, CA, and Mt. Hough Ranger District in Quincy, CA would not amend or issue new right-of-way authorizations under the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA)

Alternative 1 – Combination of Aerial and Underground Installation of Fiber Cable (Preferred alternative)

This alternative includes installation of approximately 183 miles of fiber cable, with 162 miles of aerial installation on existing overhead electrical pole structures and 21 miles of underground installation of fiber conduit. The aerial portion of this alternative would follow the existing powerline corridors in existing federal and state/county/city ROWs and easements. The alternative would minimize effects on the environment, cultural and historical resources, biological resources, and disruption of traffic. Constructability of this alternative would be more efficient due to the constraints associated with the seasonal nature of construction activities in this climate and environment, and by utilizing existing power pole infrastructure.

New underground construction will occur for eight miles in the CALTRANS US395 ROW from Bordertown, Nevada to Hallelujah Junction, California; for approximately one mile in existing NDOT US395 ROW on BLM-administered land (if existing conduit is not utilized); and for seven miles in existing city/county/state ROWs within existing developed areas in California. For approximately five miles in the City of Reno, new fiber is proposed to be placed in existing conduits.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

During the planning stages of the Project, PSREC considered using wireless technology to complete the network, or installing new infrastructure as an all-aerial or all underground network. The suitability and reliability of this technology would be compromised because of the rugged and mountainous terrain of a large portion of the service territory and lack of line of sight. Additionally, this wireless technology would reduce the available bandwidths and speeds across the network and would not optimize the availability of the existing electrical infrastructure, existing ROWs, easements, and PSREC's 75 years of experience in operating and maintaining a wire-based network.

An alternative that would include an all aerial fiber installation was considered because the cost would be less than the preferred alternative. A significant number of PSREC's existing pole structures are over 30 years old and are scheduled for replacement in the near future. These distribution poles are typically not tall enough to support an additional conduit and would require immediate replacement which would result in additional ground disturbance and increased time for permitting activities.

An all underground fiber conduit installation would not maximize the use of existing infrastructure and would result in significant cost increases. Additionally, the environmental disturbance generated by this alternative would be unwarranted, disruptive, and intensely time consuming, which would not allow the Proponent to meet the aggressive time lines of the ARRA Grant.

These aforementioned alternatives would not meet the requirements for a successful and efficient implementation of the Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

After requisite literature searches and field surveys, the Proposed Action was determined to have low to moderate environmental consequences on the resources of the Project Area. The following table describes the resource and the effects.

Table ES-1: Summary of Environmental Consequences

Resource Issue	Alternatives	
	No Action	Proposed Action
Air Quality	No effect	Temporary and localized increases in criteria pollutant concentrations and GHG emissions would occur during install & construction. No air district thresholds would be exceeded. Up to 1681 metric tons total of CO_2 would be emitted during construction period over 20 months. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Cultural Resources	No effect	A Class 3 intensive pedestrian survey was conducted. Known cultural resources eligible for the NRHP and California Register of Historic Resources to be avoided. Potential impacts to resources that may be discovered during construction would be minimized by applying committed protection measures. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. For inadvertent discoveries, an Inadvertent Discovery Plan (Plan) is proposed, see Appendix F.
Native American Religious Concerns	No effect	Correspondence and/or telephone calls to 38 tribal entities; 9 tribes responded; additional information sent to 3 tribes. Tribal monitor will be on site during 8 miles of construction in US395 ROW in CA; Plan proposed for inadvertent discoveries (Appendix F). See Tribal Consultation in Appendix A3 for Comments. No project or cumulative effect.
Environmental Justice	No effect	No project or cumulative effect
Prime Farmland	No effect	No project or cumulative effect
Flood Hazards	No effect	No project or cumulative effect
Geology, Minerals and Seismicity	No effect	The Proposed Action would result in the permanent disturbance of approximately 0.034 acres from vault placement and buildings. Potential effects to topography would be insignificant. All spoils would be used onsite. The potential for movement along faults and new landslides in the project area would be low. The potential for landslides would be low. Committed protection measures would minimize impacts from erosion or potential geologic shifts. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Soils	No effect	During construction, soils would be disturbed, mixed structurally, compacted, and exposed to wind or precipitation events, resulting in a temporary increase in potential soil erosion. These short-term impacts would be minimized by applying committed protection measures. Construction would temporarily disturb approximately 51.63 acres. Long-term disturbance would affect 0.034acres of soils. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Noise	No effect	Construction, primarily underground installation, would create both intermittent and continuous noise; overall noise levels would be low to moderate. Committed protection measures would limit noise to daylight hours. Potential noise impacts would be short term during construction. Anticipated noise levels would range from 60 dBA up to infrequent peaks of 85-90 dBA at 50 feet during underground installation. Less than significant project and

Resource Issue	Alternatives	
	No Action	Proposed Action
		cumulative effect.
Human Health and Safety	No effect	Potential effects would be minimized by applying committed protection measures. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Fire Management	No effect	Committed protection measures would be implemented to minimize potential effects. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. See Construction Fire Plan, Appendix G.
Area of Critical Environmental Concerns (ACECs)	No effect	There are no Area of Critical of Environmental Concerns (ACECs), which are special management areas designated by BLM to protect significant historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources; natural process or systems; and/or natural hazards, in the project area. The closest ACEC s are west (Susan River) and northeast (Willow Creek) of the project area.
Wilderness/WSA	No effect	Wilderness characteristics do not exist in the project area because the lands do not meet the naturalness criterion due to extensive surface disturbance of roads/highways, OHV network of trails, and do not meet the size criterion of 5,000 acres, or any of the size exceptions.
Biological Resources – T/E, State listed, Candidate Species	No effect	One federal-threatened species, Lahontan cutthroat trout, is known to occur in the Truckee River; federal-endangered Cui-ui is known to occur in the Truckee River downstream of the proposed project area. Since the project would cross the Truckee River in existing conduit located in a bridge; therefore the project will have no effect on Lahontan cutthroat trout or Cui-ui. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. The federal-endangered Carson wandering skipper occurs around Honey Lake; however, there are no suitable areas of saltgrass habitat for Carson wandering skipper in the proposed project area, and there are no known records in the proposed project area. The project will have no effect on Carson wandering skipper. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. The project will have no effect on federal candidate species that occur in the region, or historically occurred in the region, consisting of Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, greater sage grouse, Pacific fisher, wolverine, and Webber's ivesia. There are no known records of these species in the proposed project area. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. California-endangered willow flycatcher and California-threatened Swainson's hawk occur in the project area. The project will have no effect on these two species with the implementation of avoidance measures. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. The project will have no effect on six other California-listed or candidate species that occur in the region, American peregrine falcon (CA-endangered), greater sandhill crane (CA-threatened), bank swallow (CA-threatened), wolverine (CA-threatened), Sierra Nevada red fox (CA-threatened), and Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop (CA-endangered). Less than significant project and cumulative effect.

Resource Issue	Alternatives	
	No Action	Proposed Action
Biological Resources – T/E, State listed, Special Status, Candidate Species	No effect	Vegetation Resources: Surface disturbance from construction could directly affect vegetation and special status plant habitat by increasing soil erosion, mechanically impacting soils, and increasing the potential for establishment and spread of invasive and noxious weed species. Temporary construction activities on 62.12 acres would contribute to short-term effects. Committed protection measures would be implemented to minimize potential impacts to vegetation and to minimize noxious weeds. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. Special Status Species: The proposed project area provides marginal or suitable habitat for 152 other special-status species (38 animals and 114 plant species) as designated by CDFG, NNHP, USFS, BLM, and CNPS. The implementation of the avoidance measures avoids effects to these species. Foraging and nesting habitat occurs in and adjacent to the project area for birds of protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Implementation of the avoidance measures avoids effects to these species. Due to the committed environmental measures to minimize impacts to vegetation, short- and long-term effects would be low and incremental, and no population-level effects would be anticipated for any of the species with marginal habitat. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. Habitat Effects: No direct or indirect impacts to aquatic resources would occur from construction or operation. Construction would temporarily disturb approximately 51.63 acres. Long-term impacts would affect 0.034 acres. Environmental committed protection measures would aid in minimizing impacts to native habitats from construction, minimize noxious weed infestations, and support final site reclamation for regional wildlife species. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. The project area does not occur in areas designated as Wilderness Study Areas or Wilderness Areas (BLM 2007, 2001). The small segments of BLM land traversed by the proposed project are generally close to major roadways and do not provide outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive nor an unconfined type of recreation. The proposed project occurs within existing utility ROW. Less than significant project and cumulative effect. Noise: Effect to wildlife from increased noise levels would vary based on location, topography, type of noise source, levels and duration, and species' sensitivity. Protection measures for specific resources, such as nesting birds, would prevent or minimize disturbance during the breeding period. Less than significant

Resource Issue	Alternatives	
	No Action	Proposed Action
		project and cumulative effect.
Wetlands	No effect	No direct effects to wetlands as no construction in wetlands area; existing overhead construction avoids areas by spanning so indirect effects minimized to less than significant with mitigation measures. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Infrastructure	No effects	Construction in the existing ROWS will utilize committed protection measures to minimize potential effects. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Visual Resources	No effect	Construction would result in low short-term visual effects. Operation would not result in disruption of scenic vistas or degrade the overall character or quality of the area. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Land Use	No effect	The construction and operation of the Proposed Action would not conflict with any land use plans. No established communities would be divided by the Proposed Action. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Recreation	No effect	Construction could result in a temporary and minor increase in traffic, human presence, and noise impacts to recreational users but would be low and short term. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.
Socioeconomics	No effect	Positive and beneficial effects would result from the temporary increase in jobs, income, and spending during the 20-month construction period. Operation would increase the tax revenues received by Plumas, Sierra, Lassen Counties, California. Less than significant project and cumulative effect.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Few comments have been received and are addressed in this Final EA/IS/MND as follows:

NEPA Comments and Responses

The BLM's Carson City, NV, Sierra Front Field Office, through the Nevada State Clearinghouse, (SAI#E2011-147) received comments from the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Department of Wildlife (DOW). These comments are included in Appendix A1, Agency Comments.

Responses are as follows:

BLM SFFO 1: Edited font size in Executive Summary.

BLM SFFO 2: Did a global search for NHRP and replaced with NRHP.

BLM SFFO 3: Per the White House – Indian Affairs Executive Working Group (WH-IAEWG) List of Federal Tribal Consultation Statues, Orders, Regulations, Rules, Policies Manuals, Protocols and Guidance (January 2009) added NEPA regulation 40 CFR 1500-1508, and Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994).

BLM SFFO 4: NTIA is negotiating this requirement with the BLM. See Appendix F Monitoring Discovery Plan, which replaces the previous Programmatic Agreement.

BLM SFFO 5: Deleted reference to Secretarial Order3310 in Chapter 3

BLM SFFO 6: Did a global search for NHRP and replaced with NRHP.

BLM SFFO 7: Replaced last sentence in 2nd paragraph of Section 4.2 with BLM's recommended wording.

BLM SFFO 8: Added 4.2.1 Native American Religious Concerns.

BLM SFFO 9: NTIA is negotiating this requirement with the BLM. See Appendix F Monitoring Discovery Plan, which replaces the previous Programmatic Agreement.

BLM SFFO 10: Changed wording to comport with BLM's comment.

BLM SFFO 11: Changed wording to comport with BLM's comment.

NV SHPO 1: Map 2-1 is replaced to show the correct proposed areas of underground installation on US395; the typo was corrected.

NV SHPO 2: The Class III intensive inventory report is nearing completion; edits are being made. Once completed, the Class III and data sheets will be forwarded to SHPO with a request for Section 106 concurrence. The BLM initiated a discussion with the NV SHPO on the determination of the APE.

NV SHPO 3: The federal lead agency, NTIA, determined a PA is not required. However, the BLM requested an "Inadvertent Discovery Plan (Plan)" which has replaced the PA in Appendix F. This Plan is being circulated to the requisite agencies.

NV DOW 1: Table 2-4, Committed Mitigation Measures already included a seasonal cessation of construction activities during deer migration; however, for the Nevada portion of the project, the avoidance measure was expanded as noted in Biological-27, PSREC BMP.

CEQA Comments and Responses

The California Lead Agency for CEQA, the California Public Utilities Commission, through the California State Clearinghouse (SCH#2011052083) received comments from California State Lands Commission (CSLC) and the State of California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). These comments are included in Appendix A1, Agency Comments.

CSLC 1: California State Lands Commission commented that the installation of additional improvements would require an amendment to the existing lease; however, if microwave technology is used to avoid improvements on the existing lease premises it needs to be stated in the EA/MND. Chapter 2, section 2.4.1 has been revised to utilize a wireless communication link on this portion of the project.

CSLC 2: Ensure that potential impacts to biological resources in the CSLC jurisdiction are given full attention to determine if any species of concern use CLSC lands. PSREC ensures they are in compliance with all federal and state requirements (see Biological Committed Protection Measures 1 through 27 in Appendix B).

CLSC 3: Recommend that the CSLC lease have specific language detailing the procedures for handling accidental discoveries of cultural resources on state lands under CLSC jurisdiction. PSREC ensures they are in compliance with all federal and state requirements (see Cultural Committed Protection Measures 1 through 4 in Appendix B).

CalTrans: Concerned about encountering/damaging culverts and drainage facilities in the CalTrans ROW. PSREC to obtain a CalTrans Encroachment Permit for all work and traffic control to be done in the state highway ROW; and provide detailed information for each crossing as to the horizontal and vertical duct placement. CalTrans further recommends that an independent onsite full-time consultant engineering inspector be provided to document and inspect placement of the line. PSREC has committed to and will comply with all terms and conditions with the CalTrans Encroachment Permit.