Environmental Assessment

Wayne Child Substation Project

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.

Laramie County, Wyoming

March 2012
Wayne Child Substation Project
Laramie County, Wyoming
Environmental Assessment

Prepared for:
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March 2012
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APLIC  Avian Power Line Interaction Committee
CFR   Code of Federal Regulations
EA    Environmental Assessment
EPM   Environmental Protection Measures
FEMA  Federal Emergency Management Agency
FONSI finding of no significant impact
I-80  Interstate Highway 80
kV    kilovolt
MW    Megawatt
NEPA  National Environmental Policy Act
NRCS  Natural Resources Conservation Service
PM    Principle Meridian
Project Wayne Child Substation
PUD   Planned Unit Development
REA   Rural Electrification Administration
RUS   Rural Utilities Service
Tri-State Tri-State Transmission and Generation Association, Inc.
U.S.  United States
USACE U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Western Western Area Power Administration
WYNDD Wyoming Natural Diversity Database
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in connection with a project proposed by Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association Inc. (Tri-State). Tri-State is proposing to construct a new substation in Laramie County, Wyoming. The new Wayne Child Substation (Project) would be located in the southeast quarter of Section 27, T14N, R65W, 6th Principle Meridian (PM). Tri-State would own in fee a forty-one (41) acre parcel at this location. The Project is located east and immediately adjacent to the existing Archer Substation which is owned and operated by the Western Area Power Administration (Western). The Project site is located south of the new Archer Development Complex currently being built by Laramie County (Figure 1-1).

The new substation would be constructed in two phases and when complete would occupy 31 acres. Phase I would serve Tri-State’s member, High West Energy, in meeting electrical load for the Archer Development Complex in 2012. Phase I involves the construction of a 5-acre distribution substation and a stormwater detention pond for the entire site. Phase II involves connecting Tri-State’s existing Laramie River Station to Story 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line to increase system reliability. Phase II would be constructed at some later date in the future, possibly as soon as 2014. Combining High West Energy and Tri-State equipment into one facility would minimize the “footprint” and environmental effects of both facilities. The Project would consolidate and more efficiently serve both Tri-State’s need to increase system reliability and High West Energy’s need to provide electrical service to Laramie County’s new Archer Development Complex.

Serving as the lead federal agency, the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA will enable RUS to evaluate the environmental effects of the proposed project and fulfill its requirements under NEPA and other environmental mandates. This EA provides a description of the project, the need for the project, alternatives to the project, an analysis of the affected environment and potential effects to the natural and human environment, mitigation and monitoring measures, and supporting materials. The EA also describes the public involvement process, including tribes, individuals, organizations and agencies consulted in accordance with NEPA.

The proposed project is not expected to have more than minor impacts on the natural or built environment. No impacts to threatened or endangered species, prime farmland, floodplains or wetlands, cultural resources or minority or low income populations would occur. No substantial impacts to natural resources or land use are expected. The proposed Project is not expected to result in more than minor impacts to the social values and economies of the communities within the project area. No substantial cumulative impacts are expected from the proposed Project.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association Inc. (Tri-State) is a nonprofit wholesale electric power supplier owned by the 44-member cooperatives (members) that it serves in a 250,000-square-mile service area in Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wyoming. Tri-State owns (wholly or jointly) or has maintenance responsibilities for more than 5,200 miles of high-voltage transmission lines and a network of over 450 substations, telecommunications sites, maintenance centers and warehouse facilities across its service territory. Tri-State provides power for approximately 1.5 million consumers in its member systems through a combination of owned power generation facilities, purchased power, federal hydroelectric power allocations and renewable resources. Tri-State cooperative members provide electric power to rural residences, farms, ranches, towns, suburban communities, commercial businesses and industry.

Tri-State is proposing to construct a new electrical substation in Laramie County, Wyoming. The new Wayne Child Substation (Project) would meet electrical power needs for member High West Energy and serve as a regional substation for Tri-State. The Project would be located six miles east of Cheyenne, Wyoming in the southeast quarter of Section 27, T14N, R65W, 6th Principle Meridian (PM) (Figure 1-1). Tri-State would own in fee a 41-acre parcel at this location. The Project is east and immediately adjacent to an existing substation (Archer Substation) and south of the new Archer Development Complex currently being built by Laramie County.

Tri-State proposes to secure federal funding from the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to construct the new facility. As the federal agency RUS must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). RUS will use this Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the effects of the proposed project. The EA provides a description of the purpose and need for the project, the alternatives considered, the action proposed, environmental effects, proposed measures to minimize effects, and documents coordination with federal, state and local agencies and the public.

Construction of the facility, pursuant to RUS funding and approval, is planned for summer 2012.
Figure 1-1 Vicinity Map for Wayne Child Substation, East of Cheyenne, Wyoming
2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

Laramie County requested electrical service from Tri-State’s member, High West Energy, to provide power to the Archer Development. Initial estimated load is 3.4 megawatts (MW) with a peak load expected to be 10.4 MW in the future. The Project would allow High West Energy to provide electrical service to the Archer Development Complex by August 2012. Phase I would allow High West Energy to provide electrical service for current and future load growth at the Archer Development Complex. Phase I would include constructing a 5-acre distribution substation for High West Energy, a 1700-foot 230-kilovolt (kV) tie-line between the Archer Substation and the new facility and a storm water detention pond.

During Phase II Tri-State would connect the existing Laramie River Station to Story 345-kV transmission line to the Wayne Child Substation. “Sectionalizing” or transforming power at Wayne Child Substation would ease constraints on the power system by increasing flexibility in routing of power on the grid thus improving regional reliability of electrical power. Phase II would involve; constructing new transmission structures outside of the substation, building a new yard, and installing new equipment for transforming power. Completion of Phase II would provide Tri-State an owned transmission path from generation resources at the Laramie River Station to Tri-State native loads in the Foothills region of Colorado. The Phase II project would be sized to include two additional bays for any future connections to the substation.

The Wayne Child Substation would also serve Tri-State as a regional substation to provide greater reliability and flexibility in managing growing power supply and demand. Transmission lines that currently connect Wyoming energy resources to customers along the Front Range are seriously limited. Some of these transmission lines do not connect to the local power system or do not have capacity for additional power. This electrical path continues to be constrained as renewable resources, primarily wind power, is added and developed in Wyoming.
3.0 ALTERNATIVES AND THE PROPOSED ACTION

Several regional studies over the past ten years have evaluated various alternatives to easing the constraints on the electrical system including the following alternatives.

**No Action - No change to the present service and interconnection arrangements.**

No action would not improve High West Energy’s ability to serve their customers electrical power needs. The regional power system would continue to be severely constrained.

**Alternative 1: Construct a small distribution substation adjacent to Western’s Archer Substation and a separate regional substation at another location.**

Tri-State could serve the member substation directly from the existing Archer Substation by constructing a 230-kV tie line from Archer to a distribution substation and adding a 230/34.5-kV transformer. Tri-State would build a 2-5 acre facility immediately adjacent to Western’s Archer Substation. The facility would contain only equipment to serve the electrical load from the Archer Development Complex. With this alternative, High West Energy’s immediate needs would be addressed but Tri-State would need a regional substation at another location for system loads and improvements on the regional power system.

**Alternative 2: Proposed Action – Construct a regional transmission substation including distribution equipment in one facility built adjacent to Western’s Archer Substation.**

This alternative addresses both the Member, Tri-State and regional power needs, affords more opportunity for future expansion, realizes a higher increase in system reliability, makes the most efficient use of existing transmission and substation facilities, and is the most cost effective alternative.

3.1 Project Description

Tri-State is proposing to construct Alternative 2, a new regional substation in Laramie County, Wyoming (Figure 1-1). The new Wayne Child Substation would be located in the southeast quarter of Section 27, T14N, R65W, 6th PM. Tri-State would own in fee a 41-acre parcel at this location. The project site is located south of the new Archer Development Complex currently being built by Laramie County (Figure 3-1). Figure 3-2 illustrates the proposed site location for the Wayne Child Substation.
Figure 3-1 Laramie County’s Archer Development Complex
The new substation would be east and immediately adjacent to Western Area Power Administration"s existing Archer Substation. See Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4. The new substation would be constructed in phases and when complete would occupy about 31 acres. Phase I would serve Tri-State’s member, High West Energy, in meeting electrical load for the Archer Development Complex in 2012. Phase II of the project would be constructed at some date in the future, possibly as soon as 2014, to connect Tri-State’s existing Laramie River Station to Story 345-kV transmission line. This transmission line passes directly over the proposed Wayne Child Substation site. Sectionalizing the 345-kV transmission line would increase flexibility and reliability in managing regional power flows on the grid.

The project was originally referred to as the „Arrow Substation“ during regional power planning studies but was changed to „Wayne Child Substation“ when Tri-State"s equipment for the Arrow Substation was combined into one facility with High West Energy’s proposed „Wayne Child Substation“. The single larger facility would consolidate and more efficiently serve both Tri-State and High West Energy’s needs and minimize the „footprint“ of electrical facilities in Laramie County"s new Archer Development Complex. If High West’s equipment was not co-located with Tri-State, a separate distribution substation and distribution line would need to be constructed to serve the Archer Development Complex.

3.1.1 Phase I

Tri-State proposes to construct a 5.5-acre yard to house High West Energy"s distribution equipment. High West would own and operate a low-side transformer in the substation to provide 34.5/12.47 distribution service. High West’s equipment would occupy about 1.6 acres within the 5.5 acre yard planned for 2012. For Phase I the Project would consist of a 230-kV breaker, six 230-kV switches, a 230/34.5-kV transformer, meters, communication equipment and a small control building. High West Energy would be responsible for building and permitting the distribution line to service facilities within the development complex.

During Phase I, the full „build out“ for the site’s access road, drainage and storm water management system (including a sedimentation pond and ditch) would be built and would occupy 10 acres, bringing the total „footprint“ for Phase I construction to 15.5 acres.

Initially electrical power would be supplied from Western"s Archer Substation. Western would construct one new bay within the existing Archer Substation yard for a 230-kV transformer and meter to accommodate the connection to Wayne Child Substation.

Tri-State would build and own a 0.3 mile, 230-kV tie-line that would interconnect the two substations. This transmission line would be wood pole H-frame construction, with three tangent and two corner structures. Optical ground wire would be strung along the 230-kV transmission line between Archer and Wayne Child substation. This new fiber
optic cable would provide communication for the facility; therefore, a MW communication tower would not be needed.

Construction activity for Phase I would consist of road building, site grading, compacting soil, gravel surfacing, constructing storm water containment facilities, constructing High Plain”s distribution yard, installing equipment, and erecting perimeter and security fencing around the 5.5 acre site. Access to the site would be provided by a short 0.1-mile road off of the Archer Development Complex”s existing Prairie Center Road. The substation access road would have a gravel surface and large turning radius to allow large trucks and equipment to access the facility. Tri-State plans to construct Phase I of the project between March 2012 and August 2012. See Appendix A for site plan drawings. Figure 3-5 is a picture of Tri-State”s Sipres Substation near Brighton, Colorado. This facility is similar in size and configuration to Phase I of the Wayne Child Substation.

### 3.1.2 Phase II

In the near future, possibly as soon as 2014 or 2015, Phase II would be constructed and would occupy another 16 acres bringing the total substation footprint to about 31 acres. Tri-State would construct a yard and bay for a transformer that would connect the existing Laramie River Station to Story 345-kV transmission line to the substation. The new yard would be sized large enough for two additional bays to serve as possible connections in the future.

Connecting the Laramie River Station to Story 345-kV transmission line would involve breaking the existing line and removing the portion of line that crosses directly overhead of the substation. New structures and conductor would be routed around the substation for the line to enter and exit the substation. This would require 5-6 additional structures outside of the substation. The turning structures would likely be steel monopoles while the tangent structures would be steel H-frame structures. These structures would be located immediately outside of the substation on Tri-State property.

A new 345-kV bay would be constructed within the new yard. The yard would be graded to accommodate this bay and two additional bays for any future connections to regional transmission lines. The existing storm water detention pond built during Phase I would be adequately sized to properly drain the entire 30 acre site.

Once the Laramie River Station connection is in place, some minor modification to the existing communication equipment would be needed to accommodate the new 345-kV bay. Tri-State would connect High West Energy”s transformer to the new 345-kV bay. The connection from the Archer Substation would remain in place and serve as a back-up feed for the High West Energy equipment. Construction for Phase II would be similar to Phase I and would consist of site-grading, compaction, gravel surfacing, installation of transformer equipment, and fencing. An additional 16 acres would be developed during Phase II. Security fencing would be installed to surround the entire 31-acre site. Construction of Phase II would occur in the future, possibly as soon as 2014.
When completed, the Wayne Child Substation would be a 31-acre facility with low profile electrical equipment on a slightly elevated level pad with a shallow sedimentation pond on the east side. Two electrical lines would connect to the substation after Phase II; the 230-kV tie line from Archer Substation and the Laramie River Station to Story 345-kV transmission line. Up to two different electrical lines could connect to the facility sometime in the future.

The substation equipment would be constructed of galvanized steel that would oxidize to a dull gray color over time. A short gravel surfaced road extending off of Prairie Center Road would provide access to the site. The site would be fenced with chain-link fencing. The facility itself would be gated and locked. The facility would include outdoor lighting that would be used during night-time emergencies; otherwise the substation would not be lit. Fiber optic cable would provide communications for the facility and no microwave or radio towers would be constructed.

No long-term parking, trash pick-up, water or sewer service is needed at the substation. Noise from the operating substation would increase slightly over the background levels present at the existing Archer Substation. Noise from electrical wires and equipment within the substation would be most pronounced during humid or wet conditions. Noise dissipates quickly and is not expected to be noticeable along Prairie Center Road or at county buildings. A sign at the access road entrance would identify the Wayne Child Substation as a Tri-State facility and would be consistent with other signs within the Archer Development Complex.

The site would be re-vegetated with native grasses, no additional landscaping is proposed. Trees and shrubs may be added along Prairie Center Road or in other parts of the complex to meet the landscaping requirements of Laramie County for the Archer Development Complex. Figure 3-6 is a picture of the Henry Lake Substation near Brighton, Colorado. This substation closely approximates the size and configuration for the Wayne Child Substation after Phase II is complete.

3.2 Environmental Protection Measures

Tri-State implements mitigation and monitoring measures, otherwise known as environmental protection measures (EPMs), for every construction project as standard operating procedures. EPMs are measures taken during the construction phase of the project to minimize ground disturbance and potential long-term effects from construction and operation of the facility. The measures serve to avoid, minimize or mitigate effects to the human and natural environment. Tri-State uses construction inspectors and environmental monitors during construction to ensure the measures are followed. See Table 3-1.
Table 3-1  Tri-State’s Committed Environmental Protection Measures for the Wayne Child Substation Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Environmental Protection Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-1</td>
<td>The contractor shall comply with all federal, state and local environmental laws, orders and regulations. Prior to construction, all supervisory construction personnel shall be instructed on the protection of cultural and ecological resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-2</td>
<td>The contractor shall conduct its construction operations so as to prevent any unnecessary destruction, scarring or defacing of the natural surroundings in or adjacent to the work area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-3</td>
<td>Prior to construction, Tri-State shall discuss with the Contractor areas of environmental sensitivity within the Project area, and, in particular, those areas where a monitor must be present during construction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-4</td>
<td>All construction material, waste and debris shall be removed from the project area in a timely manner. Burning or burying of waste materials on the right-of-way or at the construction site shall not be allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Use</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LU-1</td>
<td>All activities associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the transmission line shall take place within the authorized limits of the facility. Additional access routes or cross-country travel shall not be allowed outside of the authorized routes prior to review and approval by Tri-State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LU-2</td>
<td>The contractor shall maintain all fences, brace panels and gates during the construction period. Any fence, brace panel or gate damaged during construction shall be repaired immediately by the contractor to appropriate landowner or agency standards as determined by the authorized officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LU-3</td>
<td>The contractor shall eliminate, at the earliest opportunity, all construction ruts that are detrimental to agricultural operations and/or hazardous to movement of vehicles and equipment. Such ruts shall be leveled, filled and graded, or otherwise eliminated in an approved manner. Damage to ditches, tile drains, culverts, terraces, local roads and other similar land use features shall be corrected as necessary by the contractor. The land and facilities shall be restored as nearly as practicable to their original condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LU-4</td>
<td>Structure foundation holes shall not be left open overnight and shall be covered. Covers shall be secured in place and shall be strong enough to prevent livestock, wildlife, or the public from falling through and into a hole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noise</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction vehicles and equipment shall be maintained in proper operating condition and shall be equipped with manufacturers’ standard noise control devices or better (e.g. mufflers, engine enclosures).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fire Prevention/Control</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FP-1</td>
<td>Construction vehicles shall be equipped with government approved spark arresters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP-2</td>
<td>The contractor shall maintain in all construction vehicles a current list of local emergency response providers and methods of contact/communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazardous Materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM-1</td>
<td>No bulk storage of fuel, toxic substances or hazardous material shall be allowed on site. All fuel and fluid spills within this area shall be handled in accordance with appropriate state and federal spill reporting and response requirements. Contractor shall notify Tri-State of any spills so appropriate notifications can be made to regulatory authorities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3-1  Tri-State's Committed Environmental Protection Measures for the Wayne Child Substation Project, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Environmental Protection Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HM-2</td>
<td>Any waste generated as a result of the proposed action shall be properly disposed in a permitted facility. Solid waste generated during construction and periodic maintenance shall be minimal. All hazardous materials shall be handled in accordance with applicable local, state and federal hazardous material statues and regulations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Traffic/Transportation

The contractor shall make all necessary provisions for conformance with federal, state and local traffic safety standards and shall conduct construction operations so as to offer the least possible obstruction and inconvenience to public traffic.

#### Noxious Weeds

To minimize introduction of noxious weed seed sources to the project area the following measures shall be performed: All heavy equipment utilized during construction shall be washed prior to entering the construction site. Equipment shall have accumulations of mud “knocked off” before leaving the site. This method promotes containment of weed seeds on the work site. All seed mixes and mulch used for reclamation activities shall be certified weed-free.

#### Air Quality

| AQ-1   | The contractor shall utilize practicable methods and devices as are reasonably available to control, prevent and otherwise minimize atmospheric emissions or discharges of air contaminants. |
| AQ-2   | Possible construction related dust disturbance shall be controlled by the periodic application of water to all disturbed areas. |
| AQ-3   | Vehicles and equipment showing excessive emission of exhaust gases due to poor engine adjustments or other inefficient operating conditions shall not be operated until corrective adjustments or repairs are made. |
| AQ-4   | Post seeding mulch or erosion blankets shall be utilized during reclamation activities to help reduce wind erosion and blowing dust. The stabilization shall be performed within 14 days of completion of project activities in any given area to minimize potential fugitive dust generation as re-vegetation occurs. |

#### Water Quality

| WQ-1   | A Storm Water Pollutant Prevention Plan has been developed for the construction of the facility and all construction activity shall conform to the plan. Water, eroded materials and other potential pollutants shall be prevented from entering the streams or watercourses as described in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. |
| WQ-2   | Construction activities shall be performed by methods that prevent entrance or accidental spillage of solid matter, contaminants debris, and other objectionable pollutants and wastes into flowing streams or dry water courses, lakes and underground water sources. Such pollutants and wastes include, but are not restricted to, refuse, garbage, cement, concrete, sanitary waste, industrial waste, radioactive substances, oil and other petroleum products, aggregate processing tailings, mineral salts and thermal pollution. |
| WQ-2   | Dewatering work for structure foundations or earthwork operations adjacent to, or encroaching on, streams or water courses shall not be performed without prior approval by Tri-State and appropriate state agencies. |

#### Soils and Geology

| S-1    | Movement of construction vehicles and equipment shall be limited to the construction site and approved access routes. |
Table 3-1  Tri-State’s Committed Environmental Protection Measures for the Wayne Child Substation Project, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Environmental Protection Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S-2</td>
<td>Excavated material not used in the backfilling of poles shall be spread around each pole, evenly spread on the access routes in the immediate vicinity of the pole structure or transported off-site to a Tri-State approved disposal location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Biological Resources**

| BR-1   | Vegetation shall be preserved and protected from damage by construction operations to the maximum extent practicable. Removal of brush and trees shall be limited to those necessary for access and construction. There shall be no clear cutting within the right-of-way unless specifically approved in writing by Tri-State. |
| BR-2   | Disturbed areas where vegetation has been removed by construction activities to the extent that the potential for soil erosion is increased to a detrimental level shall be subject to seedbed preparation techniques, reseeded to an approved seed mixture, and mulched if necessary during a recognized planting season. Mulching shall be applied only to those areas where potential erosion would prohibit vegetation establishment and growth. |
| BR-3   | All disturbed areas, except the access route running surfaces, shall be reseeded with seed mixes as specified by Tri-State. |
| BR-4   | In order to preclude avian electrocutions and minimize collision risk, Tri-State shall incorporate Avian Protection Plan standards developed by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC 2006) and the United States (U.S.) Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to protect birds on power lines, Avian Protection Plan Guidelines published April 2005 (APLIC and USFWS 2005), and the National Electrical Safety Code, which specifies electric conductor clearances. |
| BR-5   | If construction occurs within the breeding season for migratory birds (mid-February through mid-August) Tri-State shall complete nesting surveys for ground nesting birds. If active nests are found they shall be marked and avoided until after the breeding season. If avoidance is not possible, Tri-State shall consult with the USFWS. |

**Cultural Resources**

| CR-1   | Prior to construction, all supervisory construction personnel shall be instructed on the protection of cultural resources with reference to relevant laws and penalties, and the need to cease work in the location if cultural resource artifacts are discovered. |

**Soils and Geology**

| S-3    | Topsoil will be removed, stockpiled, and re-spread on disturbed areas to be reclaimed on site. Any extra topsoil will be stockpiled, protected and given to Laramie County for use in landscaping at the Archer Development Complex. |

**Cultural Resources**

| CR-2   | Initial site grading for construction of Phase I and Phase II will be monitored by a qualified archaeologist. Should any previously unknown historic/prehistoric sites or artifacts be encountered during construction, all land altering activities at that location will be immediately suspended and the discovery left intact until such time that Tri-State is notified and appropriate measures taken to assure compliance the National Historic Preservation Act and enabling legislation. |
Figure 3-2  Photograph of Wayne Child Substation Property, Looking South

Figure 3-3  Existing Archer Substation (Western Area Power Administration) Looking East From Proposed Wayne Child Substation
Figure 3-4 Western Area Power Administration’s Archer Substation

Figure 3-5 Sipres Substation, Similar to Proposed Wayne Child Phase I Facility
Figure 3-6 Henry Lake Substation, Similar to Proposed Wayne Child Phase II
4.0 RUS ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The RUS is the Federal "point" agency for rural infrastructure assistance in electricity, water and wastewater and telecommunications.

Before 1935, there was no national effort to bring electricity to rural America. In most rural areas, it was too expensive for electric companies to extend their lines out into sparsely populated areas.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). In 1936, President Roosevelt - working with Congress - passed the Rural Electrification Act. Thus began an enormous effort by rural Americans and the newly created REA to organize in their communities and plan how they would bring electricity to their towns and farms.

When the Department of Agriculture was re-organized in 1995, the REA was combined with the rural Water Facilities and Wastewater Program to form what is now the RUS.

As a Federal credit agency in the United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture, RUS provides a leadership role in lending and technical guidance for the rural utilities industries. The public/private partnership that is forged between RUS and these industries results in billions of dollars in rural infrastructure development and creates thousands of jobs for the American economy.

Tri-State has requested financial assistance from the RUS to construct the Wayne Child Substation. Granting federal financing to Tri-State is a "federal action". As such, the RUS must comply with NEPA. RUS environmental policies and procedures for implementing NEPA are published in the federal register dated December 11, 1998 (7 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1794). The Wayne Child Substation would require more than 5 acres of physical disturbance at a single location and therefore is a proposal normally requiring an EA (1794.23(c) (10)).

Tri-State has prepared this EA pursuant to the RUS’s guidance and regulations in 7 CFR Part 1794 Subpart E to assist with its review in assessing the environmental impacts of the new Wayne Child Substation. RUS will consider the environmental effects of the project and public and agency comments in making its decision whether to fund the project.

To help identify environmental issues, Tri-State corresponded with federal, state and local agencies and tribes. Tri-State has received information and comments from regional and local agencies contacted including: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Historic Preservation Office. See Chapter 9.0. No environmental issues were identified.
RUS has sought input from the Arapaho Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma, Northern Cheyenne, and Crow Nation.

Tri-State is required to publish both a legal notice and an advertisement in local newspapers announcing the availability of the EA. The EA is available from the applicant:

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association  
1100 West 116th Avenue  
Westminster, CO 80234

or request a copy at this website (http://www.tristategt.org).

The public has a 30 day period to comment on the EA. All comments must be submitted to RUS. RUS can be contacted at:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development  
Rural Utilities Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 5135  
STOP 1510  
Washington, DC 20250-1535  
(http://www.rurdev.usda.gov)

Any comments submitted to the applicant (Tri-State) will be forwarded to RUS.

RUS will use the EA and comments to evaluate the effects of the project and determine whether the project has „significant“ or „no significant impacts“ on the natural and human environment. If RUS finds that the project has significant impact an Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. If RUS determines that the project has no significant impact it will prepare a „findings of no significant impact“ (FONSI).

Prior to RUS making its findings, a notice will be published that announces the availability of the EA and solicits public comments on the EA. Following public review, RUS will draft its findings and publish a notice in the Federal Register that announces the availability of the EA and FONSI. RUS may take action on the proposed action any time after notices of the FONSI have been made and any required review period has expired. RUS may provide an additional 15 days for public review following the publication of its FONSI determination. Final action shall not be taken until this review period has expired.
5.0 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS AND PERMITS

Tri-State would comply with other environmental permits and requirements for the project including compliance with:

- Clean Water Act for storm water pollutants generated during construction. A storm water pollution prevention plan would be submitted and approved by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality,

- Clean Water Act for protection of wetlands through consultation with USACE. No wetlands or other waters of the United States occur on the Project site.

- Endangered Species Act for protection of federally-listed species through informal consultation with USFWS. No protected species are known to occur in the Project area.

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and Executive Order 13186 for protection of raptors, eagles and other migratory birds through consultation with USFWS,

- National Historic Preservation Act through Section 106 consultation with Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office to avoid impacts to historic and cultural properties, and

- Laramie County Planning Site Plan Development Review and Grading and Erosion Control Permit through the county site development process including preparation of various plans (site plan drawings, drainage report, storm water management plan, and grading plans).
6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The affected environment is described using regional data sources, technical reports prepared for the Project, contacts with local resource agencies and a site visit conducted in September 2011. The findings reported in the EA reflect site conditions and information available in fall 2011.

6.1 Land Use

The Project area lies within a rural portion of Laramie County, Wyoming six miles east of the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Communities within the project area include the town of Archer (about one mile north of the Project), and the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming (about six miles east of the Project).

Tri-State has purchased a parcel of land from Laramie County within and south of the „Archer Development Complex“. Historic land use for the property has been agricultural, primarily rangeland grazing. The property was owned and operated for over 70 years by the University of Wyoming as the University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station. Laramie County purchased about 850 acres and re-platted the area as a Planned Unit Development (PUD). The PUD is being developed for Laramie County facilities and buildings housing various county service organizations and groups as well as commercial businesses. The Archer Development Complex will include facilities for County Administration, Public Works, Soils Conservation District, Juvenile Detention Center, County Fairgrounds, recreation facilities and a business park. The complex is currently under construction. The new substation would be located in the „southern boundary“ section and a small portion of the „transition section“ as described in the PUD maps. An electric power station was a planned addition to the complex and is consistent with zoning requirements (http://www.laramiecounty/departments/planning).

The nearest town to the facility is Archer, Wyoming located about 1 mile north of the site. The city of Cheyenne, Wyoming is about 6 miles east of the site. There are no homes or residential developments within ½ mile of the proposed substation facility.

The new substation would be bordered by county property on the north and east, by federal property (Archer Substation) on the west, and by a large private parcel on the south. The Archer Substation is owned and operated by the Western Area Power Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. The nearest occupied buildings to the proposed Project are the Laramie County Public Works buildings located about 500 feet from the substation”s northern property line.

Once complete, the 30-acre Wayne Child Substation along with the existing 20-acre Archer Substation would comprise an industrial area on the southern boundary of the PUD. Several existing regional transmission lines converge at the Archer Substation. Two new transmission lines would tie in to the new Wayne Child Substation. These include the 230-kV tie-line, connecting Archer and Wayne Child, and the 345-kV...
Laramie River Substation to Story transmission line. One new distribution line, owned and operated by High Plains would also connect the facility to the Archer Complex. In the future, additional transmission and distribution lines could connect to the new Wayne Child Substation.

About 31.5 acres of rangeland would be lost and replaced by the proposed substation. Dispersed recreational hunting may occur on private ranch lands south of the Project site. New recreational facilities such as ball fields and fairgrounds will be constructed in the future within the Archer Development Complex. The sheriff department’s dog training park occurs on the northwest corner of the property and includes sheds, ramps and dog runs and fencing. This facility would be relocated when construction of the substation begins, it would likely be moved to another location within the Archer Development Complex.

6.2 Floodplains and Wetlands


Flood hazard is mapped on FEMA’s Flood Insurance Rate Map #56021C1119F. The site is within Zone X outside of the 100-year floodplain for Crow Creek.

The Project site is in an upland area and no waters of the United States occur on the Project site (USACE 2011). No perennial surface water, distinct channels, riparian habitat, trees or wetlands are present on site or in nearby surrounding areas. No hydric soils are mapped on the soil survey for the area (NRCS 1993). Habitat on the site is limited to weedy and disturbed mixed-grass prairie located on a gentle terrace.

Small vegetated swales drain the site and flow from west to east to an unnamed tributary of Crow Creek. This tributary joins Crow Creek approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the Project below Hereford Ranch Reservoir #1. The Crow Creek drainage is tributary to the South Platte River and joins the South Platte south of Greeley, Colorado.

Tri-States Environmental Protection Measures (EPM’s) (see Table 3-1) and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would ensure impacts to waterways are avoided or minimized. No effects to floodplains or wetlands would result from construction or operation of the project.
6.3 Cultural Resources

Historically the property was owned and operated for nearly 100 years by the University of Wyoming as the University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station. Areas north of the Project property fence appear to have been disturbed by cultivation; however, the project site itself lies in grassland. The area immediately west of the parcel was disturbed by grading activities associated with the Archer Substation.

A cultural resources file search of the Wyoming Cultural Records Office was conducted on October 27, 2011. The file search identified three previous cultural resource surveys that intersect the project area. All three surveys were associated with transmission line development. No previously recorded cultural resources were identified within the project area. The buildings associated with the Agricultural Experiment Station are eligible for listing on the National Register. This historic site is ¼-mile north of the Project site and the existing Archer Substation. Both the Archer Substation and the new Wayne Child Substation would be visible on the southern horizon from the historic buildings.

A Class III Cultural Resources Inventory was conducted on 67.8 acres on and surrounding the Project site. The Project site is located within the 6th PM, Township 14 North, Range 65 West, Section 27, southeast quarter. Survey was conducted in November 2011 following a year of relatively high rainfall. Ground visibility was only about 5 to 10% because of dense vegetation. One prehistoric isolated find was discovered and recorded within the project area, on bare ground outside of the facility footprint. The isolated find is not recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However; due to the lack of visibility from dense vegetation on the site and the geomorphic context of the project area (potential for wind buried artifacts) cultural monitoring during the initial stages of construction grading was recommended (RMC Consultants, Inc. 2011).

Tri-State would have a qualified archaeologist on site to monitor grading activity during construction of Phase I and II of the Wayne Child Substation. Monitoring will ensure that any buried cultural resources are not affected. If artifacts are found, all work will cease in the vicinity of the discovery and Tri-State would consult with RUS and Wyoming Historic Preservation Office and any affected tribes regarding appropriate action to protect the resource.

6.4 Threatened and Endangered Species

Tri-State used the USFWS webpage and informal consultation with USFWS Ecological Services Office in Cheyenne, to identify federally protected species occurring in Laramie County, Wyoming (http://www.fws.gov/wyominges/PDFs/CountySpeciesLists/Laramie-sp.pdf). Habitats and species occurrence on the 41-acre parcel were evaluated using the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (WYNDD), the National Wetlands Inventory, NRCS, Laramie County Wyoming Soil Survey, and a site reconnaissance by staff conducted in September 2011.
Four species were identified with the potential to occur in the area including:

- Colorado butterfly plant (Threatened)
- Ute ladies'-tresses orchid (Threatened)
- Preble’s meadow jumping mouse (Threatened)
- Greater Sage-grouse (Candidate)

The Project also lies within the range of three species of concern including; the black-tailed prairie dog, the mountain plover, and the Wyoming pocket gopher. Due to the Project nature and location, it is unlikely that the proposed project would adversely affect these species (USFWS 2012).

Habitat on the site is limited to weedy and disturbed mixed-grass prairie located on a gentle terrace and shallow swale on loamy sandy soils underlain by gravel. Vegetation observed on site in September and November 2011 consisted of weedy grassland with both short grass and mid-grass species such as blue grama, buffalo grass, needle and thread, junegrass, western wheatgrass as well as Russian thistle and prickly pear.

Off site, small vegetated swales drain the site from west to east to an unnamed tributary of Crow Creek. Vegetation cover is dense (total cover 90%) with little to no bare ground. No perennial surface water, distinct channels, riparian habitat, trees or wetlands are present on-site or in nearby surrounding areas. There is no suitable habitat for the three species requiring riparian habitats; Colorado butterfly plant, Ute ladies'-tresses orchid, and Preble’s meadow jumping mouse. The site does not contain any sagebrush communities and therefore does not provide habitat for the Greater sage-grouse. The site is also not listed within the Wyoming Greater Sage-grouse Core area. Therefore, no impacts to listed species would result from the construction and operation of the project.

Critical habitat for the Colorado butterfly plant occurs in Laramie County about ten miles west of the Wayne Child Substation site. The habitat and soils on the Project are not similar to soils where Colorado butterfly plant is known to occur in Laramie County. No suitable habitat was observed during field reconnaissance. No federally-listed species, critical habitat, floodplains, wetlands or surface waters were identified for the project site or vicinity. No effects to critical habitat would result from the construction and operation of the project.

The new substation lies within the watershed of an unnamed tributary to Crow Creek. Crow Creek is tributary to the South Platte River and joins the South Platte River south of Greeley, Colorado. There are no long-term water requirements for the new substation. Water would be needed for soil compaction, concrete foundations, and dust control during construction and would be acquired from existing public water supplies. Estimates of water use are between 20,000 and 30,000 gallons for each phase of construction. Consultation with the USFWS for issues pertaining to water use and depletion in the North Platte River Basin is not required because water use for construction of the proposed substation would be under the de minimis standard of 0.1 acre-foot (32,585 gallons) per year (http://www.fws.gov/platteriver). No impacts to Platte River species would occur as a result of water depletion or habitat changes.
6.5 Wildlife Resources

The grassland habitat and open nature of the Project area currently provides habitat for species of wildlife compatible with agricultural and range land uses including; coyotes, skunks, rabbits, small mammals and a variety of small ground nesting birds. There are few natural features that attract resident birds and wildlife to the project site; however as landscape trees and shrubs are planted in the Archer Development Complex, more birds may be attracted to the project vicinity. No prairie dog towns, badger, or fox dens were observed on the site. No large trees or cliffs suitable for raptor nesting are present within ½ mile of the site.

Construction of the site would affect grassland habitat suitable for ground nesting birds and small mammals. Construction is currently planned to occur during the breeding season between late March and early August because electrical service to the Archer Development Complex must be provided by August 2012. Tri-State would survey the area for nesting migratory birds prior to any ground disturbing activities. If an active nest is found, it would be flagged and avoided. If it cannot be avoided, Tri-State would contact the USFWS to determine the appropriate course of action. Impacts to small mammals would be short-term, associated with grading and clearing activities for Phase I and II. Ample grassland habitat (i.e. hundreds of acres) is present surrounding the site. Loss of individual animals is not likely to affect local or regional populations.

The design and electrical configuration of the 230-kV transmission line connecting the Archer and Wayne Child Substations would be constructed to APLIC standards and therefore would have minor electrocution risk to migratory birds. Risk of collision for migratory birds would increase slightly, but generally would be similar to current conditions, given the numerous transmission lines present in the vicinity of the Project.

6.6 Soils, Vegetation and Prime Farmland

The Project is located in the Denver Basin east of the Laramie Range, south of the Hartville Uplift and north of the Colorado Piedmont. The topography is gently sloping plain drained by unnamed tributaries to Crow Creek. Elevation is about 5,800 feet; slopes are gentle and range from 0-6%. The major geologic formation within the area is the Ogallala formation. It is comprised of unconsolidated to well-cemented sandstone, siltstone, volcanic ash, gravel to boulder-sized conglomerates with claystones and thin beds of limestone (Ver Ploeg et al. 1998). Surficial geology is dominated by terrace deposits. Field observation suggests that a thin layer of eolian sediment is present over terrace alluvium and slopewash (RMC Consultants 2011).

Soils within the project are limited to two soil map units; Wages loam and the Dix-Altivan Complex. Ninety percent of the site is on Wages loam; these soils consist of very deep, well drained soils on alluvial fans, terraces and knolls. These soils formed in loamy alluvium deposits. Annual precipitation is about 15 inches. Average temperatures are 45-50 degrees F. Topsoil (A Horizon) is about 7 inches over subsoil depths of 60 to 80 inches (NRCS 1993).
The site lies within the EPA’s High Plains Ecoregion (Chapman et al. 2004). This ecoregion has drought resistant species characteristic of both the short grass and mixed grass prairie. Seasonal precipitation generally falls during the growing season. Frost free period is 120 to 140 days. The WYNDD classifies the site as mixed grass prairie (WYNDD 2011).

Vegetation observed on site in September and November 2011 consisted of both short and mid-grass species such as blue grama, buffalo grass, needle and thread, junegrass, western wheatgrass as well as Russian thistle, smooth brome and prickly pear. Cover was dense and ranged from 90-100% in on the project site to 30-50% along the upper reaches of the drainage swales flowing southeast off the site.

Construction of the Project would result in the clearing, grading and removal of primarily weedy, non-native grassland, a total of about 31 acres. About fourteen acres would be cleared during Phase I and about 16 acres during Phase II.

Throughout this region dryland farming is supplemented by irrigation from the Ogallala Aquifer. Prime farmland mapping units for Alpinas loam and Altivan loam occur near but outside of the study area on irrigated terraces east and south of the project area. No prime farmland is mapped within the project area (NRCS 1993 and pers. comm. Pike 2012). No effects to prime farmlands are expected.

6.7 Air Quality

Federal air quality standards are established by the Clean Air Act and administered by Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. Given the rural nature or the site, air quality is expected to be good for major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act (http://www.epa.gov/airdata/ad_rep_aqi.html). Construction activities associated with the Project would generate particulate matter from soil disturbances and diesel-powered equipment. It is expected that minor amounts of carbon monoxide and precursor pollutants for ozone would be emitted by tailpipe emissions from construction equipment and vehicles. Any air pollutants would be widely dispersed across the project area and short-term in nature. Air pollutants would be minimized by dust suppression (watering) and vehicle maintenance. See Table 3-1. There would be no long-term air quality effects associated with routine operation of the substation.

6.8 Water Resources

The project lies within the Crow Creek watershed. No perennial surface water, distinct channels, riparian habitat, trees or wetlands are present on site or in nearby surrounding areas. Small vegetated swales drain the site from west to east to an unnamed tributary of Crow Creek. This tributary joins Crow Creek approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the site below Hereford Ranch Reservoir No. 2. The Crow Creek drainage is tributary to the South Platte River and joins the South Platte River south of Greeley, Colorado.
Water is not required on site at the substation facility. Short term, water would be needed during construction for compaction, concrete foundations and dust control. Estimates for water requirements range from 20,000 to 30,000 gallons during each of the two project phases. Water would be purchased from existing water sources, no surface or ground water would be developed. Tri-State’s proposed EPMs (see Table 3-1) would protect water resources from adverse effects. No effects to surface or groundwater quality or quantity would result from the project.

6.9 Aesthetics (Visual Resources)

The visual and aesthetic character of the project site is an open rural landscape with rolling grassland, occasional ranch houses, major highways (Interstate Highway 80 [I-80]), numerous transmission and distribution electrical lines and recent road and building development in the PUD. The future landscape would change as more development associated with the Archer Development Complex is completed resulting in a commercial landscape north of the facility with a rural landscape south of the facility. Figure 3-5 and Figure 3-6 in Chapter 3.0 show photographs of substations with similar equipment, configuration and size as proposed for the two phases of the Wayne Child Substation.

The 230-kV tie-line between the substations would be between 65-90 feet. Because of the elevation of the site, the height of the largest substation structures (55 feet) and the height of the existing and future larger voltage transmission lines (345-kV structures at 100-150 feet); the facility would be visible from I-80 and from Prairie Center Road within the PUD, as is the existing Archer Substation and transmission lines. Given that the Project would be located immediately adjacent to an existing large substation facility, the aesthetics of the project would be consistent with the current landscape.

Within the 41-acre site, 31 acres would be occupied by the footprint of the built-out facility. The remaining acres would be a buffer of native grassland south of the site. Between five and eight acres would require re-vegetation after both Phase I and II are complete. Because large vegetation, such as bushes and trees, is inconsistent with the safe operation and maintenance of a substation, only native grasses are proposed for reclaiming disturbed portions of the site. NRCS has provided a seed mix adapted to the sites soil type. Tri-State would work with Laramie County to minimize visual effects of the new facility and would implement the following measures:

- Construct any new signs for the facility consistent with sign standards for the Archer Development Complex,
- Provide funding for shrubs and trees to be planted near the road entrance to the facility to visually screen the site from traffic along Prairie Center Road, or
- Provide funding for landscaping in another portion of the Archer Development Complex,
- Stockpile, protect and donate any salvaged topsoil not used for reclaiming the site to the County for use in landscaping in other portions of the complex.
6.10 Transportation

Major transportation routes present near the facility include I-80, and Prairie Center Road in the Archer Development Complex. Access to the new substation would be a short (500-foot) gravel-surfaced road coming off of Prairie Center Road and entering the substation on the northwest property boundary.

There would be short-term impacts from the use of existing roads during construction for the transport of materials, equipment and workers to the site. Work on Phase 1 is expected to take six months. Phase 2 construction would take about 12 months. The number of workers and vehicle trips associated with construction would be relatively small compared to the existing traffic on I-80 and the work force working in the PUD. Appendix C presents the number of workers, trips and equipment expected during the two construction phases of the project. The number of workers and trips would not substantially affect local or regional transportation given existing conditions.

6.11 Noise, Radio and Television Interference

Existing noise levels at the proposed site are somewhat different than what would be expected in a rural setting. Since the site is next door to an existing substation electrical humming and buzzing are part of the noise background levels. Also construction equipment working in the Archer Development Complex is noticeable on site. Noise would be most noticeable during construction. Noise levels for heavy equipment used during construction would be in the 85 to 88 decibel range at a distance of 50 feet. Noise drops off rapidly with greater distances from the source. Given the distance to noise receptors, i.e., about 500 feet to the first occupied building in the Archer Complex, noise is not expected to be a concern except for workers present onsite. There are no other houses buildings, or facilities occupied by people or animals sensitive to noise near the facility.

During operation of the substation, electrical humming, crackling or hissing noise can be generated by „corona effect“, especially during storms or wet conditions. Again this noise would likely be noticeable only at the station property by electrical workers. „Corona effect“ can sometimes interfere with radio and television broadcasts and citizen and mobile radio bandwidths. If radio interference is noted in the vicinity of the substation different techniques, such as shielding, can be used to alleviate interference. No significant impacts from noise or radio and television reception are expected.

6.12 Public Health and Safety

The greatest hazard for health and safety from high-voltage transmission lines and equipment is the risk of primary electrical shock from direct contact with equipment or conductors. Therefore electrical lines and substations are designed and built with safe electrical clearances, security fencing and controlled access. Still, caution must be exercised to avoid shocks resulting from contact strikes with equipment, especially conductors (wires), from drill rigs, bucket trucks, farm equipment and of course electrical
service equipment. A “steady-state shock” can result from positioning vehicles under the lines. These types of shocks can cause involuntary movement and potential harm but are infrequent and usually represent a nuisance rather than a hazard. Spark-discharge shocks can result from induced voltage on objects such as irrigation pipe, fences and railroad tracks when there is inadequate grounding. The magnitude of these shocks is low and infrequent.

6.13 Socioeconomics, Community Resources and Environmental Justice

The primary community likely to experience effects from construction of the Project is Cheyenne, Wyoming, followed by the town of Archer, Wyoming. Cheyenne is about 6 miles from the project site and most housing, goods and services would likely come from this larger community. The population of Cheyenne is about 59,500 and about 32,800 for the unincorporated portion of the county including Archer, Wyoming as reported in the 2010 census (http://quickfacts.census.gov). Employment, housing and economic growth in Wyoming and Cheyenne have been relatively stable due to growth in the mining sector, primarily oil and gas and in recreational tourism. Both temporary and permanent housing are readily available in Cheyenne and would not be noticeably affected by the small increase in the construction workforce. At its peak, the construction workforce would be about 12-16 people. See Appendix C for work force estimates. Adequate public services including fire, sheriff, police, ambulance, hospitals and emergency care are readily available near the Project.

Positive impacts to socioeconomics would result from the construction of the substation; Tri-State’s member, High West Energy, would provide electricity for the PUD. Laramie County tax revenue would increase since Tri-State would pay property taxes on the value of the facility. Electric power reliability would be increased for a large portion of Wyoming and northern Colorado.

Archer, Cheyenne and Laramie County would experience a small increase in sales of goods and services associated with the project. Over the long-term, Tri-State would pay property taxes on the facility and income would be generated for Laramie County.

Executive Order 12898 requires federal agencies to identify and address “disproportionate” adverse effects on minority or low-income populations. There are no residents on or near the project area. The nearest population centers are Archer, Wyoming and Cheyenne, Wyoming. No minority or low-income populations would be disproportionately adversely affected by the construction of the substation. No substantial socioeconomic impacts would result from the project.
7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION MEASURES

In addition to the standard Environmental Protection Measures outlined as part of the proposed project in Chapter 3.0, Tri-State has also agreed to additional measures to minimize visual effects of the facility within the Archer Development Complex, as part of Laramie County Site Development Requirements.

Tri-State would:

- Construct any new signs for the facility consistent with sign standards for the Archer Development Complex,
- Provide funding for shrubs and trees to be planted near the road entrance to the facility to visually screen the site from traffic along Prairie Center Road, or
- Provide funding for landscaping in another portion of the Archer Development Complex,
- Stockpile, protect and donate any salvaged topsoil not used for reclaiming the site to the County for use in landscaping in other portions of the complex.

Tri-State would have a qualified archaeologist on site to monitor grading activity during construction of Phase I and II of the Wayne Child Substation. Monitoring would ensure that any buried cultural resources are not affected. If artifacts are found, all work would cease in the vicinity of the discovery and Tri-State would consult with RUS and Wyoming Historic Preservation Office regarding appropriate action to protect the resource.
8.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The NEPA definition of a cumulative impact comes from the Council on Environmental Quality, which defines a cumulative impact as “…the impact on the environment which 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. (40 CFR §1508.7.)”

The Project area is rural and consists largely of rangeland. Past and current development in the Project area includes nearby I-80, the town of Archer, Wyoming and the Archer Development Complex currently under construction. These developments have changed and will continue to change the rural environment surrounding the site to a more developed environment. The Wayne Child Substation and future transmission lines that could connect to the facility would help to further transform the local landscape to a more industrial, commercial and developed setting.

Within the immediate vicinity of the substation, the Laramie County Fairgrounds Complex could be constructed during the same time frame or near future as the Wayne Child Substation. No other project developments subject to County approval, such as housing, commercial or industrial development within the PUD or the surrounding area is currently proposed in the vicinity of the project (pers. comm. Abby Yenco 2012).

In the future additional transmission lines may connect to the new Wayne Child Substation. These may include regional transmission projects by Tri-State or other parties such as the Western Area Power Administration or High West Energy. Details regarding such potential projects and their impacts are unknown at this time, but the possibility exists for additional regional and local transmission projects to meet needs as this region continues to develop.

Cumulative impacts from future development include loss of vegetation, loss of wildlife habitat, soil disturbance and increased erosion, increases in weeds, increased noise and human presence and changes to regional aesthetics, visual resources and landscape character. The design and electrical configuration of large transmission lines generally pose minor electrocution risk to migratory birds. There could be an increased risk of collision for birds over time if new transmission lines are connected to the Wayne Child Substation. However, cumulative effects are expected to be minor given the extent of rural, undeveloped land remaining in the region.
9.0 AGENCY CONTACTS AND COORDINATION

Scoping for this project was conducted through coordination, consultation and notification with the following agencies:

- USFWS
- USACE
- NRCS
- Wyoming Department of Fish and Game
- Wyoming Historic Preservation Office
- Laramie County

The USFWS concurred that no effects to listed species would result from the project.

The USACE concurred that the site is an upland area and no effects to floodplains or wetlands would result from the project.

The NRCS advised that no prime farmland would be affected by the project and provided a seed mix for re-vegetation.

The Wyoming Department of Fish and Game had no comments relative to Wyoming wildlife resources.

The Wyoming Historic Preservation Office has concurred that no historic properties will be affected by the undertaking as planned.

Tri-State met with county representatives in November 2011 and March 2012 regarding county development siting and permitting requirements. The county expressed concerns regarding minimizing visual impacts.
10.0 REFERENCES


Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. E-mail from Melanie Arnett and George P. Jones to Germaine French. October 2011. Results of database search and biologists comments.

APPENDIX A

Site Plan Drawings
ALTA/ACSM LAND TITLE SURVEY
SITUATED IN
S½ SECTION 27, TOWNSHIP 14 NORTH, RANGE 65 WEST, 6TH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN,
LARAMIE COUNTY, WYOMING

Wayne Child Substation

Appendix A-2
Appendix B

Public Notices
Notice of Comment Period for an Environmental Assessment from Rural Utilities Service, United States Department of Agriculture

**ACTION** The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has released an Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment and review which evaluates the potential environmental impacts related to a proposed project by Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. (Tri-State) to build a new substation east of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

**SUMMARY** Tri-State is proposing to build a new substation to provide electrical power to its member, High West Energy, and to increase Tri-State’s regional electrical system reliability and flexibility. Tri-State is requesting that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provide financial assistance for the proposed project. As a result, the project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and requires an EA (7 CFR Part 1794). RUS will lead efforts to comply with the environmental review process. The EA includes the project’s purpose and need, alternatives, description of the project, affected environment, analyses of potential effects to the natural and human environment, mitigation, and monitoring measures.

**WHERE TO FIND THE EA** Hard copies of the EA are available for review at Tri-State headquarters and the Laramie County Library at:

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association  
1100 West 116th Avenue  
Westminster, CO 80234

Laramie County Library  
2200 Pioneer Avenue  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

You may also request a copy of the EA from Germaine French, Senior Environmental Planner, Tri-State Generation and Transmission, PO Box 33695 Denver, CO 80233-0695. Phone: 303-254-3942, or gfrench@tristategt.org. The EA is also available at http://www.tristategt.org/Transmission/WayneChild.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** RUS is requesting public comments on the proposed substation. To be considered, comments must be postmarked or otherwise received by the close of business on April 12, 2012. Comments must be submitted to RUS at:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development  
Rural Utilities Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 5135  
STOP 1510  
Washington, DC 20250-1535

Or via email to:  
Dennis.Rankin@wdc.usda.gov  
http://www.rurdev.usda.gov
NOTICE

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. is planning to construct a new substation to provide electrical power to its member, High West Energy, and to increase Tri-State’s regional electrical system reliability. An Environmental Assessment covering the project is available for public review. For additional information, refer to our notice in the legal notice section of this newspaper.
APPENDIX C

Construction Workforce Estimates
# Table C-1 Wayne Child Substation – Phase I Construction Workforce and Equipment (2011-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Crew Size</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site grading and fencing</td>
<td>4 to 6 people</td>
<td>1 grader 14 2-4 pickup trucks 1 water truck(^b) 1 bulldozer 8N 1 excavator 325 2 trailers</td>
<td>4 to 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>4 people</td>
<td>1 pressure digger 16 concrete trucks 6 pickup trucks 6 tractor trailers 6 materials trucks 1 backhoe 420</td>
<td>4 to 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure assembly and erection</td>
<td>8 to 12 people</td>
<td>1 bucket truck 1 boom truck 1 man-lift 10 pickup trucks 4 tractor trailers 1 crane</td>
<td>4 to 6 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power system assembly</td>
<td>6 to 8 people</td>
<td>4-5 pickup trucks 1 crane</td>
<td>1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel surfacing</td>
<td>5 to 6 people</td>
<td>2-3 pickup trucks 6-8 tractor trailers 1 bobcat 1 10-wheel truck</td>
<td>1 to 2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanup and restoration</td>
<td>4 people</td>
<td>1 bobcat 2 pickup trucks</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4 to 12 people</td>
<td>(equipment above)</td>
<td>24 to 32 weeks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)A number of different contractors and subcontractors would be retained to construct the substation and associated transmission and distribution lines. Tri-State would have inspectors on-site for each phase of development. All construction personnel would attend safety and environmental briefing prior to working on the project.  
\(^b\)Water tank trucks may be necessary during all phases of construction to minimize fugitive dust.
**Table C-2 Wayne Child Substation - Phase II Construction Workforce and Equipment (2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Crew Size</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Length of Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site grading and fencing</td>
<td>12 people</td>
<td>2 grader 14</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 pickup trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 water truck&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 bulldozer 8N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 excavator 325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 trailers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 grader 14</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 pickup trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 water truck&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 bulldozer 8N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 excavator 325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 trailers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>8 people</td>
<td>1 pressure digger</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 concrete trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 pickup trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 tractor trailers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 materials trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 backhoe 420</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure assembly and erection</td>
<td>16 people</td>
<td>2 bucket trucks</td>
<td>18 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 boom trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 man-lifts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 pickup trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 tractor trailers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 cranes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power system assembly</td>
<td>16 people</td>
<td>15 pickup trucks</td>
<td>4 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 cranes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravelsurfacing</td>
<td>5 to 6 people</td>
<td>2-3 pickup trucks</td>
<td>3 to 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6-8 tractor trailers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 bobcat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 10-wheel truck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanup and restoration</td>
<td>8 people</td>
<td>2 bobcats</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 pickup trucks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 to 16 people</strong></td>
<td><em>(equipment above)</em></td>
<td><strong>52-53 weeks</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>A number of different contractors and subcontractors would be retained to construct the substation and associated transmission and distribution lines. Tri-State would have inspectors on-site for each phase of development. All construction personnel would attend safety and environmental briefing prior to working on the project.

<sup>b</sup>Water tank trucks may be necessary during all phases of construction to minimize fugitive dust.
APPENDIX D

Agency Letters
March 2012

Wayne Child Substation

Appendix D

ARTS. PARKS. HISTORY.
Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources

Jan 31, 2012

Germaine French
Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association
P.O. Box 33695
Denver, CO 80233

re: Proposed Wayne Child Substation, Laramie County (SHPO File # 0112BAB008)

Dear Ms French:

Thank you for consulting with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the above referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the associated report and find the documentation meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716-42). We concur with your finding that no historic properties, as defined in 36 CFR § 800.16(i)(1), will be affected by the undertaking as planned.

We recommend the Rural Utilities Service allow the undertaking to proceed in accordance with state and federal laws subject to the following stipulation:

If any cultural materials are discovered during construction, work in the area shall halt immediately, the federal agency must be contacted, and the materials evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983).

This letter should be retained in your files as documentation of a SHPO concurrence on your finding of no historic properties affected. Please refer to SHPO project #0112BAB008 on any future correspondence regarding this undertaking. If you have any questions, please contact me at 307-777-8594.

Sincerely,

Brian Beadles
Historic Preservation Specialist

State Historic Preservation Office
2301 Central Ave., Barrett Bldg. 3rd Floor
Cheyenne, WY 82002
307-777-5487
FAX: 307-777-5421
http://wyoahp.state.wy.us

Matthew H. Mead, Governor
Millard Simpson, Director

Wayne Child Substation
Appendix D-1
WER 12489
Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc
Environmental Report
New Wayne Child Substation
Laramie County

Germaine French
Senior Environmental Planner
Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc
PO Box 33695
Denver, CO 80233-0695

Dear Ms. French:

The staff of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has reviewed the Environmental Report for the New Wayne Child Substation submitted by Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc in Laramie County. We have no terrestrial wildlife or aquatic concerns pertaining to this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
John Emmerich
Deputy Director

cc: USEFS
Mike Snigg, Laramie Region
Terry Creekmore, Laramie Region
Martin Hicks, Laramie Region

"Conserving Wildlife - Serving People"
Wayne Child Substation

Appendix D-3
Endangered, Threatened, and Candidate Species and Their Critical Habitat

You have determined that the following species or their designated habitat will not be affected by the Project: Colorado butterfly plant (Gaussia neomexicana coloradensis) and its critical habitat, Ute ladies'-tresses (Spiranthes diluvialis), Preble’s meadow jumping mouse (Zapus hudsonius preblei), and the Greater sage-grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus). Additionally, you have determined that the Project will not affect riverine habitat or the following listed species downstream of Wyoming in the Platte River system: Least tern (Interior population; Sterna antillarum), Pallid sturgeon (Scaphirhynchus albus), Piping plover (Charadrius melodus), Western prairie fringed orchid (Platanthera praeclara), and the Whooping crane (Grus americana). Based on the information provided in your letter, it is unlikely that the proposed work will adversely affect any threatened or endangered species.

Migratory Birds

The MBTA, enacted in 1918, prohibits the taking of any migratory birds, their parts, nests, or eggs except as permitted by regulations, and does not require intent to be proven. Section 703 of the MBTA states, “Unless and except as permitted by regulations ... it shall be unlawful at any time, by any means or in any manner, to ... take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture, or kill, or possess ... any migratory bird, any part, nest, or eggs of any such bird....” The BGEPA prohibits knowingly taking, or taking with wanton disregard for the consequences of an activity, any bald or golden eagles or their body parts, nests, or eggs, which includes collection, molestation, disturbance, or killing.

Work that could lead to the take of a migratory bird or eagle, their young, eggs, or nests (e.g., if you are going to erect new roads, or power lines in the vicinity of a nest), should be coordinated with our office before any actions are taken. Removal or destruction of such nests, or causing abandonment of a nest, could constitute violation of one or both of the above statutes. Removal of any active migratory bird nest or nest tree is prohibited. For golden eagles, inactive nest permits are limited to activities involving resource extraction or human health and safety. Mitigation, as determined by the local Service field office, may be required for loss of these nests. No permits will be issued for an active nest of any migratory bird species, unless removal of an active nest is necessary for reasons of human health and safety. Therefore, if nesting migratory birds are present on or near the project area, timing is a significant consideration and needs to be addressed in project planning.

If nest manipulation is proposed for this Project, the Project proponent should contact the Service’s Migratory Bird Office in Denver at 303-236-8171 to see if a permit can be issued for this project. No nest manipulation is allowed without a permit. If a permit cannot be issued, the project may need to be modified to ensure take of a migratory bird or eagle, their young, eggs or nest will not occur.

According to your letter, migratory birds may be impacted by the Project through construction activities during nesting season and potential for collision and electrocutions as a result of the proposed transmission line. However, you state that impacts will be minimized through the flagging and avoidance of nest sites and through the implementation of APLIC standards in
transmission line construction. Additionally, you state that the Service will be consulted for any nest that cannot be avoided.

Species of Concern

The Project also lies within the range of the black-tailed prairie dog (Cynomys ludovicianus), the mountain plover (Charadrius montanus), and the Wyoming pocket gopher (Thomomys clausius), all species of concern. However, due to their present status, no consultation is required for these species under the Act. Due to the Project nature and location, it is unlikely that the proposed work will adversely affect these species.

This Project should be re-analyzed if new information reveals effects of the action that may affect listed species or designated or proposed critical habitat (1) in a manner or to an extent not considered in this letter, (2) if the action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to a listed species or designated or proposed critical habitat that was not considered in this letter, and/or (3) if a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by this project.

For our internal tracking purposes, the Service would appreciate notification of any decision made on this project (such as issuance of a permit or signing of a Record of Decision or Decision Memo). Notification can be sent in writing to the letterhead address or by electronic mail to FW6_Federal_Activities_Cheyenne@fws.gov.

We appreciate your efforts to ensure the conservation of Wyoming’s fish and wildlife resources. If you have questions regarding this letter or your responsibilities under the Act and/or other authorities or resources described above, please contact Julie Proell of my office at the letterhead address or phone (307) 772-2374, extension 232.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

R. Mark Sattelberg
Field Supervisor
Wyoming Field Office

cc: WGFD, Non-game Coordinator, Lander, WY (B. Oakleaf)
    WGFD, Statewide Habitat Protection Coordinator, Cheyenne, WY (M. Flanderka)
December 15, 2011

Wyoming Regulatory Office

Germaine French
Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 33695
Denver, Colorado 80233

Dear Ms. French:

This letter is in response to information we received from you on December 19, 2011, concerning Department of the Army authorization for the construction of the Wayne Child Substation near Cheyenne. The project will be located in a 41-acre parcel in the SE ¼ of Section 27, Township 14 North, Range 65 West, Laramie County, Wyoming.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates the placement of dredged and fill material into waters of the United States in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344). The term "waters of the United States" has been broadly defined by statute, regulation, and judicial interpretation to include all waters that were, are, or could be used in interstate commerce such as streams, reservoirs, lakes and adjacent wetlands. The Corps regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations as 33 CFR Parts 320 through 332. Information on Section 404 program requirements in Wyoming can be obtained from our website at http://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/html/sdkgw/Wyoming.htm.

We have reviewed the map you provided in addition to aerial photographs of the project area. We determined that the entire project area is located entirely in upland with no waters of the United States. Therefore, the entire 41-acre parcel does not contain any waters of the United States as defined at 33 CFR Part 328.3(a).

In the March 28, 2000, edition of the Federal Register (Vol. 65, No. 60), the Corps implemented an administrative appeals process for jurisdictional determinations. This letter serves as an approved jurisdictional determination. The landowner and other affected parties may appeal any determination to the Northwestern Division Appeals Officer, Mr. David Gesl, by obtaining a Notification of Administrative Appeal Options and Process (NAO) form at our website. Section "D" of the NAO explains the procedures for appeal. The NAO form must be submitted to Mr. Gesl at the address shown on the NAO form prior to February 28, 2012, or forfeit the right to an administrative appeal.
As a result of this analysis, we determined that Department of the Army authorization is not required for the proposed substation construction because it would not require any discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States. This determination does not eliminate requirements to obtain any other applicable federal, state, tribal, or local permits.

Thank you for your interest in cooperating with requirements of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ regulatory program. Please contact Mr. Kevin Little at (307) 772-2300 and reference file NWO-2011-02797 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Matthew A. Bloseau
Program Manager
Wyoming Regulatory Office

The Omaha District, Regulatory Branch. Wyoming Regulatory Office is committed to providing quality and honest service to our customers. In an effort to improve customer service, please take a moment to complete a Customer Service Survey found on our web site at http://www.mwo.usace.army.mil/urcmd-roy/survey.htm. Paper copies of the survey are also available upon request for those without Internet access.
From: Pike, James - NRCS, Cheyenne, WY
To: French, Germaine
Subject: RE: Seed mix for Wayne Child Tri-State Substation
Date: Wednesday, January 04, 2012 8:16:56 AM

Attachments: Copy of Cover_Crop_(340)_Worksheet_(WY-ECS-25_Planto As -Built)Tir-State.xls

Germaine,
Please review the attached seeding recommendation. I calculated it for 1 acre as the area to be seeded is undetermined at this time. I reviewed the seeding recommendation you sent. Nothing in my experience allows me to concur with the cover crop or grass seeding recommendation. The area contains no prime farmland. Please call with any questions.

Jim Pike
District Conservationist
11221 East Hwy 30
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009 (307)772-2314 ext. 110

From: French, Germaine [mailto:gfrenc@gfrenc@tristategt.org]
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2012 1:11 PM
To: Pike, James - NRCS, Cheyenne, WY
Subject: Seed mix for Tri-State Substation

Thank you for your time and comments Mr. Pike.

Germaine French
Senior Environmental Planner
Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.
1100 West 116th Avenue
Westminster, CO 80234

Desk 303-254-3942
Cell 720-556-6385
FAX 303-254-6063