

Short-Term Use of the Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Productivity

The affected environment is an existing transmission line corridor for most of the project's length. The proposed action, replacing a 115-kV line with a 500-kV line, is a more productive use of the corridor than the existing condition. With respect to the underlying resources of the corridor, the alternatives would not substantially alter their long-term environmental productivity. For example, the affected environment of the existing lines has generally recovered since it was initially built. While there is never complete recovery, the long-term productivity of the affected environment has not been substantially altered. If the transmission towers and lines were dismantled, it would be possible to restore the corridor to nearly its original condition and uses. The alternative action, building double-circuit towers through the Spokane area, would effectively reserve this portion of the corridor over the long term for additional transmission use at a relatively lower future environmental cost. The proposed action, on the other hand, would result in lower near-term environmental impacts and dollar costs.