

## Socioeconomics

---

### Affected Environment

#### Demographics

The four counties crossed by the corridor have a population of about 541,300, which is about 9 percent of the state’s population (numbers used in the section and accompanying tables have been rounded). Spokane County—designated as a metropolitan statistical area (MSA)—has nearly 80 percent of the population of the four counties and includes the City of Spokane, population about 195,700. Lincoln County has the smallest population (10,200) with the slowest growth rate in population between 1990 and 2001 (See Table 3-7.)

**Table 3-7. Population Trends across Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Spokane Counties**

County	1980	1990	2000	2001
Douglas County	22,144	26,205	32,603	32,800
Grant County	48,522	54,758	74,698	75,900
Lincoln County	9,604	8,864	10,184	10,200
Spokane County	341,835	361,364	417,939	422,400
Total, Four Counties	422,105	451,191	535,424	541,300
Percent Change	na	6.9%	18.7%	1.1%
Percent of Total State Population	10.2%	9.3%	9.1%	9.1%
State of Washington	4,132,156	4,866,692	5,894,121	5,974,900
Percent Change	na	17.8%	21.1%	1.4%

Note: na is not applicable

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Census; Washington State Office of Financial Management

Between 1990 and 2000, the counties as a group grew at a rate of about 19 percent, slightly slower than Washington State’s overall growth rate of 21 percent. In contrast to the previous decade, much of the growth during the 1990s was due to people moving into the area; about 63 percent of the population gain in both the four county region and the State were from net in-migration.

Between 2000 and 2001, population in the four-county area increased at a much reduced rate of 1.1 percent, compared to the State at 1.4 percent. Natural population increase was slightly more than half of the population gain in the area, whereas net in-migration was responsible for about 57 percent of the State’s total population increase.

### **3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**

#### **Economic Characteristics**

Tables 3-8 and 3-9 present employment by sector in the four counties traversed by the corridor. For the three rural counties of Douglas, Grant, and Lincoln, farming is the principal economic sector, with more than one in five workers employed in agricultural production. This four-county area is one of Washington State's most important agricultural regions. According to the most recent (1997) agricultural census, the region has about one-fourth of state's agricultural land base and the market value of agricultural products sold in the region totaled \$1.1 billion. The regional agricultural economy is relatively diversified with leading commodities of wheat, barley, corn for grain, oats, dry edible beans, hay, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, cattle and calves, pigs and hogs, and sheep. Each of these counties is top-ranked among all United States counties in a number of agricultural commodities. For example, Grant leads all counties in the production of potatoes and sweet corn. (For apples and green peas, Grant ranks second among all counties.) Lincoln ranks second and third among all counties in wheat and barley respectively.

Unlike the other counties, Lincoln County's leading employment sector is government, mostly local government. Although over 93 percent of the county's total land is farmland, total farm employment (both proprietors and wage & salaried workers) represents 22 percent of the county's labor force, whereas government sector employs about 26 percent. However, about 40 percent of Lincoln County's total 1997 value of production comes from agriculture and agriculture-related activities.

In Spokane County, the services sector is the largest employer, with 32 percent of the county's total employment. The services sector is highly diverse ranging from personal and business services, hotels and lodging, automobile and miscellaneous repair services, amusement and recreation services, and hospitals and health services to legal; educational and social services; museums and art galleries; membership organizations; and engineering, accounting, research and management services. In addition, Spokane County has been a regional center to forestry, agriculture, and mining industries. Although these industries are still relatively important to the economy, the local economic base has expanded as high-technology companies have moved into the area.

#### **Income Characteristics**

One of the economic measures used in comparing geographic areas is per capita income. Per capita income is an estimate of total personal income divided by the area's total population. Total personal income is composed of labor earnings (proprietor income and wages & salaries); dividends, interest, and rent; and transfer payments.

**Table 3-8. Full and Part-time Employment in Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Spokane Counties, 2000 (number of workers)**

	<i>Douglas County</i>	<i>Grant County</i>	<i>Lincoln County</i>	<i>Spokane County</i>	<i>Four-County Region</i>	<i>Washington State</i>
Total full-time & part-time employment	11,270	38,573	5,108	250,334	305,285	3,560,164
Wage & salary employment	9,039	30,947	3,185	207,979	251,150	2,938,765
Proprietors' employment	2,231	7,626	1,923	42,355	54,135	621,399
Farm proprietors' employment	1,133	2,366	860	2,124	6,483	38,711
Nonfarm proprietors' employment	1,098	5,260	1,063	40,231	47,652	582,688
Farm employment	2,636	6,603	1,136	2,419	12,794	79,886
Nonfarm employment	8,634	31,970	3,972	247,915	292,491	3,480,278
Private employment	6,608	25,212	2,669	211,960	246,449	2,933,709
Ag. services, forestry & fishing	793	1,890	184	2,555	5,422	64,508
Mining	7	58	7	313	385	5,664
Construction	527	1,403	189	15,249	17,368	216,748
Manufacturing	154	4,913	91	23,591	28,749	371,436
Transportation & public utilities	408	1,426	107	9,920	11,861	167,892
Wholesale trade	371	1,512	280	14,227	16,390	168,912
Retail trade	2,088	5,395	614	44,678	52,775	594,402
Finance, insurance, & real estate	359	1,539	342	21,212	23,452	272,353
Services	1,901	7,076	855	80,215	90,047	1,071,794
Government & govt. enterprises	2,026	6,758	1,303	35,955	46,042	546,569
Federal, civilian	172	342	70	4,490	5,074	69,151
Military	135	270	37	4,852	5,294	72,831
State and local	1,719	6,146	1,196	26,613	35,674	404,587
State	78	760	74	8,989	9,901	132,128
Local	1,641	5,386	1,122	17,624	25,773	272,459

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System.

**Table 3-9. Wage and Salary Employment in Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Spokane Counties, 2000 (number of workers)**

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Douglas County</i>	<i>Grant County</i>	<i>Lincoln County</i>	<i>Spokane County</i>	<i>Four-County Region Total</i>	<i>Washington State</i>
Agriculture, forest & fishing	2,716	6,986	332	1,669	11,703	91,530
Construction & mining	358	800	76	10,493	11,727	152,790
Manufacturing	136	4,856	73	21,970	27,035	345,830
Transportation & public utilities	327	880	40	7,826	9,073	139,684
Wholesale trade	308	1,332	249	12,760	14,649	150,196
Retail trade	1,799	4,212	365	36,136	42,512	483,740
Finance, insurance & real estate	166	504	143	10,856	11,669	133,937
Services	1,223	4,447	332	56,976	62,978	747,048
Government	1,877	6,353	1,250	30,158	39,638	458,482
Total	8,910	30,370	2,860	188,844	230,984	2,703,237

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, Labor Market & Economic Analysis Branch.

### **3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**

The composition of personal income, and hence per capita income, varies among the counties and the state (see Table 3-10). For instance, net earnings (proprietor income and wages and salaries) are the dominant portion of personal income for most counties. Lincoln County is an exception, however, with an increased portion of personal income in dividends, interest, and rent and transfer payments. Combined dividends, interest, and rent and transfer payments represent more than 55 percent of Lincoln's total personal income in 2000. For the four-county region, dividends, interest, and rent and transfer payments represent a greater share of total personal income than for the state.

By and large, total personal income and per capita income within the four-county region increased in real terms (i.e., removing the effects of inflation) between 1980 and 2000. Again, the exception is Lincoln County. While dividends, interest, and rent and transfer payments have grown in the county, the combined growth was not enough to offset the sizable decline in net earnings. While Spokane and Douglas counties' total real personal income growth rates were modest between 1980 and 2000 (although at a lower rate than for the state of Washington), Grant County's personal income increased more than five-fold.

In terms of per capita income, Lincoln County's real per capita income declined between 1980 and 2000. In spite of overall growth in real per capita income, all of the four counties had lower per capita incomes than Washington State.

#### **Environmental Justice**

Environmental justice, as described by Executive Order 12898 of 1994, requires federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Justice defines environmental justice as:

*“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies” (US EPA, 1998).*

**Table 3-10. Income Trends in Region (using 1999 dollars)**

<i>County/State</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1999</i>
<b>Douglas County</b>			
Total personal income (\$000)	\$405,160	\$474,422	\$656,611
Net earnings (\$000)	\$297,141	\$309,042	\$404,899
Dividends, interest & rent (\$000)	\$66,604	\$95,533	\$137,763
Transfer payments (\$000)	\$41,415	\$69,848	\$113,949
Per capita income (\$)	\$18,297	\$18,104	\$19,204
<b>Grant County</b>			
Total personal income (\$000)	\$275,679	\$528,231	\$1,398,915
Net earnings (\$000)	\$216,150	\$367,492	\$851,964
Dividends, interest & rent (\$000)	\$32,506	\$92,576	\$270,788
Transfer payments (\$000)	\$27,023	\$68,164	\$276,163
Per capita income (\$)	\$5,682	\$9,647	\$19,424
<b>Lincoln County</b>			
Total personal income (\$000)	\$229,828	\$191,966	\$203,368
Net earnings (\$000)	\$148,936	\$93,619	\$90,886
Dividends, interest & rent (\$000)	\$57,247	\$67,889	\$68,186
Transfer payments (\$000)	\$23,645	\$30,457	\$44,296
Per capita income (\$)	\$23,930	\$21,657	\$20,839
<b>Spokane County</b>			
Total personal income (\$000)	\$6,041,968	\$7,396,490	\$9,984,505
Net earnings (\$000)	\$4,182,467	\$4,680,001	\$6,333,274
Dividends, interest & rent (\$000)	\$1,043,061	\$1,519,904	\$1,972,726
Transfer payments (\$000)	\$816,440	\$1,196,584	\$1,678,505
Per capita income (\$)	\$17,675	\$20,468	\$24,368
<b>Four-county Region</b>			
Total personal income (\$000)	\$6,952,634	\$8,591,109	\$12,243,399
Net earnings (\$000)	\$4,844,694	\$5,450,154	\$7,681,023
Dividends, interest & rent (\$000)	\$1,199,418	\$1,775,902	\$2,449,463
Transfer payments (\$000)	\$908,522	\$1,365,053	\$2,112,913
Per capita income (\$)	\$16,471	\$19,041	\$22,973
<b>Washington State</b>			
Total personal income (\$000)	\$83,173,904	\$118,706,330	\$174,876,529
Net earnings (\$000)	\$60,486,320	\$81,049,067	\$122,174,863
Dividends, interest & rent (\$000)	\$13,718,780	\$23,646,675	\$32,264,589
Transfer payments (\$000)	\$8,968,804	\$14,010,589	\$20,437,077
Per capita income (\$)	\$20,127	\$24,392	\$30,380

### **3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**

*Low-income* is generally defined as a household income at or below the US Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. The guidelines establish poverty thresholds on an annual basis; the poverty threshold for 2001 was \$11,559 for a 2-person household in the contiguous United States. However, other thresholds may be used as appropriate. *Low-income population* means any readily identifiable group of low-income persons who live in geographic proximity and, if circumstances warrant, geographically dispersed/transient persons (such as migrant workers or Native Americans) who will be similarly affected by the Proposed Action, policy or activity.

A *minority population* is considered to be present if the minority population percentage of the affected area is greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis (census tracts are generally considered appropriate). Guidance from the US Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) states that “minority populations should be identified where either (a) the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50 percent or (b) the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or other appropriate unit of geographic analysis” (CEQ, 1998). *Minority Population* means any readily identifiable groups of minority persons who live in geographic proximity, and if circumstances warrant, geographically dispersed/transient persons (such as migrant workers or Native Americans) who will be similarly affected by a proposed program, policy or activity.

*Disproportionately High and Adverse Effect on Minority and Low-Income Populations* means that an adverse effect is predominately borne by a minority population and/or a low-income population and that the effect will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and is appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect that will be suffered by the rest of the population. Adverse effects to environmental justice populations are considered:

- destruction or disruptions of community cohesion;
- destruction or disruptions to access of available public and private facilities and services;
- adverse employment effects;
- displacement of businesses, housing, and people;
- tax and property value losses;
- actions injurious to the public’s health (e.g., air, noise and water pollution); and
- actions harmful to the public’s well being (e.g., aesthetic impacts and loss of recreational property).

## Minority Population

A concentrated minority population is assumed present if the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population or the minority population of the affected area exceeds 50 percent of the total population.

Table 3-11 presents the race distribution for the four-county study region and the State of Washington. As a region, the minority population combined is 8.2 percent, less than the state’s average of 14.6 percent. Populations of each of the minority groups within the four-county region are lower than the state’s average for each group. However, these aggregations mask the minority population levels within individual counties.

**Table 3-11. Race Distribution in the Four-County Region and Washington State, 2000**

<i>Race</i>	<i>Douglas County</i>		<i>Grant County</i>		<i>Lincoln County</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
One Race	31,794	97.5%	72,451	97.0%	10,020	98.4%
White	27,599	84.7%	57,174	76.5%	9,740	95.6%
Black or African American	101	0.3%	742	1.0%	23	0.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	355	1.1%	863	1.2%	166	1.6%
Asian	178	0.5%	652	0.9%	25	0.2%
Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	31	0.1%	53	0.1%	7	0.1%
Some other race	3,530	10.8%	12,967	17.4%	59	0.6%
Two or more Races	809	2.5%	2,247	3.0%	164	1.6%
Hispanic Origin (of any race)	6,433	19.7%	22,476	30.1%	191	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,603</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>74,698</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10,184</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>Race</i>	<i>Spokane County</i>		<i>Four-County Region</i>		<i>Washington State</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
One Race	406,386	97.2%	520,651	97.2%	5,680,602	96.4%
White	381,934	91.4%	476,447	89.0%	4,821,823	81.8%
Black or African American	6,659	1.6%	7,525	1.4%	190,267	3.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	5,847	1.4%	7,231	1.4%	93,301	1.6%
Asian	7,870	1.9%	8,725	1.6%	322,335	5.5%
Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	666	0.2%	757	0.1%	23,953	0.4%
Some other race	3,410	0.8%	19,966	3.7%	228,923	3.9%
Two or more Races	11,553	2.8%	14,773	2.8%	213,519	3.6%
Hispanic Origin (of any race)	11,561	2.8%	40,661	7.6%	441,509	7.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>417,939</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>535,424</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>5,894,121</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: Some other race, refers to a “write-in” category in which respondents listed multi-racial, mixed, interracial, Hispanic or Latino. The Census Bureau estimates that 97 percent of respondents who reported as “Some other race” were Hispanic or Latino. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

For instance, Grant County’s minority population is higher than the state’s at 20.5 percent. The census category of “some other race” represents Grant County’s largest minority group, with

### 3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation

17.4 percent of the county’s total population. “Some other race’s” share in Grant County compares with only 3.9 percent for Washington State. Likewise, Grant County’s minority with Hispanic origins represents over 30 percent of the county’s total population, a share significantly higher than Washington State. Only 6 miles of the project corridor’s total 84 miles are located in Grant County, traversing the county’s northern-most area in the Grand Coulee City area.

Similarly, Douglas County’s minority population of “some other race” and minority with Hispanic origins have a significantly higher share of the total population (10.8 percent and 19.7 percent, respectively) than Washington State. The project’s substation lies just inside the Douglas County border; i.e., less than a mile of the project corridor’s total 84 miles are located within the county.

#### Low-Income Population

According to federal guidelines, low-income population within the environmental justice study area is relative to the median household income for Washington State (\$50,689 in 2001). Income is typically measured for households with 30% (extremely low-income), 50% (very low-income), and 80% (low-income) of median income.

According to 2001 estimates, the four-county study region has a median household income of \$40,552 or 80 percent of the median income according to federal income limits (Table 3-12). With Spokane County’s population base representing over three-fourths of the region’s population, the regional aggregations of race and median household income largely reflect Spokane County. Median household incomes in Lincoln and Grant Counties (62.2 percent and 67 percent, respectively), however, fall significantly below the 80 percent threshold of Washington State’s median household income.

**Table 3-12. Median Household Incomes of Study Area and Washington State, 2001**

<i>Geographic Area</i>	<i>2001 Median Household Income</i>	<i>Percent of Median</i>
Douglas County	\$40,556	80.01%
Grant County	\$33,966	67.01%
Lincoln County	\$31,522	62.19%
Spokane County	\$41,795	82.45%
Four-County region	\$40,552	80.00%
Washington State	\$50,689	100.00%

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management. *2001 Population Trends for Washington State*.

## Environmental Consequences

Socioeconomic impacts are both short and long term. Short-term impacts include temporary increases in local housing demand and employment, and damage to crops and agricultural land during construction. Long-term impacts include potential impacts to agricultural lands around and under tower bases being taken out of production for the life of the project.

### Impact Definitions

A **high** impact would change current socioeconomic conditions and likely create adverse effects that could not be mitigated. High impacts would result from one or more of the following conditions:

- Regional reduction of the quality or quantity of social or economic resources.
- Significant reduction of long-term economic productivity.
- Consumption of significant amounts of non-renewable resources.

A **moderate** impact would change current socioeconomic conditions. However, the effects of these adverse changes could be largely mitigated. Moderate impacts would result from one or more of the following conditions:

- Local reduction of the quality or quantity of social or economic resources.
- Marginal reduction of long-term economic productivity.
- Consumption of moderate amounts of non-renewable resources.

A **low** impact would create a minimal change in current socioeconomic conditions. These effects would not require any mitigation. Low impacts would result from one or more of the following conditions:

- Reduction of the quality or quantity of social or economic resources within the site of the proposed project.
- No reduction in long-term economic productivity.
- Consumption of negligible amounts of non-renewable resources.

### Impacts

#### Housing Availability

During peak construction in the summers of 2003 and 2004, 150 workers would work along various segments of the 84-mile corridor. This number is quite small in the context of the population and employment data presented in Tables 3-7 through 3-9. The construction contractor has indicated they would hire local firms to do the construction work. Power plant

### 3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation

construction workers frequently commute up to 60 miles daily to project sites. It is assumed that the commuting pattern of transmission line construction workers would be similar. Therefore, most workers would be local and would commute from their permanent homes, at least for most of the construction period.

However, some workers (personnel and possibly dependents) would require temporary lodging in the local area during construction. Most, if not all, members of the construction team that relocate during construction would leave at the end of the project. It is unlikely that any workers would permanently settle in the project area. Lodging facilities within commuting distance are available to house the low number of non-local construction workers (see Table 3-13). A number of these facilities have kitchen units and could be used for extended stays by contract workers.

Housing rental vacancy rates in each of the four counties are relatively high compared to that of the state. Ranging from a high of 10.7 percent in Grant County to a low of 6.2 percent in Douglas County, the combined housing rental vacancy rate in the four-county region is 8.8 percent (2000 Census). Lincoln County, which would have more miles crossed by the proposed transmission line than the other three counties combined, had a rental vacancy rate of 6.6 percent. This vacancy rate, though lower than that of the combined four-county region, remains higher than the state, which was 5.9 percent (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2002).

**Table 3-13. Lodging Availability in the Project Area**

<i>City</i>	<i>Motels &amp; Inns</i>	<i>RV Parks &amp; Campgrounds</i>	<i>Rooms</i>
Grand Coulee Dam Area	8	4	180
Wilbur	2	2	20
Davenport	3	1	25
Spokane	74	2	6,250*
Total	87	9	6,475*

\* Estimated

Source: Yellow Pages directory, various cities; Spokane Area Visitors & Convention Bureau.

Because construction workers can be housed and they would not place an undue burden on communities in the area, the level of impacts is considered low.

#### Employment and Income

The proposed project would stimulate the regional economy during construction through material purchases in the region, payroll, and related indirect and induced spending, or “*multiplier effects*.” These economic benefits would occur for a limited time during construction.

Purchases of local supplies and materials and other spending by construction workers would create positive economic impacts. Total project costs have been estimated at \$152 million (2002 dollars) for the Agency Proposed Action. An estimated 5 to 10 percent of total project costs (\$7 to 15 million) would involve local purchases of fuel, vehicle parts and other goods and services in the four counties. Income earned by construction workers would be about \$17 million. Non-local workers spend an estimated 40 percent of their net pay locally. If 50 members of the construction crew temporarily relocate into the project area, local spending by both local and non-local construction workers would amount to about \$14.6 million during the 18-month construction period; this is 0.12 percent of the four-county personal income level in 1999. Both material purchases and salary would have additional indirect effects that would create added short-term income.

These impacts are small relative to the amount of economic activity in the four counties (see Tables 3-8 through 3-10), and are short term by nature. Therefore, the level of impacts of these additional expenditures on overall regional economic activity, while positive, would be low.

After construction, the new transmission line would not increase economic activity in any of the four counties. However, the 500-kV transmission line may contribute to regional economic growth by meeting increased power demands. This is a potential long-term positive impact.

### **Agricultural Practices, Productivity, and Revenues**

The primary crops cultivated in the corridor are wheat, barley, oats, and hay (alfalfa and other). The dollar values and yields of these crops are based on Washington State Department of Agriculture statistics for Lincoln County in 2001, which is the most recent information available.

The economic value of a temporary loss of agricultural crops was calculated based on a worst-case scenario: a 150-foot wide, 42-mile long section of agricultural land taken out of production for one growing season (it is probable that the impact would be spread over two growing seasons and involve a smaller portion of the corridor). A maximum of 765 acres would be temporarily removed from production. Consequently, estimated losses could reach \$115,000 assuming a weighted average of crop values of \$150 per acre, based on general productivity characteristics of agricultural land in Lincoln County. Actual losses, however, would be much less since, in most cases, only the area surrounding the tower site (about 0.5 acre) and the temporary access road leading to the site would be taken out of production.

About 12 acres of agricultural land would be permanently lost because of land required for the new towers, assuming each tower occupies an area of 50 feet by 50 feet. However, approximately 8.7 acres would be reclaimed for production from the removal of the wood-pole structures of the 115-kV line being replaced, creating a net loss of about 3.3 acres. Therefore, the anticipated net long-term loss of agricultural revenue from the project is estimated at approximately \$495 per growing season, assuming the weighted average of crop values in Lincoln County of \$150 per acre.

### **3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**

Farmers would be compensated for crop losses during construction. The amount of acreage permanently taken out of production is considered negligible. The level of impacts would be low.

#### **Property Taxes**

The construction of this project would not affect the amount of property taxes collected by the counties crossed by the proposed transmission line.

#### **Sales Taxes**

States cannot tax direct purchases by the Federal government; however, Washington would tax local purchases by government contractors building the line (Excise Tax Bulletin 316.08.193 and WAC 458-20-17001). Contractors would also be taxed on all local purchases of goods while in Washington, unless those individuals' permanent residences are within states or other political jurisdictions that are exempt from paying a local sales or "use tax" within the state. State sales tax in Washington is 6.5 percent. Each local jurisdiction also has a local sales tax which, when combined with the state sales tax, could be 7.6 to 8.1 percent in the project area (Washington Department of Revenue, 2002).

With the exception of local purchases of crushed rock for access road widening, and other minor purchases such as fuel and replacement tools, little else is expected to be purchased by the contractor. Tower steel, conductors, insulators and steel grills for footings would be supplied by BPA and would not be taxed. Any tax revenue received, however, would be a positive impact.

#### **Nuisance, Trespassing, and Vandalism**

Local residents with land crossed by the corridor could have their land use restricted by construction and periodic maintenance activities. Maintenance of the transmission line requires periodic inspection and occasional action by maintenance crews. Landowners are contacted prior to crew entry. However, crops may sometimes be damaged by vehicles used for maintenance, particularly for emergencies. Moreover, in select areas, crop production may be damaged by the spread of noxious weeds.

Access roads could be used by unauthorized motorists and hunters who could be a nuisance to farmers and other landowners. However, because most of the corridor is remote, potential impacts from trespassing and vandalism would be low.

#### **Property Impacts**

Some short-term adverse impacts on property value and saleability may occur on an individual basis. However, these impacts are highly variable, individualized, and unpredictable. The

project is not expected to cause overall long-term adverse effects on property values along the existing right-of-way. Project impacts along with numerous general market factors are already reflected in the market value of properties along the existing right-of-way in the proposed project area. Project impacts associated with new transmission line or access road easements would be offset. Land needed for easements would be appraised and landowners would be offered fair market value for these land rights.

Restrictions on use (i.e., RV parking) in the commercial area between corridor mile 83/4 and 83/6 could result in adverse economic impacts for the proprietor. The extent of such impacts is not known.

### Environmental Justice

The median income of residents at the four-county region, the site affected by the Proposed Action, does not meet the income threshold for poverty status (Table 3-12). In addition, the 8.2 percent minority population in the four-county study region (Table 3-11) does not surpass the minority threshold (50 percent) established as an indicator for whether a minority population affected by a proposal is meaningfully greater than that represented within the State as a whole. Therefore, the BPA Grand Coulee-Bell Transmission Line Project would not affect a proportionally high percentage of low-income and minority residents currently residing within the four-county region.

Within the four-county aggregation, however, there are individual counties that surpass either the minority and/or income thresholds. Douglas and Grant Counties exceed the minority population thresholds for “some other race” and minority with Hispanic origins, while Grant and Lincoln Counties’ median household income falls below the 80 percent threshold of the state’s median household income. Given the limited extent of the corridor in Douglas and Grant counties and corridor’s passage through sparsely populated privately owned lands in Lincoln County, the BPA Grand Coulee-Bell Transmission Line Project would still not affect a proportionally high percentage of low-income and minority residents. In addition, even if disproportionate impacts were to occur, they would be limited to visual resource impacts. Such impacts would be no more than moderate.

## Environmental Consequences of the Alternative Action

The alternative to the proposed action would result in impacts that are comparable to the proposed action.

### Cumulative Impacts

Lincoln County has a total of about 876,000 cultivated acres. The acreage temporarily taken out of agricultural production (765 acres), compared to the amount in production, would be negligible. In addition, there was a reduction of about 125,000 acres of cultivated land between

### **3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**

1992 and the present; the project's impact is negligible compared to this. However, there is not expected to be further significant decreases in the cultivated land base because additional participation in federal crop reduction programs has decreased substantially.

Cumulative socioeconomic impacts account for those effects related to other forecasted or anticipated projects slated for the affected region. Generally, these anticipated projects are expected to represent a net addition to the four-county region's socioeconomic base.

Although statewide economic and demographic forecasts are regularly updated, local area economic and demographic forecasts are generally non-existent. Local population forecasts are updated every five years by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), with the most recent in 2002. The latest OFM forecast indicates that population within the affected region is expected to grow slightly slower than the state – an average of 6.1 percent versus 6.2 percent over the next 25 years (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2002). Projected net in-migration, a significant measure of economic activity<sup>1</sup>, is expected to be slower within the four-county region compared to the statewide average. Implied within this forecast is that anticipated economic activity during the next 25 years will not be a significant departure from trend-line growth. Within such a context of cumulative socioeconomic effects, the proposed project accounts for a negligible portion of the total.

Other than the normal economic growth in the Spokane area inferred above, there are no other known plans or proposed projects in the area that would result in adverse cumulative socioeconomic impacts. Project employment and income impacts would represent a very small fraction of regional employment and income levels now and in the future.

#### **Mitigation**

The following mitigation will reduce potentially adverse socioeconomic effects created by the project:

- BPA will compensate landowners at fair market value for any new land rights required for easements for new right-of-way or to construct new, temporary or permanent access roads.
- Farmers will be compensated by BPA for crop damage. Soil compaction will be corrected or landowners will be compensated.
- BPA engineers will work with farmers to site towers to maintain efficient crop patterns and minimize adverse impacts to farming activities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Net in-migration is strongly correlated with employment change within an area. Generally, population change lags behind employment change.

- BPA will compensate landowners for any danger trees that will need to be removed outside the existing right-of-way based on their stumpage value.

### **Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative**

Potential beneficial (e.g., income and employment) and adverse socioeconomic impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed project would not occur under the No Action Alternative. No Action could result in other adverse socioeconomic impacts, however. Reduced capacity and reliability under No Action could lead to higher energy costs for industry and consumers. This would tend to lower productivity and efficiency for industries and areas that are affected, making them less competitive with other industries and areas. The consequences of this would be lower employment and income levels than would otherwise be the case, reduced levels of economic activity, and reduced governmental tax revenues and the services they support.

The quality and reliability of electrical power has been a key to economic growth and improving industrial productivity levels. With structural economic change, particularly with the new digital economy, power quality and reliability requirements have increased markedly. [For instance, the “old industrial economy” used less sophisticated electro-mechanical devices that were sensitive to long outages, but not sensitive to voltage sags. New digital economy equipment and processes are very sensitive to voltage sags.] To the extent that transmission capacity deficiencies reduce power reliability and quality, regional businesses and industries would be affected by costly process disruptions.

### **3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK