7 WHAT IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES WOULD BE INVOLVED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALTERNATIVES?

This chapter describes the irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources associated with the implementation of the alternatives evaluated in this PEIS. A resource commitment is considered *irreversible* when direct and indirect impacts from its use limit future use options. Irreversible commitments apply primarily to nonrenewable resources, such as cultural resources, and also to those resources that are renewable only over long periods of time, such as soil productivity or forest health. A resource commitment is considered *irretrievable* when the use or consumption of the resource is neither renewable nor recoverable for future use. Irretrievable commitments apply to loss of production, harvest, or use of natural resources.

Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources could be incurred as a result of development[1] of specific energy transport projects within the designated corridors.

7.1 POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF SECTION 368 CORRIDOR DESIGNATION AND LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

Designation of Section 368 energy corridors and land use plan amendment on federal lands in the 11 western states would not result in an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources within the designated corridors. Such changes could occur at the time that a specific project and its ROW were authorized and the project was constructed and operated.

[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.

7.2 POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT OF ENERGY TRANSPORT PROJECTS

The development of energy transport projects on other federal and nonfederal lands under both alternatives could result in the consumption of sands, gravels, and other geologic resources, as well as fuel, structural steel, and other materials. Water resources could also be consumed during construction, although water use would be temporary and largely limited to on-site concrete mixing and dust abatement activities.

In general, the impact to biological resources from project construction and operation would not constitute an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources. During project construction and operation, individual animals would be impacted. Site-specific and species-specific analyses and mitigation conducted at the project level during permitting and authorization would make adverse impacts to entire populations unlikely.

Clearing of ROWs within designated corridors and on other federal and nonfederal lands would result in the direct loss of vegetation within the ROWs, which would be irretrievable. While habitat would be impacted during construction within project ROWs under both alternatives, implementation of the mitigation measures (such as habitat restoration) identified in this PEIS would reduce these impacts over time. Under the Proposed Action, the consideration and implementation of the IOPs identified in this PEIS could further reduce ecological impacts. However, some habitats within designated corridors would be irretrievably committed with the development of energy transport projects.

Cultural and paleontological resources, as well as Tribal traditional cultural properties, are

nonrenewable, and any disturbance of these resources would constitute an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources. However, consideration and implementation of the IOPs and mitigation measures identified in this PEIS could minimize the potential for impacts to these resources. Access to previously inaccessible areas could lead to vandalism of both known and unknown cultural, Tribal, and paleontological resources, thereby rendering them irretrievable. Impacts to visual resources could constitute an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources, but could also be mitigated somewhat through the consideration and implementation of the mitigation measures and, under the Proposed Action, the IOPs identified in this PEIS.