

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

For

BREA Headquarters Project



Committed to the future of rural communities.

Dated: July 2024



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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

APE	Area of Potential Effect
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
DC	Direct Current
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EA	Environmental Assessment
EMF	Electromagnetic Fields and Interference
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
FCL	Formally Classified Lands
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation tool
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NAA	No Action Alternative
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
PAD-US	Protected Areas Database of the U.S.
PV	Photovoltaic
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RD	Rural Development
RUS	Rural Utilities Service
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SPCC	Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan
SSA	Sole Source Aquifer
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey

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1.0 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Benton Rural Electric Association (BREA) is a not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperative and serves more than 11,000 members in portions of Benton, Yakima, and Lewis Counties in the state of Washington. BREA is planning to construct a new administration building and staging area for materials and parking for their fleet. This project is necessary to permit BREA to continue connecting with new consumers and to continue providing safe and reliable service.

The construction phase of the Project, which includes grading, will be planned, and designed to minimize the use of mechanized grading and fill materials procured off-site. Controls, such as silt fences and stabilization will be used during and after construction as needed to minimize indirect adverse environmental effects.

After construction, the proposed Project would be in operation seven days per week during the working hours that BREA sets forth. Anticipated activities would consist of trucks going to and from the building to pick up supplies and store them in the on-site warehouses. Anticipated activities also include people going to and from the office buildings for daily work. Fig. 1 on the following page shows the site location overlaid upon Google satellite imagery. Fig. 2 on the following page shows the site's location within the State of Washington. Maps containing additional information can be found in the appendices.

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Fig. 1. Benton REA headquarters building overlaid upon Google satellite imagery.

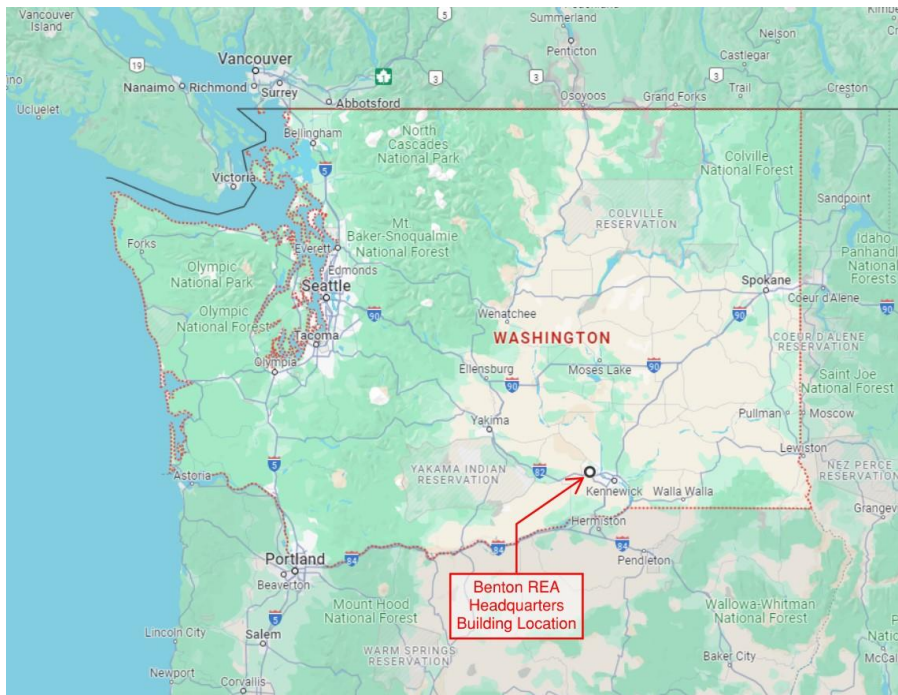


Fig.2. Benton REA proposed headquarters location within the City of West Richland, Washington.

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In 2022 BREA received a FONSI for a scaled down iteration of this project. The initial project was 9.8 acres. Since then, the scope of the project has expanded to 17.8 acres. The expanded scope of the project triggers the need for an Environmental Assessment (EA) rather than the previously approved Environmental Report (ER) as it has been expanded beyond the 10-acre cutoff for a categorical exclusion under 7 CFR 1970.54 (a).

Per RD Instruction 1970-C Exhibit B Section 2.3.1: “USDA, Rural Development is a mission area that includes three federal agencies – Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Utilities Service. The agencies have in excess of 50 programs that provide financial assistance and a variety of technical and educational assistance to eligible rural and tribal populations, eligible communities, individuals, cooperatives, and other entities with a goal of improving the quality of life, sustainability, infrastructure, economic opportunity, development, and security in rural America. Financial assistance can include direct loans, guaranteed loans, and grants in order to accomplish program objectives.”

Benton Rural Electric Association (BREA) plans to seek financial assistance from the USDA Rural Development (RD), Rural Utilities Service (RUS) under its Electric Program for its new Headquarters Project. The project location map is located in Appendix A.

1.1.2 AGENCY AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

RUS’s action is the decision to provide financing assistance for the Proposed Action through the Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program. Under the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized and empowered to make loans to nonprofit cooperatives and others for rural electrification for the purpose of financing the construction and operation of generating plants, electric transmission and distribution lines, or systems for the furnishing and improving of electric service to persons in rural areas (7 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] § 904). A primary function or mission of RUS is to carry out the electric loan program (7 U.S.C. 6942).

USDA, Rural Development (RD) is a mission area that includes three federal agencies – Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Utilities Service (RUS). The agencies have in excess of 50 programs that provide financial assistance and a variety of technical and educational assistance to eligible rural and tribal populations, eligible communities, individuals, cooperatives, and other entities with a goal of improving the quality of life, sustainability, infrastructure, economic opportunity, development, and security in rural America. Financial assistance can include direct loans, guaranteed loans, and grants in order to accomplish program objectives.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 3100 (7 CFR 3100), which prescribes the policies and procedures of the USDA for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of

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1969, as amended, 7 CFR 1970 which provides environmental policies and procedures for the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality, 40 CFR 1500-1508, and the USDA Rural Development guidance document 1970-C which serves as a guide for preparing EAs under NEPA.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

RUS's purpose is to evaluate this proposed facility for financing through the Electric Infrastructure Loan and Loan Guarantee Program to serve nonprofit utility cooperatives in rural areas as required by the REA. The need of the Proposed Action is to provide BREA and its members with a building and staging area, allowing for improved operation and maintenance of their electric system. The new facility will allow for better maintenance of fleet vehicles, additional storage of electrical equipment such as transformers, poles, regulators, reclosers, etcetera, and improved working conditions for BREA staff.

BREA's current headquarters facilities were originally constructed in 1961, and they are beginning to show signs of age. The existing headquarters facilities also suffer from poor layout. There are currently four warehouses where equipment and vehicles are stored. These warehouses were tacked on to the original facility due to the need for more space, but their layout and the fact that the warehouses are not all right next door to each other leaves BREA prone to inefficiency, slower operations, and delayed responses to outages. BREA line workers are required to traverse an approximately 0.4-mile area within the City of Prosser, Washington, driving through a minimum of five gates to the four warehouses to gather material and equipment before heading into the field. The proposed action would construct a new headquarters building, staging area, vehicle storage lots and garages, and equipment and materials storage facilities all within the same location. This would create a one-stop location where line workers can gather all necessary equipment and vehicles, greatly improving efficiency.

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2.0 ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

Benton REA is planning to construct a new office space and staging area. The office will consist of a 25,000-square-foot new building, and the development will require typical development impacts such as construction of access and parking, utility installations, and landscaping. The Project's area of potential effect (APE) covers approximately 17.8 acres and lines in Sections 11 and 12 of Township 09 North, Range 27 East, Willamette Meridian. Future expansion may require the construction of additional buildings and infrastructure, these foreseeable improvements will be constructed so that the entire area of potential effect will be contained within the 17.8 acres, as shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 as well as on the enclosed map, which can be found in Appendix A.

The Project has been sited on private property currently owned by BREA to avoid floodplains, wetlands, and streams, and to minimize the need for grading. The site is also in a prime location for BREA because of its location within its service area, which makes the location ideal for staging materials and their vehicle fleet. The preferred new headquarters is to be located just north of BREA's Kennedy Substation. With the location being within a few hundred feet of Kennedy Substation while also being within 20 miles of eight other substations, the facility will allow for BREA staff to more easily perform day-to-day operations on the electric system and to more quickly resolve outages in the area.

The Project's construction phase, including grading, will be planned to minimize the use of mechanized grading and off-site fill materials. Appropriate measures, such as silt fences, will be implemented during and after construction as necessary to diminish any indirect adverse environmental effects.

2.2 OTHER ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

BREA considered the potential sites in the area in terms of those that they own or could lease, those that would avoid floodplains, wetlands, and streams, and those that would require a minimal need for clearing and grading. The site was chosen as it minimizes all potential negative social and environmental impacts and is currently owned by BREA.

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2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The 'no action alternative' (hereby referred to as NAA) results in no new BREA headquarters being built. This alternative would force BREA to continue operations out of their old headquarters building, which was constructed in 1961. This would limit BREA's ability to expand operations to meet the needs of the growing population and electric power demand in the area. This would also disallow the expansion of storage facilities, limiting BREA's ability to keep equipment on hand for when it is needed. The NAA also prevents BREA from improving its fleet of vehicles by not expanding maintenance garages and parking spaces for fleet vehicles. This limits BREA's ability to effectively perform day-to-day operations. The NAA would also prevent BREA from relocating its headquarters to an ideal location in West Richland, Washington, which is within BREA's service territory and within 20 miles of eight of BREA's substations.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

3.1 LAND USE

3.1.1 GENERAL LAND USE

The land on which the project is to be built is currently undeveloped and unused. The land is currently zoned C-LI – Commercial Light Industrial. No development plans are known to exist for the area and BREA currently owns the property upon which the facility is to be constructed. The proposed Project will be located on rural, agricultural tracts of land in West Richland, Washington in Benton County at the intersection of Highway 26 and Highway 17 on land currently owned by BREA.

3.1.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The preferred site is surrounded to its south and east by farmland, to its west by the Tri-City Raceway, and to its north by the West Richland Police station. While the area is zoned for light industrial, the nearest residence appears to be approximately 800 feet northwest from the APE boundary. The nearest residential zoning area is approximately a quarter mile southeast of the APE boundary.

3.1.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Action Alternative

The NAA would result in no changes to current land use. The land would remain empty and unused. The land could potentially be sold and used for farming.

Proposed Action

As there are no known development plans for the area, the land is currently appropriately zoned for commercial light industrial use, and the land has already been purchased by BREA, the proposed action is not anticipated to have any negative impacts to land use.

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3.1.1.3 MITIGATION

Land use is compliant with local zoning regulations and will not need to be rezoned. No mitigation measures are warranted.

3.1.2 IMPORTANT FARMLAND

3.1.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site is located on cleared land, which may have been used as farmland in the past. The Project area is owned by BREA, and is not currently being used for farming, however, the land to the south and east of the project area does appear to be used for farming. According to the attached map using data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the site is not located within farmland of local, statewide, or unique importance.

3.1.2.2 ENVIRONMENT CONSEQUENCES

No Action Alternative

The NAA would result in no building construction on the land. The land could be potentially sold for use as farmland. However, the site would most likely sit unused until it is repurposed for other industrial use, as it is zoned accordingly.

Proposed Action

Proposed Project location and description as well as applicable AD-1006 forms were forwarded to the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on May 20, 2024, regarding the impact on important farmland for the Project. According to correspondence with NRCS, the project location does not contain any Prime, Unique, Statewide, or Locally Important Farmland. Copies of NRCS correspondence and completed forms can be found in Appendix B. Thus, there is no anticipated impact to farmland resulting from the proposed action.

3.1.2.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.1.3 FORMALLY CLASSIFIED LANDS

3.1.3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The National Map and the PADUS map provided by the USGS as well as the EPA-provided NEPAassist tool were referenced for any known Formally Classified Lands. The maps may be found in Appendix C. There are no known: National Parks and Monuments; National Forests and Grasslands; National Historic Landmarks; National Battlefield and Military Parks; National Historic Sites and Historical Parks; National Natural Landmarks; National Wildlife Refuges; National seashores, lake shores, and trails; Wilderness areas; Wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; State parks; State fish and wildlife management areas; Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands; or Areas of State and Local Interest located in the Project Area.

3.1.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Action Alternative

The NAA does not apply as there are no impacts to formally classified lands.

Proposed Action

The site and APE are located on land that is owned by BREA. According to the National Map and NEPAassist tool, there are no known Formally Classified Lands as defined above located in the Project APE. Therefore, no impact on any Formally Classified Lands is anticipated as a result of the Project.

3.1.3.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.2 FLOODPLAINS

3.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey indicates that the proposed project contains soils that fall within the “none” category of Flooding Frequency Class. NRCS defines a Flooding Frequency Class of “none” as: “The chance of flooding is nearly 0 percent in any year. Flooding occurs less than once in 500 years.”

According to the NRCS Web Soil Survey, the proposed project location is not within a known floodplain.

The proposed project will alter the topography of the site, but the flow of water will be directed in the same direction as is naturally occurring. As such, the proposed project would have no effect on the flow of floodwater across the site.

There is no digital data available on the FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer for this location (as shown in Appendix D).

3.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Action Alternative

The NAA does not apply as there are no impacts to floodplains.

Proposed Action

Based upon all available data for this Project, no floodplain is located in the area, and no environmental impact is anticipated to any floodplain as a result of this Project.

3.2.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.3 WETLANDS

3.3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

There are no NWI wetlands within the APE of preferred site. The avoidance of wetlands was one of the initial criteria for site selection. Maps of USFWS and NWI wetlands for the surrounding area can be found in Appendix E.

3.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Action Alternative

The NAA does not apply as there are no impacts to wetlands.

Proposed Action

As there are no wetlands in the APE for the Project, and the construction of the project will involve controls and best management practices to control any discharge from the site, there is no anticipated impact to any wetlands because of this Project.

3.3.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.4 WATER RESOURCES

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

According to the attached map, located in Appendix F, using data from the EPA's Sole Source Aquifer online data-viewer, the proposed Project is not located within the limits of a Sole Source Aquifer. The proposed Project is not within a known well-head or watershed protection area. The nearest body of water to the proposed Project is Lost Lake, located 0.25 miles south of the Project APE.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No action alternative

The NAA would result in no additional impact of any kind to water resources.

Proposed Action

All necessary permits will be in place prior to construction. Controls, such as silt fences, stabilization, and other Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used as a requirement of the Land Disturbance Permit and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan during and after construction as needed to minimize any potential indirect adverse environmental effects to water quality. During construction activities, routine inspections will also take place to ensure that these controls are implemented correctly.

The project will not result in any new effluent discharge, stormwater quality is not anticipated to be affected by the Project. Furthermore, the proposed Project is not within the limits of a known well-head or watershed protection area.

The project is not within the limits of a Sole Source Aquifer. As mentioned above, the Project will also not result in any new effluent discharge, BMPs will be used during construction, and stormwater quality is not anticipated to be affected by the Project.

No effects or impacts to water resources are anticipated as a result of the proposed Project.

3.4.1 WATER QUANTITY

3.4.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The APE is located in an arid region where heavy rains and flooding are rare. Per the NRCS soil science report located in Appendix D, the soil in the area is Quincy loamy sand, which excessively drained and has very low water retention. The APE is not located near any known well-heads, watersheds, or drainage areas of any sole source aquifer. The closest SSA, the Lewiston Basin Aquifer Area SSA, is 87 miles to the east of the project.

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3.4.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No action alternative

The NAA would result in no additional impact to water quantity.

Proposed Action

As mentioned previously, BMPs will be implemented during construction to limit impacts to water flow during construction. The building, parking lots, and storage areas will be designed so as to limit undesirable flow of water. A land disturbance permit will be acquired and a SWPPP will be implemented prior to the beginning of construction. The proposed facility will not generate any new effluent discharge. Thus, no impacts to water quantity are anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

3.4.1.3 MITIGATION

BMPs will be implemented during construction, all applicable construction and building codes will be followed, a SWPPP will be implemented, and stormwater runoff will be factored into the design of the facility.

3.4.2 WATER QUALITY

3.4.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

As mentioned previously, the APE is not located near any known well-heads, watersheds, or drainage areas of any sole source aquifer. The closest SSA, the Lewiston Basin Aquifer Area SSA, is 87 miles to the east of the project. The proposed facility will not generate any new effluent discharge.

3.4.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No action alternative

The NAA would result in no additional impact of any kind to water quality.

Proposed Action

As mentioned previously, BMPs will be implemented during construction to limit impacts to water flow during construction. The building, parking lots, and storage areas will be designed so as to limit undesirable flow of water. A land disturbance permit will be acquired and a SWPPP will be implemented prior to the beginning of construction. The proposed facility will not generate any new effluent discharge. Thus, no impacts to water quantity are anticipated as a result of the proposed action.

3.4.2.3 MITIGATION

BMPs will be implemented during construction, all applicable construction and building codes will be followed, a SWPPP will be implemented, and stormwater runoff will be factored into the design of the facility.

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3.5 COASTAL RESOURCES

3.5.1 COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT

3.5.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

There are no coastal areas or protected aquatic habitats in the region.

3.5.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

As there are no coastal areas or protected aquatic habitats in the region, no impact to those areas is anticipated by the Project.

3.5.1.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

3.5.2 COASTAL BARRIER RESOURCES ACT

3.5.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Coastal Barrier Resources Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 do not apply to the proposed action, as the site is over 200 miles inland.

3.5.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No effect on coastal areas.

3.5.2.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.6 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.6.1 GENERAL FISH, WILDLIFE, AND VEGETATION

3.6.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site is located on mostly-clear, open land with a small amount of trees within the proposed APE that would need to be cleared. The proposed Project will be located near rural, agricultural tracts of land in the city of West Richland in Benton County, Washington south of the intersection of Highway 224 and Keene Rd. Per the IPaC consultation, which can be found in Appendix F, there are three animal species with conservation status of endangered or threatened that have the potential of being found in the vicinity of the project site. Endangered and threatened species are discussed further under heading 3.6.2 below.

3.6.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No Action Alternative

The NAA would result in no additional impact of any kind fish, wildlife, or vegetation.

Proposed Action

There are no surface waters within the Project APE providing no suitable habitat for fish. BMPs and controls will be used to prevent any offsite impacts to the environment. The previously cleared land that will be converted to a headquarters also currently provides little suitable habitat in general for native vegetation or wildlife on the Project site. A small number of trees within the project APE will need to be cleared. Other than the clearing of a small number of trees, no effects on fish, wildlife, or vegetation are anticipated as a result of this Project.

3.6.1.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

3.6.2 LISTED THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

3.6.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

BREA accessed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool on January 18th, 2024, and was updated on August 7th, 2024. According to the consultation, there are three threatened or endangered species that may be present in the vicinity of the APE: The Gray Wolf, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and the Bull Trout. The Monarch Butterfly, which is a candidate for conservation status also has the potential to be found in the area. The official IPaC species list is provided in Appendix F.

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3.6.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

Under the NAA, the proposed APE would remain in its current condition and there would be no impact to biological resources

Proposed Action

PROPOSED ACTION DETERMINATIONS			
SPECIES	PROTECTION STATUS	HABITAT DESCRIPTION	HABITAT PRESENT
MAMMALS			
Grey Wolf	Endangered	Preferred habitat consists of temperate forest, mountains, tundra, taiga, grasslands, and deserts. They typically hunt medium and large mammals such as moose, elk, deer, and bison.	<p>The project will be developed within West Richland city limits in an area near two highways with no forests nearby therefore there is no suitable habitat for the Gray Wolf in or around the Project APE. Designated critical habitat for the Grey Wolf is in Michigan and Minnesota. The APE is not within designated critical habitat for the Grey Wolf.</p> <p>As the Grey Wolf is a large predator, inadvertent take of a specimen during construction is extremely unlikely.</p>
BIRDS			
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Threatened	Preferred habitat consists of densely wooded areas next to streams and marshes.	There are no forests or significant bodies of water in or around the Project APE. Therefore, there is no suitable habitat for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo within the APE.

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PROPOSED ACTION DETERMINATIONS (CONT.)			
SPECIES	PROTECTION STATUS	HABITAT DESCRIPTION	HABITAT PRESENT
FISHES			
Bull Trout	Threatened	Preferred habitat consists of high mountainous areas where snowfields and glaciers are present. Bull Trout prefer to live in rivers, lakes, and streams that are cold, clean, complex, and connected to each other.	There are no above ground connected bodies of water, mountains, or glaciers in or around the Project’s boundaries. Therefore, there is no suitable habitat for the Bull Trout within the APE.
INSECTS			
Monarch Butterfly	Candidate	Preferred habitat consists of any area that has flowing plants and milkweed; however, Monarch Butterfly eggs can only be laid on milkweed plants. Over the winter months monarchs need a specific microclimate to protect them from the elements. Overwintering locations are usually found in central Mexico and in California along the Pacific Coast.	The project APE does not have any milkweed in or around its boundaries. Therefore, there is no suitable habitat for Monarch Butterflies within the APE.

In light of this information, it is concluded that RUS funding of the proposed undertaking will result in “No Effects” upon any listed or candidate species, nor will it result in destruction of suitable habitat for any of the aforementioned species.

3.6.2.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.6.3 MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT

3.6.3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

BREA accessed the Rapid Avian Information Locator (RAIL), at the recommendation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), on May 20, 2024. According to the RAIL, there is a probability that the Golden Eagle could be found in the vicinity of the project APE in January. The Golden Eagle is not threatened or endangered in the State of Washington. Also according to the RAIL, there are three birds of concern with a potential range that overlaps the Project location, the American White Pelican, the Ferruginous Hawk, and the Horned Lark (ssp. Strigata). The official IPaC species list and the RAIL information are provided in Appendix F.

3.6.3.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

Under the NAA, the proposed APE would remain in its current condition and there would be no impact to migratory birds including Bald and Golden Eagles.

Proposed Action

The proposed action will consist of the construction of a new BREA headquarters building, requiring the removal of a small number of trees. All tree removal is to take place between September 2024 and February 2025 when the vast majority of migratory birds have flown south for the winter. If any evidence of active bird nests in the area is found, regardless of species, BREA will halt operations and contact the USFWS ecological field services office for further guidance. Contractors operating in the area will be instructed not to disturb birds in any way. Thus, the proposed action is anticipated to have no effect on migratory birds.

The American White Pelican's preferred habitat is near bodies of water, especially coastal areas and islands. The project area does not contain suitable habitat for the American White Pelican. Additionally, the American White Pelican is a very large bird, and incidental or accidental take is extremely unlikely as there would be no way a contractor would not see the specimen beforehand. Thus, the project will have "No Effect" on the American White Pelican.

The Ferruginous Hawk's preferred habitat consists of open grasslands where it hunts rodents living therein. The RAIL, included in Appendix F, indicates that the Ferruginous Hawk is not found in the project area in the fall and winter months. Additionally, the Ferruginous Hawk is a very large bird, and incidental or accidental take is extremely unlikely as there would be no way a contractor would not see the specimen beforehand. Therefore, the project will have "No Effect" on the Ferruginous Hawk.

The Horned Lark (ssp. Strigata)'s preferred habitat consists of bare ground with little vegetation, and they prefer to breed in similar open areas where vegetation is not overgrown. This includes short grasslands, deserts, and cleared farmland. The RAIL, included in Appendix F, indicates that the Horned Lark is not found in the project area in the fall and winter months. Thus, the project will have "No Effect" on the Horned Lark (ssp. Strigata).

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3.6.3.3 MITIGATION

Tree clearing will be limited to the months of September to February. If any evidence of active bird roosting or nesting is found in the area, USFWS will be contacted. Contractors will be instructed not to disturb bird activity in any way.

3.6.4 BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT

3.6.4.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

As previously mentioned, BREA accessed the Rapid Avian Information Locator (RAIL), at the recommendation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), on May 20, 2024. The RAIL indicated that there is a probability that the Golden Eagle could be found in the vicinity of the project APE in January. The Golden Eagle is not threatened or endangered in the State of Washington.

3.6.4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

Under the NAA, the proposed APE would remain in its current condition and there would be no impact to migratory birds including Bald and Golden Eagles.

Proposed Action

The proposed action will consist of the construction of a new BREA headquarters building, requiring the removal of a small number of trees. Tree clearing will be limited to the months of September to February. Neither the Bald Eagle nor the Golden Eagle can be found in the project area during those months. Thus, the proposed action is anticipated to have “No Effect” on the Bald or Golden Eagle.

3.6.4.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.6.5 INVASIVE SPECIES

3.6.5.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Many invasive species have the potential to be found throughout Washington (<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/us/washington>). As such, some invasive species may be present in the project boundary. However, in general, the proposed Project site has no known invasive species present, only native growth.

3.6.5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

After construction is completed, the surrounding area will be reseeded with non-invasive grasses which can be commonly found in the area. Landscaping around the facility will be maintained by a professional landscaping service, and invasive plants will not be allowed to be established in the project area as a result of the proposed action. Thus, the proposed action will result in “No Effect” to invasive species in the area.

3.6.5.3 MITIGATION

Professional landscaping service and grounds crew will reseed the area after construction and maintain the grounds within the project area. The professional landscaping crew will ensure that invasive vegetation does not become established within the project area.

3.7 CULTURAL RESOURCES AND HISTORIC PROPERTIES

3.7.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site is located on mostly-clear land, which was likely used for farming in the past. The proposed headquarters is to be built within the city limits of West Richland, Washington just south of the West Richland Police Department station.

3.7.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The Washington Historic Preservation Program (DAHP) was contacted for their review and comment on the proposed Project. In accordance with the online Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (TDAT), the following Indian tribes were provided a finding of “no historic properties affected” on May 17, 2024, regarding the proposed Project: Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribe of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and Nez Perce Tribe.

In order to determine the potential impact of the proposed projects on the cultural resources, BREA commissioned a cultural resource survey of the project boundary for the BREA Headquarters Project. Regarding the Project, the survey stated that “the proposed undertaking meets the criteria for a finding of no historic properties affected as per 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1)”. The cultural resource survey was provided to all listed tribes as well as the AHPP.

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The DAHP concurred with the findings on May 20, 2024.

As of today's date, no further response was received by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribe of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, or the Nez Perce Tribe.

In light of this, it is concluded that the proposed undertaking will have no effect on historic properties or cultural resources.

3.7.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

3.8 AESTHETICS

3.8.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site is located on land which is currently owned by BREA. The proposed headquarters will be located in the city of West Richland, Washington in Benton County south of the intersection of Highway 224 and Keene Rd. Based on aerial images of the site, the nearest residences are located approximately 0.15 miles away. The headquarters building is likely to be visible only from the Tri-City Raceway (also known as the Red Mountain Event Center), the West Richland Police Station, vehicles traveling along Keene Road, and the farmland around the proposed APE.

3.8.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

The NAA will result in the aesthetics of the area remaining completely unaffected.

Proposed Action

The Project will include parking, an office, and staging areas over the approximately 17.8 acres of the APE, outside of any scenic or otherwise aesthetically sensitive area. It is anticipated that none of the surrounding areas will be significantly aesthetically affected by the proposed action.

3.8.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.9 AIR QUALITY

3.9.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The attached report, located in Appendix I, using the EPA-provided NEPAAssist tool shows that the proposed Project is not within EPA-designated non-attainment or maintenance areas for air quality criteria pollutants.

3.9.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

The NAA will result in no change to the air quality of the surrounding area.

Proposed Action

The Project APE is outside of any EPA-designated non-attainment or maintenance areas for air quality criteria pollutants.

Short-term increases to dust due to construction for the Project will be negligible due to the usage of BMPs, such as silt fences and stabilization, which will be used during and after construction as needed to minimize any indirect adverse environmental effects.

Short-term increases in emissions from construction vehicles may also be expected during the construction phase of the project, but this incidental increase is not anticipated to have any noticeable effect due to the short duration of construction.

3.9.3 MITIGATION

BMPs will mitigate short-term increases to dust, and short-term increases in emissions will be negligible during construction.

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3.10 SOCIO-ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Applicants are required to determine if their proposal has or may have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations under E.O. 12898 *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* and USDA Departmental Regulation DR 5600-2, *Environmental Justice*.

3.10.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The U. S. Census Bureau data for Benton County, WA was reviewed and is provided in Appendix G. It shows a population of 89.2% white with a 10.9% poverty rate and reported growth of 4.0%.

Per the attached report, also located in Appendix G, using the EPA-provided EJScreen tool, the proposed project generates a report with values of N/A due to its small size and sparse population.

The proposed Project is within an undeveloped area already owned by BREA. The development of the Project is not anticipated to impact the lives of the population. There are no known environmental issues within the APE that would be expected to pose an environmental justice risk. The surrounding area, local services, and public facilities will not be affected by the Project.

3.10.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

The NAA does not apply as there is no potential for impact on environmental justice.

Proposed Action

The proposed action will improve the overall infrastructure in the area by allowing the local electric utility, BREA, to expand and streamline operations. The proposed action does not have any foreseeable adverse impact on historically underprivileged demographics.

The expansion of BREA's operations could allow them to hire more staff, boosting economic activity in the area. The proposed action would also serve to improve working conditions for the current employees of BREA. The proposed action will not be located in a majority-minority or low-income area. As a result, the proposed project would not have any disproportionate effects on racial minority, low-income, or any other historically underprivileged populations in the area. The proposed action is not anticipated to have any change on the population of the area, however there may be a benefit to the local economy. It is further anticipated that the proposed project would not have any impact on, or be influenced by, the civil rights, ethnic origin, sex, or social status of the people located near the project area. The Project is not considered an environmental risk or controversial and will not displace any current residents, nor will it adversely impact local public facilities or public services.

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The proposed project's APE is on land that is already owned by BREA. The proposed project is being designed to serve the future needs for the growing population and electric power demand in the area.

Financial assistance for this Project is not anticipated to have any adverse Environmental Justice or civil rights impact.

3.10.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

3.11 MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

3.11.1 NOISE

3.11.1.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The proposed headquarters will be located within the city of West Richland in Benton County, Washington south of the intersection of Highway 224 and Keene Rd. Noise levels in the area are elevated beyond what would be considered normal as a result of proximity to a racetrack to the west and a police station to the north. There is pre-existing noise pollution in the area from loud events that are held at the racetrack as well as from sirens from the police and fire stations to the north. Based on aerial images of the site, the nearest residences are located approximately 0.15 miles away.

3.11.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

The NAA would result in no change to noise pollution.

Proposed Action

Any noise produced by the construction of the facility will be localized and temporary for the extent of the construction. The level of noise that is anticipated to be produced by the proposed action will not be greater than the current ambient noise levels in the area. Some level of additional noise in the area is tolerable as the area is already prone to elevated levels of noise. As the APE location is within a commercial – light industrial zone, noise levels beyond those typically experienced within a residential area are reasonable. All construction will be done within the APE, and all federal, state, and local codes and ordinances including those applying to noise levels will be followed during construction. Following completion of construction, ambient noise levels are expected to return to status quo, as the BREA headquarters is not anticipated to be a major contributor to noise pollution. Thus, the proposed action is not anticipated to have a noticeable adverse effect on the noise pollution in the area.

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3.11.1.3 MITIGATION

All federal, state, and local noise ordinances will be followed during and after construction.

3.11.2 TRANSPORTATION

3.11.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The attached map, located in Appendix H, using FAA-provided data, shows that the proposed Project is approximately 4 linear miles from the nearest airport. The proposed undertaking's APE is near the intersection of two major roadways: Keene Road and Van Giesen Street.

3.11.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

The NAA would result in no effect on transportation.

Proposed Action

14 CFR 77.9 governs whether an undertaking has enough potential to affect air traffic as to require filing of notice with the FAA. As the proposed APE is greater than 20,000 feet away from the nearest airport, 14 CFR 77.9 (a) applies. The proposed BREA headquarters building will not exceed 200 feet in height. Thus, consultation with the FAA is not required, and no effect to air traffic is anticipated to result from the proposed action.

The proposed action's APE is near the intersection of two major roadways: Keene Road and Van Giesen Street. These roadways have sufficient capacity to support the comings and goings of construction vehicles and equipment without suffering a substantial impact on traffic conditions in the area. Any impacts to traffic are anticipated to be minimal and within what could be reasonably expected from normal growth within a commercial – light industrial area.

3.11.2.3 MITIGATION

No mitigation measures are warranted.

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3.12 HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.12.1 ENVIRONMENTAL RISK MANAGEMENT

3.12.2.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The attached report, located in Appendix C, using the EPA-provided NEPAassist tool shows that the proposed Project is not within EPA-designated areas for existing hazardous waste facilities, toxic release inventories, or TSCA sites.

3.12.2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No-Action Alternative

The NAA would result in no effect on human health, hazardous materials, or the environment.

Proposed Action

As shown in the above-referenced report, the Project is outside of any existing RCRA facilities, toxic release inventories, or TSCA sites, and is not expected to produce any hazardous material or waste. The new headquarters will not require an RCRA hazardous materials handling facility.

The proposed new headquarters plan includes construction of locations for storing electrical equipment such as power transformers, which contain oil. Per 40 CFR 112 BREa will be required to create a written Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan (SPCC) if the aggregate of all stored oil-containing equipment with individual capacity of 55 gallons or greater exceeds a total of 1,320 U.S. gallons (40 CFR 112.1(d)(2)). BREa will follow all EPA requirements including those outlined in 40 CFR 112. Industry standards for design and construction as well as all OSHA guidelines will be followed to ensure the safety of both the construction crew and the BREa staff. Thus, the proposed action is not expected to have an adverse impact relating to proliferation of hazardous materials or on any aspect of health and human safety.

3.12.2.3 MITIGATION

If above-ground oil containing equipment (greater than 55 U.S. gallons individually) totals more than 1,320 U.S. gallons, BREa will create an SPCC as required by the EPA in 40 CFR 112. All applicable OSHA standards and guidelines will be followed.

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3.13 CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

3.13.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

No corridor is needed for this project.

3.13.2 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

No corridor is needed for this project.

3.13.3 MITIGATION

No corridor is needed for this project.

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4.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

4.1 SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Environmental Resource	Determination of Effect
Land Use	No known development plans for the area, BREA currently owns the property. Area is zoned appropriately. No Effect Anticipated.
Farmland	No Conversion is Anticipated to Occur. No Effect Anticipated.
Formally Classified Land	No known Formally Classified Lands within project area.
Floodplains	No known floodplains within project area. No Effect Anticipated.
Wetlands	No known wetlands within project area. No Effect Anticipated.
Water Resources	No well-heads, watershed protection areas, or Sole Source Aquifers within the project area. Project will not add any effluent discharge to the drainage area. BMPs will be utilized for construction. No Effect Anticipated.

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Environmental Resource	Determination of Effect
Coastal Resources	No coastal areas or aquatic habitats in this region. No Effect Anticipated.
Biological Resources – Fish, Wildlife and Vegetation	Little to no suitable habitat for native vegetation currently within the project area. USFWS concurrence granted. No Effect Anticipated.
Biological Resources – Threatened and Endangered Species	No suitable habitat for listed threatened and endangered species is currently within the project area. No Effect Anticipated.
Biological Resources – Migratory Bird Treaty Act	Little suitable habitat for birds of concern within project area. Tree clearing will be limited to the months of September to February. No Effect Anticipated.
Biological Resources – Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act	Little suitable habitat for Bald or Golden Eagle within project area. Neither is a bird of concern in the project area. Neither species can be found in the area from September to February, when trees will be cleared. No Effect Anticipated.
Biological Resources – Invasive Species	Minimized fill required from offsite and no surface water at project site. Professional landscaping service will oversee reseeding and maintenance of grounds within the area. All invasive vegetation will be removed by professional landscaping service. No Effect Anticipated.
Cultural Resources and Historic Properties	The survey concluded “no historic properties affected”. DAHP and concurrence provided. Consultation concluded for all other tribes. No Effect Anticipated.

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Environmental Resource	Determination of Effect
Aesthetics	Project is outside of any aesthetically sensitive area. Project will be of limited height. No Effect Anticipated.
Air Quality	Project is outside of any EPA-designated non-attainment or maintenance areas for air quality criteria pollutants. Short-term increases to dust will be mitigated by BMPs, and short-term increases to emissions will be negligible during construction. No Adverse Effect Anticipated.
Socio-Economic & Environmental Justice	Project is not an environmental risk nor controversial and will not displace any current residents, nor will it adversely impact local public facilities or public services. No Effect Anticipated.
Noise	Short-term noise during construction may occur. Post-construction noise levels will be equivalent to current ambient noise levels in the area. No Effect Anticipated.
Transportation	Project is 4 miles from nearest airport. Building height will not exceed 200 feet. No noticeable short-term obstruction to traffic planned for construction. No Effect Anticipated.
Human Health and Safety	If applicable, BREA will create written SPCC plan according to 40 CFR 112. No Effect Anticipated.

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4.2 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Environmental Resource	Past	Proposed Action	Future Action	Cumulative Effect
Land Use	Mostly clear, currently unused plot of land which his owned by BREA	Convert 17.8-Acres To An Administration Building with Staging Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Farmland	Mostly clear, currently unused plot of land which his owned by BREA	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Formally Classified Land	None Existing Near Project Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Floodplains	None Existing Near Project Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Wetlands	None Existing Within Project Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Water Resources	No Known Wells, Or Protection Areas Near Project Area. Project does not involve actions which would impact Sole Source Aquifer.	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Coastal Resources	None Existing Near Project Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Biological Resources – Fish, Wildlife And Vegetation	Little Suitable Habitat Within Project Area. No Indirect Effects to Surrounding Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated

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Environmental Resource	Past	Proposed Action	Future Action	Cumulative Effect
Biological Resources – Threatened And Endangered Species	No Suitable Habitat Within Project Area. No Indirect Effects To Surrounding Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Biological Resources – Migratory Bird Treaty Act	Small Chance of Encountering Species of Concern Within Project Area. No Indirect Effects To Surrounding Area	No Occupied Bird Nests Will Be Cleared Prior to Consultation with USFWS. No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Biological Resources – Bald And Golden Eagle Protection Act	Small Chance of Encountering Golden Eagle Within Project Area. Golden Eagle Not A Species of Concern in Area. No Indirect Effects To Surrounding Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Biological Resources – Invasive Species	None Known Within Project Area Or Surrounding Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Cultural Resources And Historic Properties	None Known Within Project Area Or Surrounding Area	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Aesthetics	Unused Fallow Land within Commercial – Light Industrial use zone.	Will Convert 17.8 Acres Of Fallow Land to Headquarters Building and Staging Area.	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated

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Environmental Resource	Past	Proposed Action	Future Action	Cumulative Effect
Air Quality	Outside Of EPA-Designated Non-Attainment Or Maintenance Areas For Air Quality Criteria Pollutants	Incidental short-term increases in CO ₂ emission due to construction vehicles. BMPs to be implemented to avoid impacts to Air Quality. No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Socio-Economic & Environmental Justice	No Public Facilities Or Services, Nor Residential Or Commercial Properties Within the APE	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Noise	Pre-Existing Noise Pollution in Area Due to Proximity to Highways, Racetrack and Events Center, and Police and Fire Stations.	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Transportation	Airport 4 miles away. APE Located Near Intersection of Major Roadways.	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated
Human Health And Safety	Vacant Land	All Industry, OSHA, And EPA standards And Guidelines Will Be Followed During And After Construction. No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated	No Effect Anticipated

In general, no effects are anticipated either individually or cumulatively as a result of the Project both within the approximately 17.8-acre area of potential effect for the project and for the immediately surrounding area within the next 20 years. The “City of West Richland Comprehensive Plan 2017 Update” does not indicate any planned developments which would be in conflict with the

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proposed action. No future developments in the area are anticipated to have an effect on the environmental resources of the area. The proposed action will convert unused fallow land to a new BREA headquarters. No other cumulative impacts are anticipated in the area.

5.0 SUMMARY OF MITIGATION

MITIGATIONS	
LAND USE	No mitigations are warranted.
IMPORTANT FARMLAND	No mitigations are warranted.
FORMALLY CLASSIFIED LAND	No mitigations are warranted.
FLOODPLAINS	No mitigations are warranted.
WETLANDS	No mitigations are warranted.
WATER RESOURCES	All necessary BMPs will be implemented by the contractor. A SWPPP will be implemented, and runoff control will be considered in facility design.
COASTAL RESOURCES	No mitigations are warranted.
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	Tree clearing will be limited to September through February. Professional landscaping service will reseed, maintain grounds, and ensure no invasive weeds take hold.
CULTURAL RESOURCES	Inadvertent Discovery Plan in place.
AESTHETICS	No mitigations are warranted.
AIR QUALITY	All necessary BMPs will be implemented by the contractor.
SOCIO-ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	No mitigations are warranted.
NOISE	All federal, state, and local noise ordinances will be followed.
TRANSPORTATION	No mitigations are warranted.
HUMAN AND HEALTH SAFETY	All applicable OSHA guidelines will be followed. If applicable under 40 CFR 112, an SPCC will be implemented.
CORRIDOR ANALYSIS	No mitigations are warranted.

The initial criteria for site selection, the use of BMPs such as silt fences and stabilization are anticipated to effectively minimize the potential effects of the Project upon the environment. Conditional approval measures were requested by interested Agencies, such as the appropriate actions to be taken in case of incidentally encountering human remains or artifacts in the Project area. All mitigation issues are discussed above as well as in the appropriate appendices, and additional mitigation measures beyond those listed do not appear warranted at this time.

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6.0 COORDINATION, CONSULTATION, AND CORRESPONDENCE

The draft EA is available for public review at the RD website (INSERT LINK HERE).

The following agencies or agency websites were consulted as part of the preparation of this EA, all supporting documentation and agency correspondence are provided in the Appendices:

Confederated Tribes and Band of the Yakama Nation

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

Nez Perce Tribe

Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office

EPA

FAA

NEPAssist

US Census Data

USDA – NRCS

US Fish and Wildlife Services

USGS National Map Viewer

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7.0 REFERENCES

All supporting documentation and agency correspondence is provided in the Appendices.

EPA EJScreen, last accessed January 18th, 2024. <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

EPA NEPAassist tool, last accessed January 18th, 2024.
<https://nepassisttool.epa.gov/nepassist/nepamap.aspx>

Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (TDAT), last accessed February 2nd, 2024.
<https://egis.hud.gov/tdat/>

US Census Data, last accessed February 2nd, 2024.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/pontotocountyoklahoma>

US Fish and Wildlife Services– Information for Planning and Consultation, last accessed January 18th, 2024. <https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/>

US Fish and Wildlife Services – National Wetlands Inventory, last accessed January 15th, 2024.
<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.html>

USGS National Map, last accessed January 18th, 2024. <https://apps.nationalmap.gov/viewer/>

8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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