

3.8.1.2.2 Farmland

Consultation was carried out with the NRCS in order to determine whether or not prime and unique farmland, and farmland of statewide or local importance, are present in the site area. As mentioned previously, the NRCS identifies prime and unique farmland and farmland of statewide or local importance by soil type.

According to the NRCS, the plant site and infrastructure corridors are not located on prime and unique farmland; however, Benton County has designated the site as Agricultural Land of Long-Term Significance. Only a portion of the alternate access road route for PGF operation (approximately 2.9 acres) is classified as farmland of statewide and local importance on the basis that it is located on Finley fine sandy loam with 0 to 15 percent slopes (NRCS 2002) (see Section 3.1, Earth for more information on soils). The area of farmland of statewide or local importance occupied by the alternate operation access road route equates to 0.000001 percent of the total area of farmland in the County and approximately 0.000023 percent of the total area of farmland of statewide importance (123,437 acres) in Benton County.

3.8.1.2.3 Recreation

Existing and Future Recreation Areas in and Around Plymouth

A description of existing recreation areas is provided below, and the location of these areas is shown on Figure 3.8-1:

- **Columbia River.** The river is used for a variety of recreational activities including waterskiing, swimming, sailing, windsurfing, canoeing, fishing, and boating (Benton County n.d.a).
- **Plymouth Park.** Plymouth Park is located adjacent to the Columbia River, to the southeast and south of Plymouth. The park is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and used for camping and day-use. The camping area has 32 tent/RV pull-through campsites, 16 of which have full hook-ups (Benton County n.d.a). The amenities at the camping area include paved campsites, tent pads, grass, shade, firepits/grills, hot showers, and a trailer dump station. The day-use area, which is located on a small island to the southwest of the camping area, has covered shelters, tables, fire pits/grills, a swimming area, grass, shade, drinking water, cold showers, and restroom facilities with handicap access (Benton County 1998). The park also has boat launching facilities that include a two-lane launch ramp, handling dock, tie-up dock, and parking area.
- **Hunting Area.** A public hunting area is located to the west and northwest of Plymouth Farm and is accessible via Christy Road and SR 14. The type of game in the area include waterfowl, upland birds, and some deer.

There are no proposed future recreation areas near Plymouth.

Existing and Future Recreation Areas Near the McNary Substation

A description of existing recreation areas is provided below:

- **Columbia River and Marina** – The Columbia River is used for a variety of recreational activities as described previously. The marina located immediately to the west of I-82 is used to moor a variety of small- to medium-sized sailing and fishing boats.
- **Campground** – A campground located immediately to the south of the marina has facilities for RVs and tent camping and has amenities.

There are no proposed future recreation areas near the McNary Substation.

3.8.1.3 Proposed Action

3.8.1.3.1 Plant Site

The plant site (including the gas pipeline and water supply/wastewater pipeline) would occupy an area of approximately 44.5 acres and be located within the boundary of the 532.5-acre Plymouth Farm. The farm is used for irrigated agricultural purposes and produces apples and cherries; however, the plant site does not currently contain orchards.

The plant site is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance. There are no recreation areas within the plant site. The plant site is not located in the shoreland area of the Columbia River.

3.8.1.3.2 Transmission Interconnection

Less than half the length of the transmission interconnection corridor is located within the boundary of Plymouth Farm, with the remaining northern portion of the corridor located on a neighboring property. This neighboring property is also used for irrigated agricultural purposes.

The transmission interconnection corridor is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance. The transmission interconnection would not pass through any recreation areas or through the shoreland area of the Columbia River.

3.8.1.3.3 Access Road

The proposed access road would use approximately 2,500 feet of Plymouth Industrial Road. The access road would then branch from Plymouth Industrial Road and pass through land that is currently used for dryland and irrigated agricultural purposes, a small portion of which is located within Plymouth Farm. The new portion of the roadway would be approximately 5,300 feet in length.

The access road would not be located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance. No recreation areas or Columbia River shoreland areas are located within the right-of-way for the access road.

3.8.1.4 Alternate 230-kV Transmission Interconnection

The existing conditions for the alternate 230-kV transmission interconnection would be the same as the existing conditions for the proposed transmission interconnection, because the 230-kV line is located in the same physical location as the proposed 500-kV line.

3.8.1.5 Alternate Benton PUD/BPA Transmission Interconnection

The portion of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection corridor extending from the plant site to the existing Benton PUD 115-kV line along Christy Road would be located within Plymouth Farm and would cross the BNSF railroad tracks. For the majority of its length, the alternate transmission interconnection would follow an existing 115-kV line (that would be rebuilt) that traverses predominantly rangeland and undeveloped land, and the Columbia River, to connect with the McNary Substation in Umatilla County, Oregon.

The alternate transmission interconnection corridor is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance. No recreation areas exist in the alternate transmission interconnection area. The alternate transmission interconnection would traverse the Columbia River shoreland area.

3.8.1.6 Access Alternative

The alternate construction access road would use Christy Road and also necessitate construction of a new road from Christy Road that would extend along the western boundary of the Plymouth Farm, using an existing dirt road. From the western boundary, the road would be orientated east-west and use another dirt road in the Plymouth Farm to connect to the plant site. These existing dirt roads pass between areas of irrigated orchards. The alternate operation access road would share the existing Williams Co. compressor station access road and an existing road within Plymouth Farm.

Only a portion of the alternate operation access road route (approximately 2.9 acres) is classified as farmland of statewide and local importance on the basis that it is located on Finley fine sandy loam with 0 to 15 percent slopes. There are no recreation areas or Columbia River shoreland areas located in the alternate access road right-of-ways.

3.8.2 CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANS AND ZONING ORDINANCES

The proposed project is governed by the provisions of the *Benton County Comprehensive Land Use Plan* and the Benton County Zoning Ordinance in Benton County, Washington, and the Umatilla County Zoning Ordinance and *City of Umatilla Comprehensive Plan* in Umatilla County, Oregon.

3.8.2.1 Benton County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to “provide for local needs relating to the use of land, including the protection of property and water rights, and in so doing, to meet the state’s minimum planning law requirements.” The policies and goals of the

Comprehensive Land Use Plan that are applicable to the proposed project are addressed in Appendix F. Appendix F links local goals and policies to relevant sections in this EIS. The project is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

3.8.2.2 Benton County Zoning Ordinance

The plant site, alternate access roads, the proposed and alternate 230-kV transmission interconnections are located on land that is zoned GMA Agricultural District (GMAAD). According to the Benton County Zoning Ordinance (Benton County 2001), “Facilities for power generation for sale to the public other than nuclear fueled” are a conditional use in the GMAAD. In Benton County, power generation facilities in the GMA agricultural district, in which the proposed project would be located, require a conditional use permit (CUP) according to Benton County Zoning Ordinance 11.18.070.11. CUPs are issued provided that the facility is located in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts to agricultural productivity on adjacent lands. Benton County Zoning Code 11.52.090(d) requires the Benton County Board of Adjustment to determine if that proposed use:

- Would be compatible with other uses in the surrounding area or would be no more incompatible than are any other outright permitted uses in the applicable zoning district.
- Would not materially endanger the health, safety, and welfare of the surrounding community to an extent greater than that associated with any other permitted uses in the applicable zoning district.
- Would not cause pedestrian and vehicular traffic associated with the use to conflict with existing and anticipated traffic in the neighborhood to an extent greater than that associated with any other permitted uses in the applicable zoning district.
- Would be supported by adequate service facilities and would not adversely affect public services to the surrounding area.
- Would not hinder or discourage the development of permitted uses on neighboring properties in the applicable zoning district as a result of the location, size, or height of the buildings, structures, walls, or required fences or screening vegetation to a greater extent than other permitted uses in the applicable zoning district.
- Would not be in conflict with the goals and policies expressed in the current version of the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

The western and easternmost portions of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection corridor would pass through land that is zoned GMAAD. In the area between, the corridor would pass through land that is zoned Unclassified District (U) and land zoned for industrial use. Planning personnel at Benton County have advised that because the alternate transmission interconnection would involve rebuilding or replacing the existing Benton PUD 115-kV transmission line, construction of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would be a permitted use in these zoning districts (Shuttleworth 2002).

The eastern portion of the proposed access road is located in the U District. The road is an accessory use to the project.

The zoning in the Benton County portion of the site area is shown on Figure 3.8-2.

3.8.2.3 City of Umatilla Comprehensive Plan

The *City of Umatilla Comprehensive Plan* (Comprehensive Plan) was adopted in December 1977. It contains a number of goals, objectives, and policies to guide the future development and conservation of the City of Umatilla. The goals, objectives and policies that are applicable to the Proposed Action are addressed in Appendix F. Appendix F links goals and policies to relevant sections in this EIS. The project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

3.8.2.4 Umatilla County Zoning Ordinance

The McNary Substation and the segment of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection that is located in Umatilla County would cross land that is zoned F-1 Exclusive Farm Use Zone (F-1 Zone) (Umatilla County 1981). In the F-1 Zone, “utility facilities necessary for public service except commercial facilities for the purpose of generating power for public use by sale” are permitted upon the issuance of a zoning permit. However, since the alternate transmission interconnection would only replace the existing line over the Columbia River and to the McNary Substation, and would not involve construction of new towers, a zoning permit would not need to be obtained from Umatilla County.

3.8.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.8.3.1 Methodology

Potential land use/zoning, recreation, and farmland impacts attributable to construction or operation of the proposed PGF are discussed in the following sections. The impacts are considered high (and significant) if:

- The PGF would be inconsistent with a substantial number of the goals, objectives, and policies set out in the *Benton County Comprehensive Land Use Plan* and the *City of Umatilla Comprehensive Plan*.
- The PGF would be inconsistent with the provisions of the Benton County Zoning Ordinance and the Umatilla County Zoning Ordinance.
- The zoning for land on which the PGF is located would not allow the conversion of farmland to other uses.
- The PGF would be inconsistent with the policy of the SMA and *Benton County Shoreline Management Master Plan*.
- Surrounding land owners would experience extended interruptions in the ability to carry out their normal land use activities.

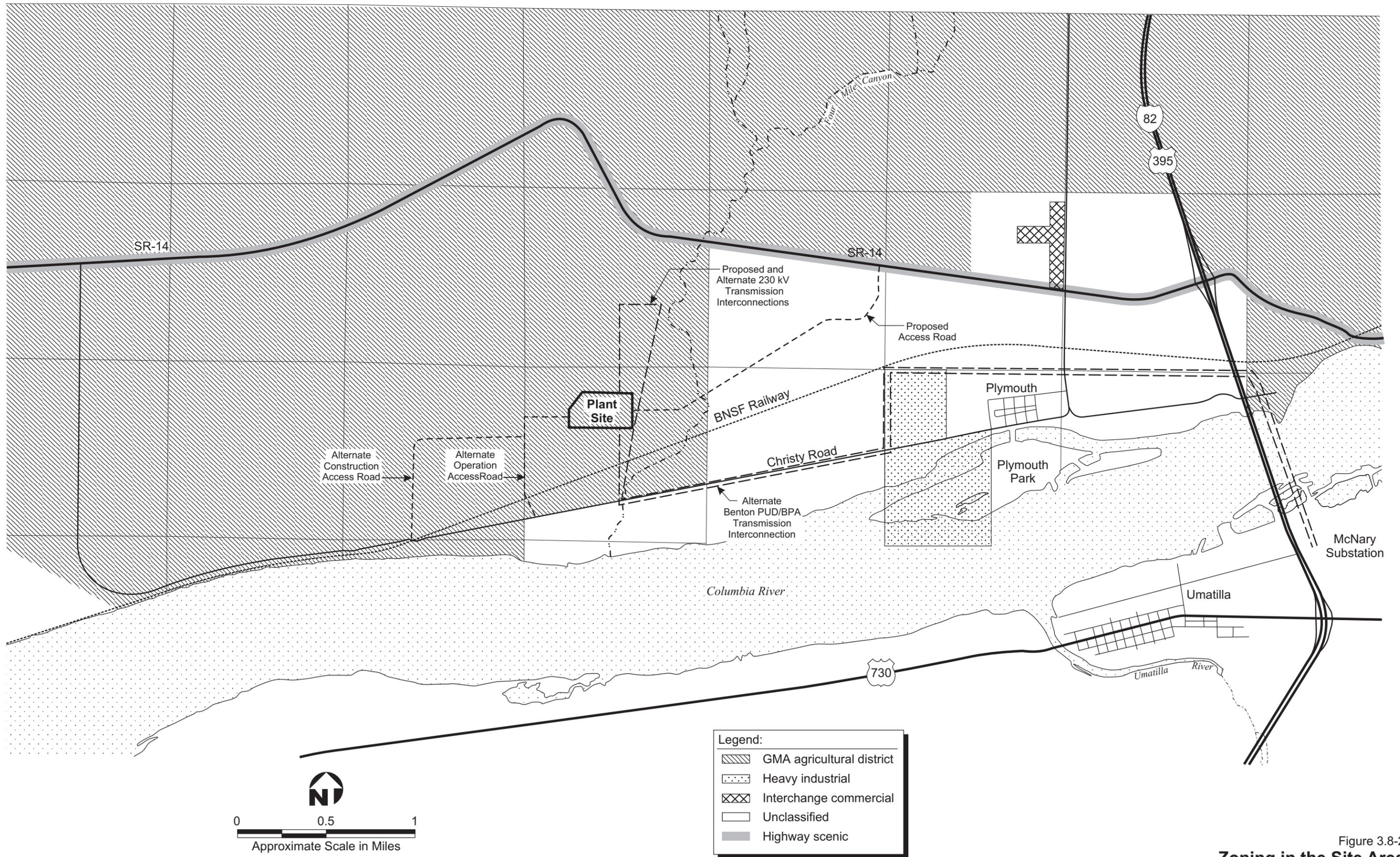


Figure 3.8-2
Zoning in the Site Area

Figure 3.8-2 (Continued)

- Substantial indirect adverse impacts would be anticipated (such as air, noise, and visual impacts) that negatively affect businesses or commercial activity or residential property values.
- Recreation areas would be affected such that they would no longer be a desirable place for people to use for recreational purposes.
- The PGF would result in the conversion of a large proportion of farmland to other purposes and there would be very little remaining farmland in the area.

The impacts to land use/zoning, recreation, and farmland are considered to be moderate if the proposed project would result in a modest change to the above listed criteria. The impacts would be considered low if there would be no noticeable or only minor changes to land use/zoning, recreation, or farmland.

3.8.3.2 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would not have any impact on land use, zoning, farmland, or recreation, or the shoreland area of the Columbia River.

3.8.3.3 Proposed Action

3.8.3.3.1 Plant Site

Construction

Land Use and Farmland

Construction of the PGF would prevent approximately 44.5 acres of land from continuing to be under an agricultural designation. However, because the plant site is not currently being used for agricultural purposes, these impacts would not be significant. Construction of the PGF would not have an adverse impact on the agricultural productivity of the adjacent Plymouth Farm; however, it would temporarily increase noise, dust, and traffic in the vicinity of the farm and surrounding area. These impacts would be low (and therefore less than significant) and would occur for approximately 24 months (see Sections 3.2 Air Quality, 3.7 Noise, and 3.11 Transportation).

During construction, components of the PGF (such as the turbine and generators) would be off-loaded at an offload platform adjacent to the rail siding serving the AgriNorthwest grain facility. These activities would be scheduled to avoid conflicts with the grain facility's operations. The water supply/wastewater pipeline would be installed by boring beneath the BNSF Railway to avoid disrupting operation of the railway.

The plant site is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance, but it is designated by Benton County as farmland of long-term significance.

Recreation

It is not anticipated that the construction activities at the plant site would have an adverse impact on the use of Plymouth Park or the Columbia River for recreational purposes.

Operation

Land Use and Farmland

Operation of the plant is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on Plymouth Farm. The plant would use some water leased from Plymouth Farm; however, wastewater from the plant would be returned to the farm for irrigating crops.

Recreation

The PGF would have no impacts on recreation areas during operation.

3.8.3.3.2 Transmission Interconnection

Construction

Land Use and Farmland

Low adverse impacts on land use would occur during construction of the transmission interconnection. The movement of machinery and construction workers, and installation of the support structures for the transmission line, could necessitate some removal of crops within Plymouth Farm and the agricultural property to the north of the farm. These activities would temporarily restrict crop production along the transmission line corridor, but the impacts would be low because it is anticipated that only small areas would be disturbed. The areas disturbed would be those in the vicinity of the support structures for the transmission line and directly beneath the line where a temporary vehicle access track would be provided. The construction would also temporarily increase noise, dust, and traffic in the area around the transmission interconnection corridor. These impacts would be low and occur for a period of no more than a few weeks.

The transmission interconnection corridor is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance.

Recreation

Impacts to public recreation areas would be the same as for the plant site.

Operation

Land Use and Farmland

During PGF operation, land beneath the transmission interconnection would continue to be used for agricultural purposes. A potential adverse impact would be the height restrictions placed on agricultural machinery passing beneath the line. However, normal transmission line design practice would maintain sufficient clearance for all normal agricultural equipment plus a safety allowance for worker protection. The land under the line could continue being cultivated by

mechanical means, and therefore the impacts would be low. Aerial application of agricultural chemicals would be limited to cropland adjacent to the transmission line. Maintenance and the need for line access would be infrequent and would not interfere with agricultural production on Plymouth Farm or the neighboring property.

Recreation

Operation of the transmission interconnection would not have an adverse impact on recreation areas.

3.8.3.3.3 Access Road

Construction of the proposed access road would temporarily increase noise, dust, and traffic in the area around the access road corridor; however, the impacts would be low. Recreation areas would not be affected. The proposed access road route is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance.

During PGF operation, the access road would not have any adverse impacts on land use, farmland, or recreation areas.

3.8.3.4 Alternate 230-kV Transmission Interconnection

Impacts due to the alternate 230-kV transmission interconnection would be the same as impacts from the proposed transmission interconnection because the 230-kV line is located in the same physical location as that proposed 500-kV line.

3.8.3.5 Alternate Benton PUD/BPA Transmission Interconnection

Construction

Land Use and Farmland

Construction of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would have impacts during construction that are similar to the proposed transmission interconnection. The impacts are anticipated to be less; however, because the land through which the former would pass consists mostly of rangeland and undeveloped land as opposed to irrigated agricultural land, the construction activities would be carried out within the existing Benton PUD 115-kV line corridor.

Adverse impacts on the BNSF Railway corridor or operation of the railway line are not anticipated because construction of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection over the railway line would be scheduled to avoid conflicts with train movements.

Consistent with existing use, the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would be constructed within the existing Benton PUD 115-kV line corridor, alongside the existing line. When the alternate transmission interconnection has been constructed and becomes operational, the existing Benton PUD 115-kV line would be decommissioned and removed. Construction of the alternate transmission interconnection would not have an adverse impact on operation of the McNary Substation.

Construction would also temporarily increase noise, dust, and traffic in the area around the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection corridor. These impacts would occur only temporarily at any location and be low. The alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection corridor is not located on prime or unique farmland, or farmland of statewide or local importance.

Recreation

Recreation areas would not be affected by the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection.

Shoreline Issues

Construction of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would have a low impact on the shoreland area of the Columbia River. It is assumed that BPA would string the additional line required for this alternate interconnection.

Operation

Land Use and Farmland

The height restriction impacts associated with the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would be similar to the proposed transmission interconnection. The alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would have the least impact because it would be located within the existing transmission line corridor for the Benton PUD 115-kV line, where these types of restrictions already exist and the use of agricultural machinery is minimal because the land is predominantly rangeland or undeveloped. Therefore, the impacts would be low. Maintenance and the need for transmission line access would not interfere with agricultural production. Operation of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would not restrict future industrial development in the Port of Kennewick industrial property through which it would pass.

Recreation

Operation of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would not have an adverse impact on recreation areas.

Shoreline Issues

Operation of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would have a low impact on the shoreland area of the Columbia River.

3.8.3.6 Access Alternative

3.8.3.6.1 Alternate Construction Access Road

Improvement of the alternate construction access road would temporarily increase noise, dust, and traffic in the area around the corridor; however, the impacts would be low. During use of this road, impacts to land use/zoning, farmland, or recreation areas would be low also.

3.8.3.6.2 Alternate Operation Access Road

Improvement and use of the alternate operation access road would have no adverse impacts on land use, farmland, or recreation areas. Only a portion of the alternate operation access road (approximately 2.9 acres) route is classified as farmland of statewide and local importance on the basis that it is located on Finley fine sandy loam with 0 to 15 percent slopes. Improvement (paving) of the road would prevent this area of farmland of statewide and local importance from being used for agricultural purposes in the future. However, these impacts would be low because the area impacted represents small percentages of total farmland (0.000001 percent) and the total area of farmland of statewide significance (0.0023 percent) in the County.

3.8.4 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Impacts on land use/zoning, farmland, and recreation are anticipated to be low and less than significant. Design measures that are part of the proposed project that would reduce impacts include the following:

- Neighboring property owners would be consulted to determine times when construction of the transmission interconnections would have the least impact on their operations.
- Property owners and operators of the BNSF Railway would be advised of the schedule for constructing the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection prior to commencement of construction.

3.8.5 MITIGATION MEASURES

Since the proposed project would result in less than significant impacts on land use/zoning, farmland and recreation, no mitigation measures are required.

3.8.6 REFERENCES

Benton County. 2001. Benton County Zoning Ordinance BCC-Title 11 Ordinance No. 62. September 2001.

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