

Corridor 229-254(S)

Mullan to Alberton Corridor

Corridor Purpose and Rationale

The corridor provides a pathway for pipeline transport across the Lolo National Forest. The corridor runs parallel to Corridor 229-254 just south along Highway I-90 reconnecting with Corridor 229-254. Input regarding alignment from multiple organizations¹ during the WWEC PEIS suggested following this route. There are no major pending ROWs for transmission line or pipeline projects within the corridor at this time. Alternative corridors in western Montana may be limited by terrain and landform. Previous development within the corridor, including the abandoned Northern Pacific and Milwaukee Railroad grades, provide potential pathways for unground infrastructure. Since the nearest existing pipeline corridor is located approximately 20 miles north of the corridor, the corridor provides potential for additional pipeline development in the future.

Corridor location:

Idaho (Shoshone Co.)
 Montana (Mineral Co)
 USFS: Idaho Panhandle and Lolo NFs
 Regional Review Region: Region 6

Corridor width, length:

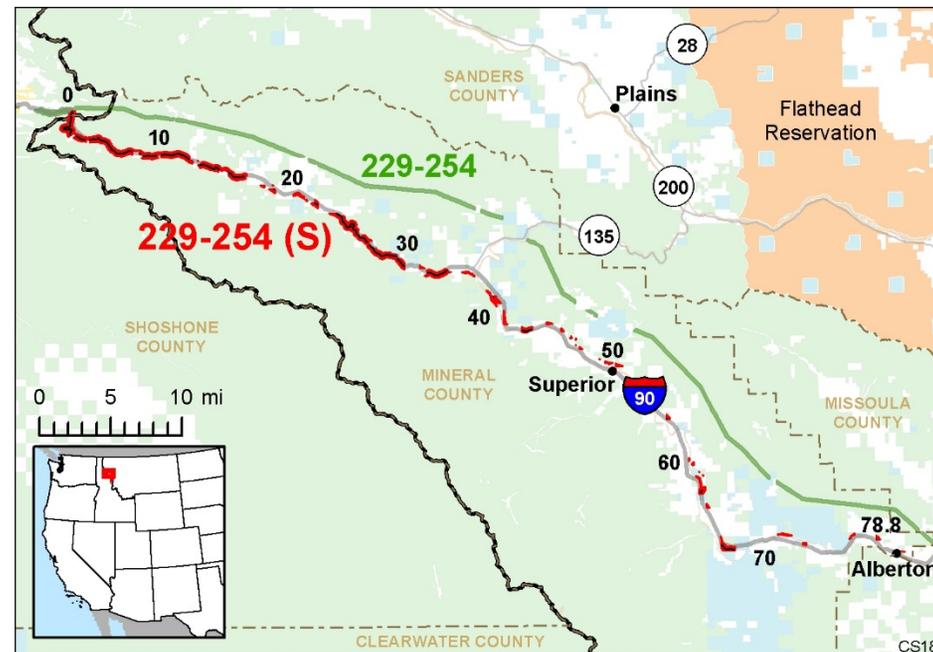
Width 2,000 ft
 26 miles of designated corridor
 79 miles of posted route, including gaps

Designated Use:

- corridor is underground only

Corridor of concern (Y)

Critical habitat, NRHP, "suitable" segment under Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, CDT, USFS Inventoried Roadless Area



Corridor history:

- Locally designated prior to 2009 (N)
- Existing infrastructure (Y)
 - A 100-kV transmission line is within and adjacent to most of the corridor.
 - Highway I-90 runs along the entire corridor.
- Energy potential near the corridor (Y)
 - 1 substation is within the corridor and 15 more substations are within 5 mi of the corridor.
- Corridor changes since 2009 (N)

Figure 1. Corridor 229-254(S)

¹ Avista Utilities, American Wind Energy Association, Bonneville Power Administration, Rocky Mountain Area Transmission Study, Western Interconnection Transmission Paths, and Western Utility Group

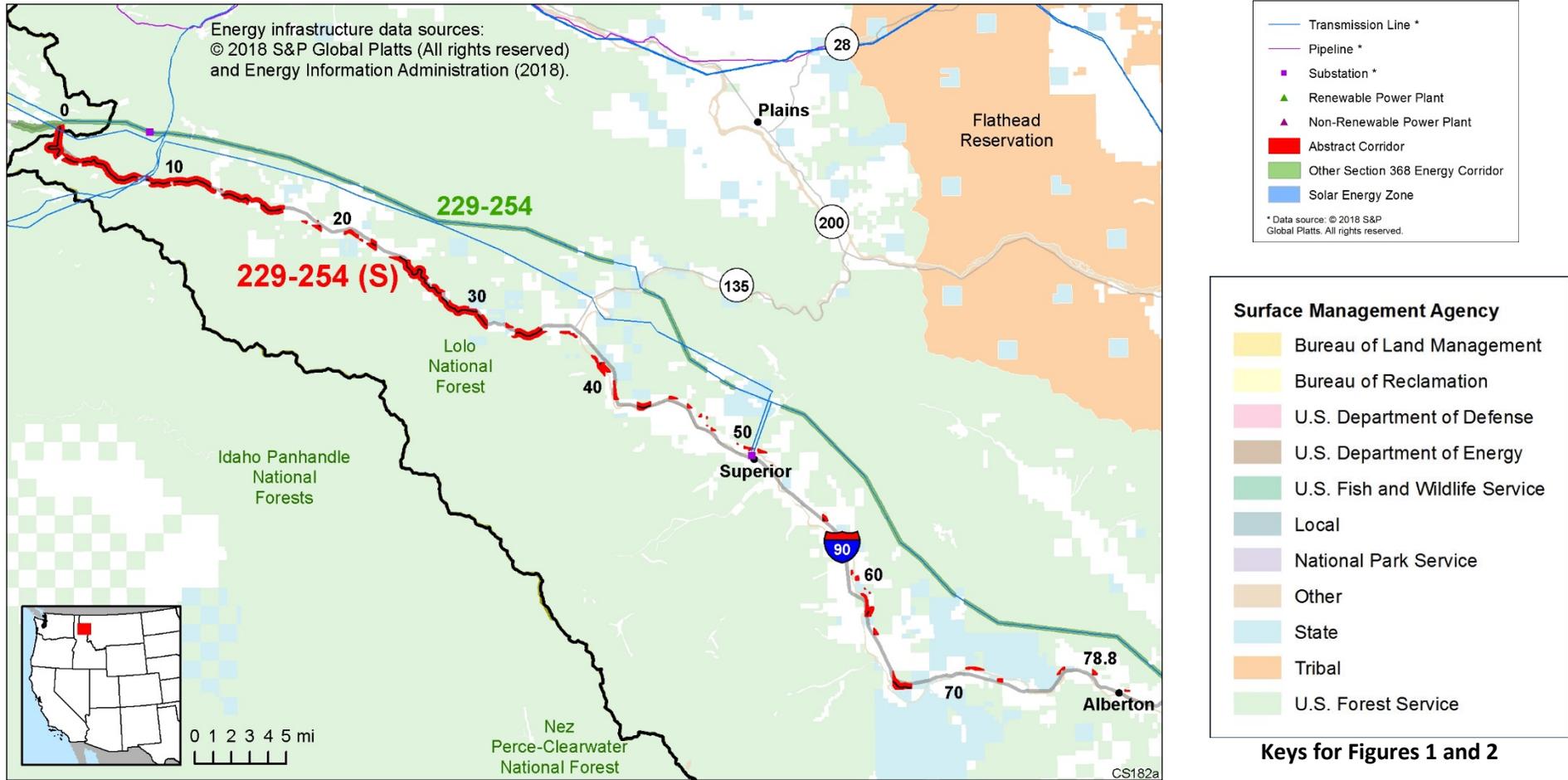


Figure 2. Corridor 229-254(S) and nearby electric transmission lines and pipelines

Conflict Map Analysis

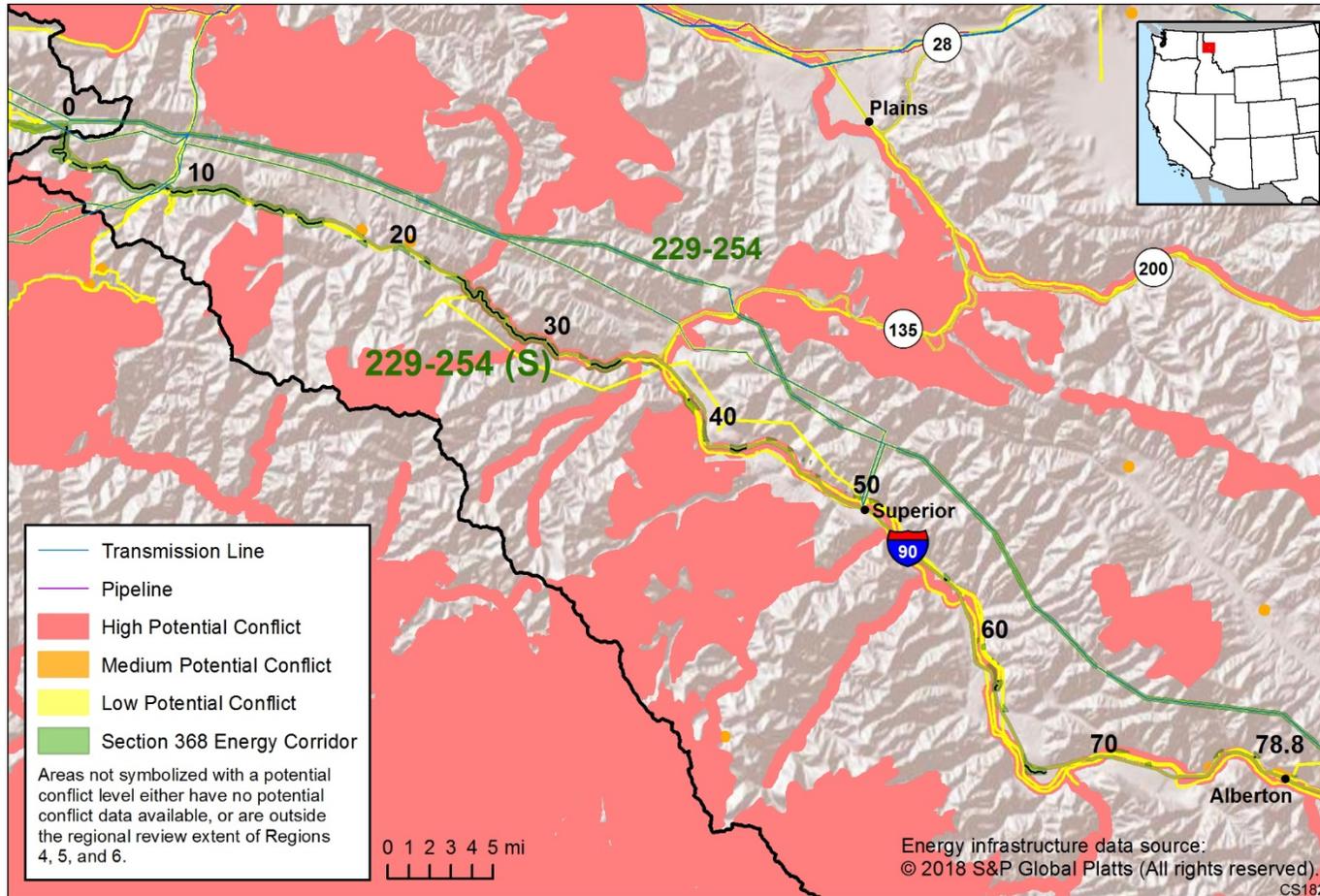


Figure 3. Map of Conflict Areas in Vicinity of Corridor 229-254(S)

Figure 3 reflects a comprehensive resource conflict assessment developed to enable the Agencies and stakeholders to visualize a corridor’s proximity to environmentally sensitive areas and to evaluate options for routes with lower potential conflict. The potential conflict assessment (low, medium, high) shown in the figure is based on [criteria](#) found on the WVEC Information Center at www.corridoreis.anl.gov. To meet the intent of the Energy Policy Act and the Settlement Agreement siting principles, corridors may be located in areas where there is potentially high resource conflict; however, where feasible, opportunity for corridor revisions should be identified in areas with potentially lower conflict.

Visit the 368 Mapper for a full view of the potential conflict map (<https://bogi.evs.anl.gov/section368/portal/>)

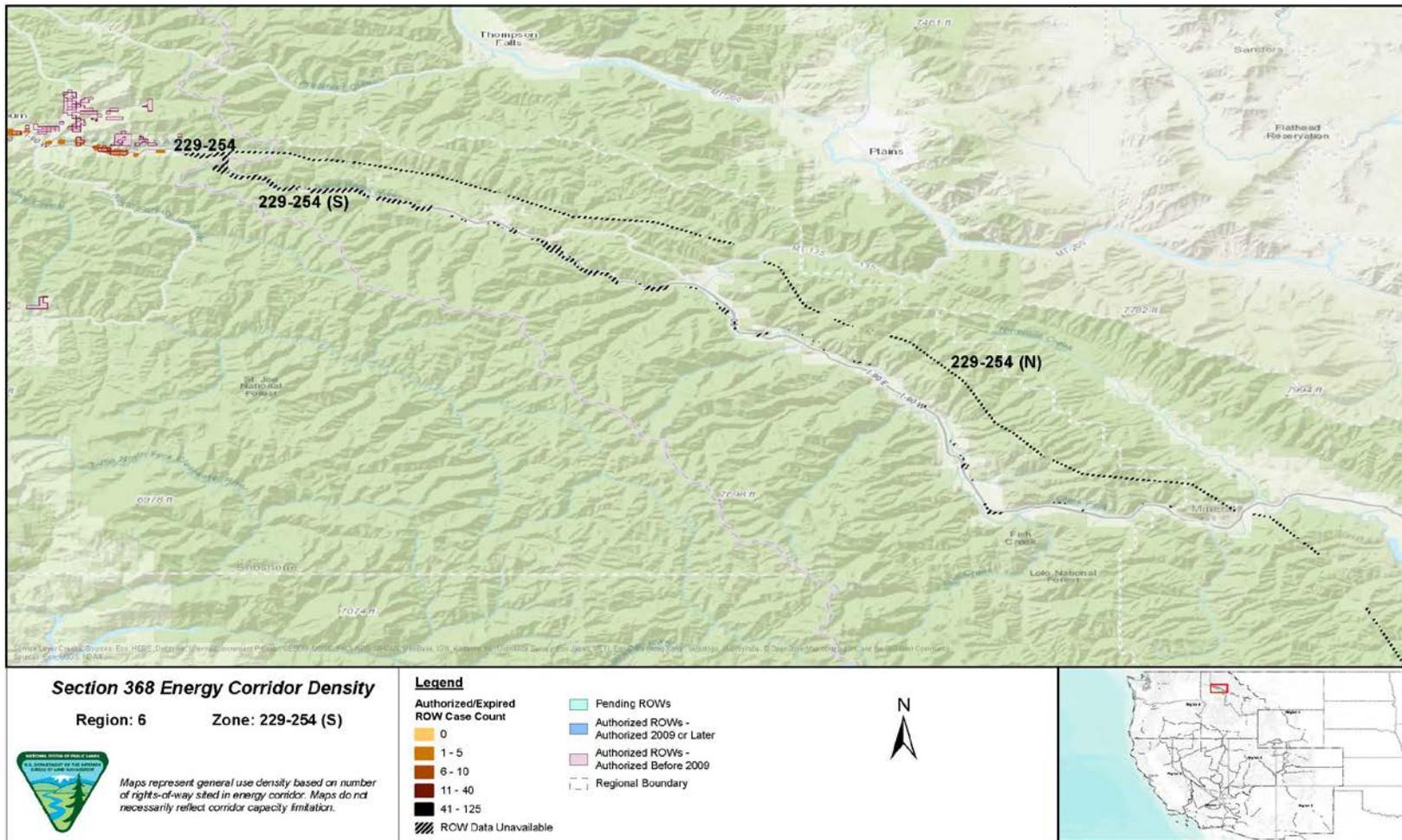


Figure 4. Corridor 229-254(S), Corridor Density Map

Figure 4 shows the density of energy use to assist in evaluating corridor utility. ROWs granted prior to the corridor designation (2009) are shown in pink; ROWs granted after corridor designation are shown in blue; and pending ROWs under current review for approval are shown in turquoise. Note the ROW density shown for the corridor is only a snapshot that does not fully illustrate remaining corridor capacity. Not all ROWs have GIS data at the time this abstract was developed. BLM and USFS are currently improving their ROW GIS databases and anticipate more complete data in the near future.

Corridor Review Table

Designated energy corridors are areas of land prioritized for energy transmission infrastructure and are intended to be predominantly managed for multiple energy transmission infrastructure lines. Other compatible uses are allowable as specified or practicable. Resource management goals and objectives should be compatible with the desired future conditions (i.e., responsible linear infrastructure development of the corridor with minimal impacts) of the energy transmission corridor. Land management objectives that do not align with desired future conditions should be avoided. The table below identifies serious concerns or issues and presents potential resolution options to better meet corridor siting principles.

The preliminary information below is provided to facilitate further discussion and input prior to developing potential revisions, deletions, or additions.

CORRIDOR 229-254(S) REVIEW			
POTENTIAL COMPATIBILITY ISSUES or CONCERNS TO EXAMINE	MILEPOST (MP)¹	STAKEHOLDER INPUT and OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS BASED ON SITING PRINCIPLE ANALYSIS²
<i>USFS Jurisdiction: Idaho Panhandle National Forests</i>			
<i>Agency Land Use Plan: Idaho Panhandle National Forests LMP (2015)</i>			
SIO High and the corridor intersect – Management of areas under SIO High provides for deviations from existing conditions but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that they are not evident. (Corresponds to VQO Retention.)	MP 0 to MP 1		The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles as it is collocated with I-90 and is intersected by a transmission line.
ROS Semi-Primitive Motorized and the corridor intersect – Areas under this ROS class are managed such that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use is permitted.	MP 1		The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles as it is collocated with I-90. There is no readily available option to avoid the ROS Semi-Primitive Motorized class at this location.
<i>USFS Jurisdiction: Lolo National Forest</i>			
<i>Agency Land Use Plan: Lolo National Forest Plan (1986)</i>			
ROS Semi-Primitive Motorized and the corridor intersect - Areas under this ROS class are managed such that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use is permitted.	MP 1 to MP 3		The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles. There is either space within the corridor for future energy infrastructure to avoid the ROS Semi-Primitive Motorized class or for the corridor to be slightly shifted to the east to avoid this ROS class. Either option would involve placement of infrastructure within the ROS Roaded Natural class.
ROS Roaded Natural and the corridor intersect – Areas under this ROS class may have resource	MP 1 to MP 12, MP 16, MP 18,		The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles as it is collocated with I-90 and/or with one or more

CORRIDOR 229-254(S) REVIEW

POTENTIAL COMPATIBILITY ISSUES or CONCERNS TO EXAMINE	MILEPOST (MP)¹	STAKEHOLDER INPUT and OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS BASED ON SITING PRINCIPLE ANALYSIS²
modification and utilization practices evident, but harmonized with the natural environment. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and design of facilities.	MP 29, MP 31, MP 36, MP 61, MP 71, and MP 79		transmission lines. A corridor shift is not feasible due either to the extent of the ROS Roaded Natural class extent or limited width of USFS-administered lands.
Wonderful Peak Roadless Area and the corridor are adjacent - The LMP does not prescribe restrictions for areas adjacent to roadless areas.	MP 3 to MP 4	The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001) prohibits road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas.	The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles. The corridor is not located in the roadless area and development and management inside of the corridor would not be affected. There is no existing infrastructure in this segment of the corridor other than I-90 near MP 4. Agencies could consider a coordination IOP related to Roadless Areas to help minimize conflicts with the Roadless Rule.
ROS Unknown and the corridor intersect – The ROS class is unknown.	MP 12 to MP 13, MP 21, and MP 50 to MP 51, MP 79	ROS Roaded Natural and Rural are in the immediate area of the unknown area at MP 12 to MP 13, while the ROS Rural class surrounds the unknown areas at MP 21 and MP 50.	Although the ROS class is listed as unknown, the corridor appears to best meet the siting principles as it is collocated with I-90 and one or more transmission lines.
Gilt Edge - Silver Creek Roadless Area and the corridor are adjacent - The LMP does not prescribe restrictions for areas adjacent to roadless areas.	MP 13 to MP 14	The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001) prohibits road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest in inventoried roadless areas. Comment on abstract: the corridor needs additional reviews based on the Roadless Area.	The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles. The corridor is not located in the roadless area and development and management inside of the corridor would not be affected. Agencies could consider a coordination IOP related to Roadless Areas to help minimize conflicts with the Roadless Rule
ROS Rural and the corridor intersect – Areas under this ROS class may be substantially modified. Resource modification and utilization practices are to enhance specific recreation activities and maintain vegetative cover and soil.	MP 13 to MP 68, MP 73 to MP 77		The corridor appears to best meet the siting principles as it is collocated with I-90 and/or with one or more transmission lines.
Bull Trout (ESA-listed Threatened) critical habitat and the corridor intersect. The land use plan pre-dates the identification of critical habitat in 2010 and does not have specific guidance or objectives.	MP 24, MP 32 to MP 34, MP 39, and MP 71	The USFWS issued the Final Critical Habitat Rule for Bull Trout in 2010. The Recovery Plan for the Conterminous United States	The corridor runs parallel to the critical habitat. In some locations, there appears to be the opportunity to delete small corridor segments or shift the corridor to avoid critical habitat. From MP 25 to MP 50, the Agencies could

CORRIDOR 229-254(S) REVIEW			
POTENTIAL COMPATIBILITY ISSUES or CONCERNS TO EXAMINE	MILEPOST (MP)¹	STAKEHOLDER INPUT and OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS BASED ON SITING PRINCIPLE ANALYSIS²
		<p>Population of Bull Trout was finalized in 2015. No management prescriptions related to utility corridors were identified for this species.</p> <p>Comment on abstract: mitigation measures must be developed that prescribe avoidance parameters for this species habitat. This should be a standard requirement for all corridors accessing Bull Trout habitat.</p> <p>Reasonable and prudent measures identified by the USFWS during consultation will be incorporated in project plans to minimize habitat fragmentation.</p> <p>RFI comment: re-route to avoid critical habitat. Consult closely with state fish and game agencies and WGA to implement the full mitigation hierarchy of avoidance, minimization, and compensation for CHAT resources at "Very High" risk.</p> <p>Comment on the abstract: reduce high impacts and reconsider portions of this corridor to avoid Bull Trout habitat and to minimize disturbance to other sensitive wildlife species.</p> <p>Comment on abstract: shift the corridor to avoid the roadless area</p>	<p>consider shifting the corridor to align with the existing transmission line rather than I-90.</p> <p>Section 7 consultation with USFWS would be commensurate with agency determination of potential affect to threatened or endangered species.</p>

CORRIDOR 229-254(S) REVIEW			
POTENTIAL COMPATIBILITY ISSUES or CONCERNS TO EXAMINE	MILEPOST (MP)¹	STAKEHOLDER INPUT and OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION	POTENTIAL RESOLUTIONS BASED ON SITING PRINCIPLE ANALYSIS²
		landscape, as recommended, but also to avoid Bull Trout habitat.	
Bull Trout (ESA-listed Threatened) critical habitat and the corridor are adjacent - The land use plan pre-dates the identification of critical habitat in 2010 and does not have specific guidance or objectives.	MP 32, MP 42 to MP 43 and MP 61 to MP 62	<p>The USFWS issued the Final Critical Habitat Rule for Bull Trout in 2010.</p> <p>The Recovery Plan for the Coterminous United States Population of Bull Trout was finalized in 2015. No management prescriptions related to utility corridors were identified for this species.</p> <p>Reasonable and prudent measures identified by the USFWS during consultation will be incorporated in project plans to minimize habitat fragmentation.</p> <p>RFI comment: re-route to avoid critical habitat. Consult closely with state fish & game agencies and WGA to implement the full mitigation hierarchy of avoidance, minimization, and compensation for CHAT resources at "Very High" risk.</p>	The corridor is not located in the critical habitat and development and management inside of the corridor would not be affected. From MP 25 to MP 50, the Agencies could consider shifting the corridor to align with the existing transmission line rather than I-90.

¹ Mileposts are rounded to the nearest mile.

² Siting Principles include: *Corridors are thoughtfully sited to provide maximum utility and minimum impact on the environment; Corridors promote efficient use of landscape for necessary development; Appropriate and acceptable uses are defined for specific corridors; and Corridors provide connectivity to renewable energy generation to the maximum extent possible, while also considering other generation, in order to balance the renewable sources and to ensure the safety and reliability of electricity transmission.* Projects proposed in the corridor would be reviewed during their ROW application review process and would adhere to Federal laws, regulations, and policy.

Additional Compatibility Concerns

The issues and concerns listed below are not explicitly addressed through agency land use plans or are too general in nature to be addressed without further clarification. Although difficult to quantify, the concerns listed have potential to affect future use and/or development within this designated corridor. The Agencies have provided a preliminary general analysis. The information below is provided to facilitate further discussion during stakeholder review.

Corridor Utility:

- The corridor is designated underground-only but there is an existing transmission line within the corridor, making potential future upgrades to this transmission line problematic.

Analysis: The Agencies could consider designating the corridor as multi-modal to address this concern.

Terrain Concerns:

- The corridor needs additional reviews based on the presence of extremely rough terrain not suitable for transmission line access (comment on abstract).

Analysis: Topography could be a factor when pursuing a project proposal. The Agencies could consider potential adjustments to the corridor to avoid terrain concerns.

Cultural Resources:

- Re-route to avoid NRHP properties (RFI comment).

Analysis: Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of an undertaking on cultural resources listed on the NRHP.

Specially Designated Area:

- Re-route to avoid “suitable” segment under Wild & Scenic Rivers Act (RFI comment). The corridor needs additional reviews based on the WSR (comment on abstract).

Analysis: The corridor does not appear to intersect a WSR suitable segment.

Ecology:

- This section of the corridor should be considered a high conflict area for Montana DEQ siting purposes. It is too fragmented to be effectively considered under Montana MFSA Preferred Location Criteria. Criteria that would be impacted, or difficult to address include residences, visual impacts, and difficulty in obtaining greatest local acceptance. MP 18 to MP 25, and MP 30 to MP 78.8 (Alberton) are generally unusable for MFSA siting purposes unless there is no other option (comment on abstract).
- The corridor needs additional reviews based on the significant levels of fish, wildlife, and the presence of extremely rough terrain not suitable for transmission line access (comment on abstract).

Analysis: IOPs and BMPs would be required. In general, the corridor follows existing infrastructure. The Agencies could consider an IOP for habitat connectivity so that projects within Section 368 energy corridors are sited and designed in a manner that minimizes impacts on habitat connectivity. The MFSA would only apply to electric transmission lines that are collectively less than 150 miles in length; pipelines greater than 25" in diameter and 50 miles in length; and exceptions are granted if the applicant has obtained ROW agreements or options from more than 75% of the owners who collectively own more than 75% of the property along the centerline. Smaller and shorter pipeline projects could be located within corridor without MFSA being triggered and larger projects could be located if the property owners agreed to the land use.

Recreation:

- The corridor needs additional reviews based on recreational interests (comment on abstracts).

Analysis: Section 368 energy corridors were designated to provide long-distance pathways for electrical transmission and pipelines while minimizing impacts from proliferation of energy ROWs across Federal lands. Corridors are often collocated with existing infrastructure to minimize impacts on resources, including recreation. Adherence to existing IOPs for visual resources would be required.

Abstract Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CDT = Continental Divide Trail; CHAT = Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool; DEQ = Department of Environmental Quality; ESA = Endangered Species Act; GIS = geographic information system; IOP = interagency operating procedure; LMP = land management plan; MFSA = Major Facility Siting Act; MP = milepost; NHPA = National Historic Preservation Act; NRHP = National Register of Historic Places; PEIS = Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; RFI = request for information; RMP = resource management plan; ROS = recreation opportunity spectrum; ROW = right-of-way; SIO = scenic integrity objective; USFS = U.S. Forest Service; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; VQO = visual quality objective; WGA = Western Governors' Association; WSR = wild and scenic river; WWEC = West-wide Energy Corridor.