

6 WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY?

This chapter discusses the relationship within each alternative between the short-term use of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity. The designation of Section 368 energy corridors and land use plan amendment are not expected to affect the short-term uses or long-term productivity of the environment. The impacts (short- and long-term) from utilization of resources associated with project development under each alternative are presented in Chapter 3. For this PEIS, *short-term* refers primarily to the period of construction of an energy transport project; it is this time when the most extensive environmental impacts are likely to occur.

The comparison of the alternatives shows that there would be little difference in the types of impacts that could result with project development under both alternatives. Under each alternative, there would be continued use on federal and nonfederal lands of the environment for the development and operation of energy transport projects in the 11 western states. Development of energy transport projects under each of the alternatives would result in largely temporary impacts, and the long-term productivity of the physical environment would not be affected by the alternatives.

The construction of energy transport projects within the Section 368 corridors that would be designated under the Proposed Action could occur along 6,112¹ miles of proposed corridors throughout the 11 western states, as well as on additional miles of other federal and nonfederal lands. While there would be no

Section 368 energy corridors designated under the No Action Alternative, future energy transport projects may be expected to be built as energy demand continues to grow throughout the West. These future energy transport projects would be less likely to be colocated within energy corridors as they might be under the Proposed Action, but rather may be expected to be relatively widely dispersed across the 11 western states.

When viewed from a West-wide perspective, the development of energy transport projects under either alternative would not require the short-term disturbance or long-term alteration of a major amount of federal and nonfederal land. However, development of energy transport projects under each of the alternatives would result in the local, short- and long-term disturbance of vegetation, wildlife, and habitats. Under both alternatives, land clearing and grading and construction activities would disturb wildlife and their habitats within individual project ROWs as well as on other federal and nonfederal lands that would be crossed by the projects. Short- and long-term construction-related disturbances of biota and habitats could result in long-term reductions in biological productivity within the project-specific ROWs.

Environmental impacts during construction could be mitigated under No Action by current permitting and mitigation requirements, and under the Proposed Action by implementing the mitigation measures, as well as by the consideration and implementation of the IOPs identified in this PEIS. The impacts to the environment during operations would constitute a long-term use of the environment, and could be similarly mitigated.

Federal and nonfederal lands in the West currently support a variety of land uses (depending on their specific locations),

¹ Shaded text indicates portions of the document that underwent revision between the draft and the final PEIS in response to comments received during the public comment period as well as additional information provided by local federal land managers and resource specialists.

including livestock grazing, recreation, commercial and residential development, timber harvest, oil and gas leasing, and minerals extraction. The long-term presence of energy transport projects and associated ROWs could affect long-term land use within and along designated corridors or No Action ROWs on both federal and nonfederal lands, especially if previous land use activities were determined to be incompatible with energy transport projects. Energy transport projects within the proposed corridors or No Action ROWs could also affect long-term quality and use of visual resources and affect recreational use on federal and

nonfederal lands. While some recreational activities (such off-road vehicle use) could experience long-term increases in activity, changes in the types and patterns of recreational usage can be positive or negative, depending on the subjective values of the interested and affected public.

Under the Proposed Action, improvements in the reliability and capability of the national electricity grid to deliver electricity, as well as the relief of congestion in the grid, would be expected to contribute to long-term socioeconomic benefits throughout the West.