

Appendix 1 Glossary of Terms

1 GLOSSARY

Alternative corridors: Linear areas within a macro-corridor that are deemed suitable for placement of the proposal when the natural environment, built (manmade) environment, and engineering requirements are considered. The width of the corridor must be large enough to allow latitude in specifically locating the transmission line but not so broad as to be meaningless.

Alternative: A reasonable way to resolve the identified problem or satisfy the stated purpose and need (see also 40 C.F.R. §1502.14).

Connected Actions: Closely related actions that automatically trigger other actions, cannot proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously, or are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for justification (see also 40 C.F.R. §1508.25(a)(1)).

Constraints (unsuitable, incompatible, high risk, Avoidance Areas): Areas having one or more physical, environmental, institutional or statutory impediments to corridor designation. Areas that may be crossed by corridors only if necessary, and if reasonable mitigation or avoidance of significant impacts can be obtained. Areas where the proposed action conflicts with existing land use, development, or resources. These areas should be avoided when other reasonable alternatives exist. In addition to resource and land use constraints, engineering and economic constraints must be considered (e.g. topography, span limitations, railroads/highway/river crossings, access roads, etc).

Cooperating agency: Federal, Tribal, or State government agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal for Federal action. The cooperating agency typically has a secondary role or approval for the proposal (permit, review, etc). Responsible for review and participation in the development of the EIS (see also 40 C.F.R. §1501.6 and 1508.5).

Cumulative Effects or Impacts: The impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (see also 40 C.F.R. § 1508.7).

Exclusion areas: Areas that may not be crossed by corridors unless authorized by the appropriate official (for example, Governor, agency head, etc.). Exclusion is based on law/regulation/impact and not on cost, regional or local pressure or desirability.

Federal Action: A proposed federal undertaking, includes most things that a federal agency could prohibit, regulate, or provide a portion of the financing for; thereby requiring a NEPA-compliant analysis be performed (see also 40 C.F.R. § 1508.18). See also 7 CFR 1794 (RUS NEPA regulations) regarding agency determinations as to whether a proposed action is a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment (§ 1794.54 et al.); and 7 CFR 1970.9 (RD NEPA regulations) regarding actions requiring environmental review.

Interdisciplinary: A team or process involving multiple disciplines. For example, an interdisciplinary siting team involved in a macro-corridor study would be comprised of representatives from engineering, environmental, land acquisition, community outreach/public relations and other disciplines.

Lead federal agency: The agency or agencies preparing or having taken primary responsibility for preparing the NEPA document (see also 40 C.F.R. §1501.5 and 1508.16).

Least-Risk Corridors (Optimal Path): A linear area identifying the path of greatest opportunity and least constraint within a macro-corridor and connecting the proposed actions' end points. Spatial data can be categorized for each resource based on the opportunity or constraint, and a GIS model can be applied to map the areas of opportunity and constraint (suitability layers) into a suitability map. GIS software such as ArcGIS uses least-risk path analysis algorithms included in the software to generate a composite suitability map, model paths within the macro-corridor and generate proposed paths of opportunity for alternative transmission corridors.

Macro-Corridor: Broad linear area of land within which alternative corridors can be located for further study and comparison. This area encompasses the end points of a proposed transmission corridor and is located within the larger study area. The Macro-corridor may consist of one contiguous broad area within which many alternative corridors could be located or more than one broad linear area each providing an alternative corridor possibility (i.e., each macro-corridor could become a corridor alternative but much wider).

No action alternative: The alternative where current conditions and trends are projected into the future without the proposed action (40 CFR § 1502.14(d)).

Opportunities: Areas within which transmission line construction would be more compatible with the current land use, and/or have a reduced likelihood of additional impacts, and/or result in more efficient line operation and management. Potential opportunities include but are not limited to existing transmission line/utility corridors, transportation rights-of-way, industrial areas, National Corridors, or along property boundaries.

Proposed Action: A description of the intended actions to be taken by the applicant/utility/project proponent to allow alternatives to be developed and its environmental impacts analyzed (see also 40 CFR § 1508.23).

Purpose and Need: A statement which briefly specifies the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action. The statement should provide the foundation for the scope of alternatives to be assessed, taking into account both the applicant's and the agency's objectives and goals, and ultimately providing a justification for the expenditure of public funds (see also 40 C.F.R. §1502.13).

Reasonable Alternative: An alternative that is deemed possible after considering the cost, engineering and regulatory environment.

Route: A constructible right-of-way within an alternative corridor.

Route or Corridor Refinement Meetings: Additional public meetings (typically after scoping meetings) which allow additional public review and input on corridor options. The information gained from such meetings may be used for additional data collection and analyses to support further route refinement and alternative route analysis, and help select a preferred route as well as alternative route(s) for analysis in the Agency NEPA document.

Scoping: The early and open process for identifying interested members of the public, agencies with relevant expertise, cooperating agencies, necessary permits and compliance requirements, impacts, issues, and alternatives that will be addressed in a NEPA document. It requires involvement of Agency staff, members of the public, and other agencies in focusing the scope of the document. The purpose of scoping is to identify significant issues to be analyzed in depth, and eliminate those from detailed study determined not to be significant (see also 40 C.F.R. § 1501.7 and § 1508.27).

Siting: The interdisciplinary process of determining the location for the proposed action. Siting is a continual process of refinement from study area to macro-corridor to corridor to route.

Stakeholders: Federal, state, local agencies, tribes, landowners, general public etc. with an interest in the proposed action.

Study area: A geographic area to be assessed for siting the proposed action, within which the macro-corridor is sited; may be a group of states, a state, a group of counties within a state or adjacent states, etc. The size of the study area should be sufficient to allow evaluation of areas with differing environmental, engineering and regulatory constraints. The study area should be small enough to encompass only feasible alternatives (engineering and cost considerations to meet the purpose and need), but large enough to include an adequate number of alternative corridors. The boundaries allow for the development of all feasible corridors, provide the area necessary to account for potential impacts, and focus the study efforts to an area compatible with that used for the overall environmental analysis.

Suitability (compatibility): The appropriateness of the proposed action to an area of land. Suitability can be determined by environmental, engineering and economic analysis.

Suitability values (ratings/model criteria): A resource is identified and rated with a numeric suitability value that characterizes the level of constraint or opportunity that is appropriate for the resource in relation to the proposed action. The rating system is designed to protect the most sensitive parts of the study area by identifying areas with the greatest potential for negative impacts, while highlighting areas best suited for construction of the proposed action. Use of a rating (or suitability) scale provides a means of quantifying and comparing impacts of one corridor over another. RUS would accept both quantitative and qualitative methods for assigning suitability values as long as the methods for defining terms are clearly defined and transparently described.

Weighting: The relative importance of suitability values (resources) in relation to potential effects of the proposed action. The Agency requires stakeholder input into the weight assignment process. This necessitates meetings to share important information, identify special concerns and siting constraints, and participation in assigning weights to criteria used to evaluate and compare alternative corridors. Stakeholders and weights are regionally specific and must be identified in the region of the macro-corridor siting. The weighting process should be designed by a multi-disciplinary committee including industry representatives, subject matter experts (environmental and engineering) and other key stakeholders.