

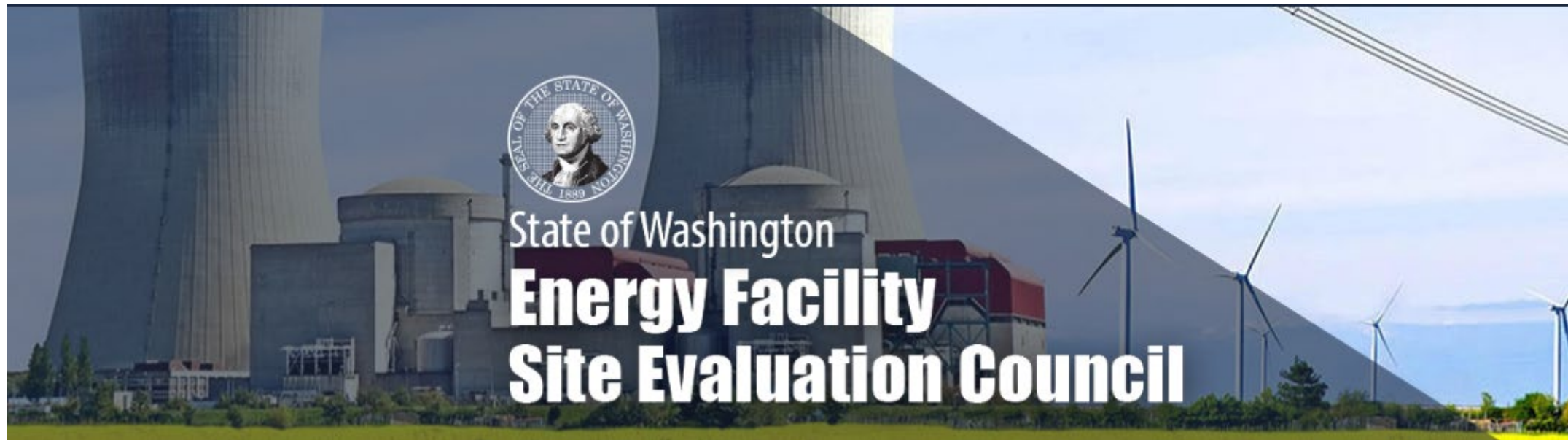


Transmission Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Sean Greene, Environmental Planner

April 8, 2025





- Formed in 1970 to provide centralized siting and permitting for energy facilities
- Large-scale thermal power plants, nuclear facilities, oil refineries, natural gas storage fields, natural gas and oil pipelines, and many high-voltage transmission facilities required to site through EFSEC
- Other energy facilities, with some restrictions, can elect to site through EFSEC
- EFSEC Council consists of members from state agencies and local government
- EFSEC develops recommendations on project that are submitted to the Governor, who makes the final decision



Programmatic EIS Background

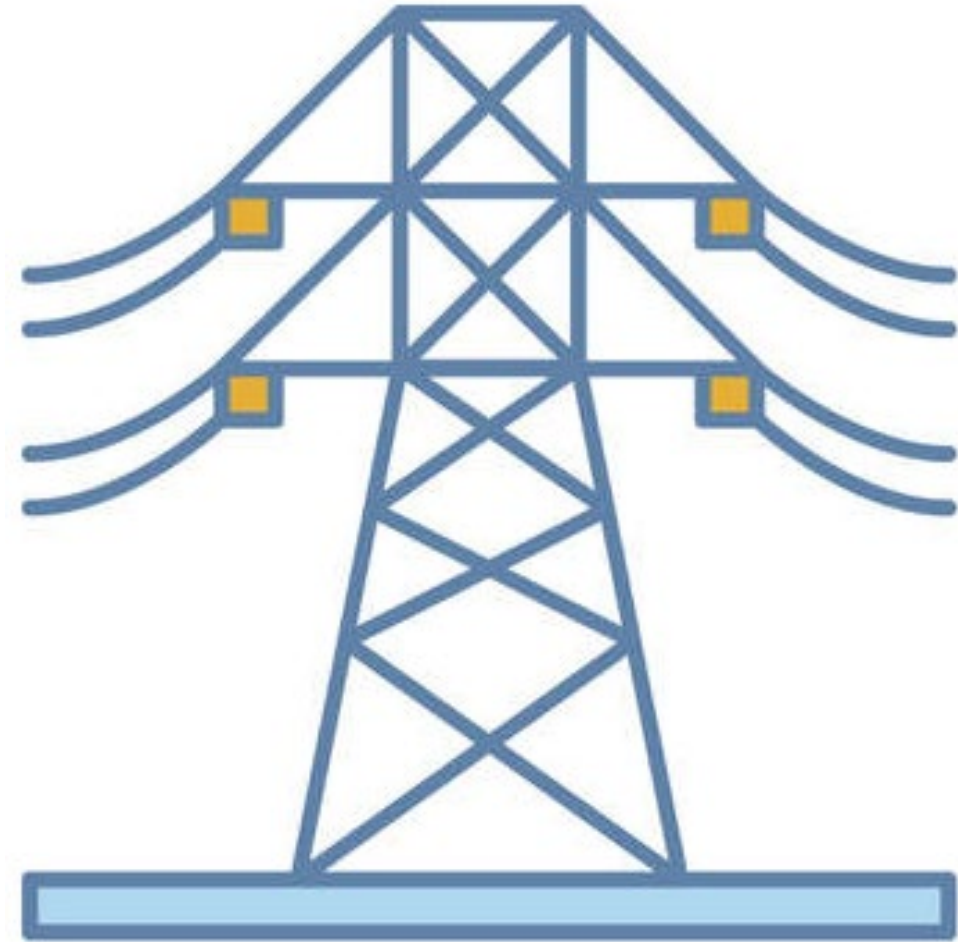
- WAC 43.21C.405 directed EFSEC to prepare a nonproject environmental review of electrical transmission facilities with a nominal voltage of 230 kilovolts or greater
- Review included overhead lines, underground lines, substations, and other related equipment
- Programmatic EIS prepared under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)
- WAC 43.21C.408 states that any project proposals that follow the recommendations in the Programmatic EIS are considered to have mitigated for all significant adverse environmental impacts considered within the Programmatic EIS





Programmatic EIS Purpose

- Identify probable significant adverse environmental impacts common to transmission projects
- Provide suitable mitigation measures to address identified impacts
- Identify sensitive siting areas that proponents can avoid to minimize adverse impacts
- Provide SEPA Lead Agencies and permitting agencies as well as Tribes and other interested parties with information to consider during their reviews of specific projects
- Help developers understand potential impacts at an early phase to, ideally, result in siting and design choices that avoid or minimize impacts



Why Should You Care?

- Electricity demand in the region expected to grow by 20% in the next decade
- Renewable energy development
- Transmission lines can have unique and significant environmental impacts
- Any new transmission facilities will be required by law to consider this Programmatic EIS
 - Help us ensure that environmental impacts are appropriately identified, assessed, and mitigated
 - Early involvement is the best way to avoid and minimize impacts





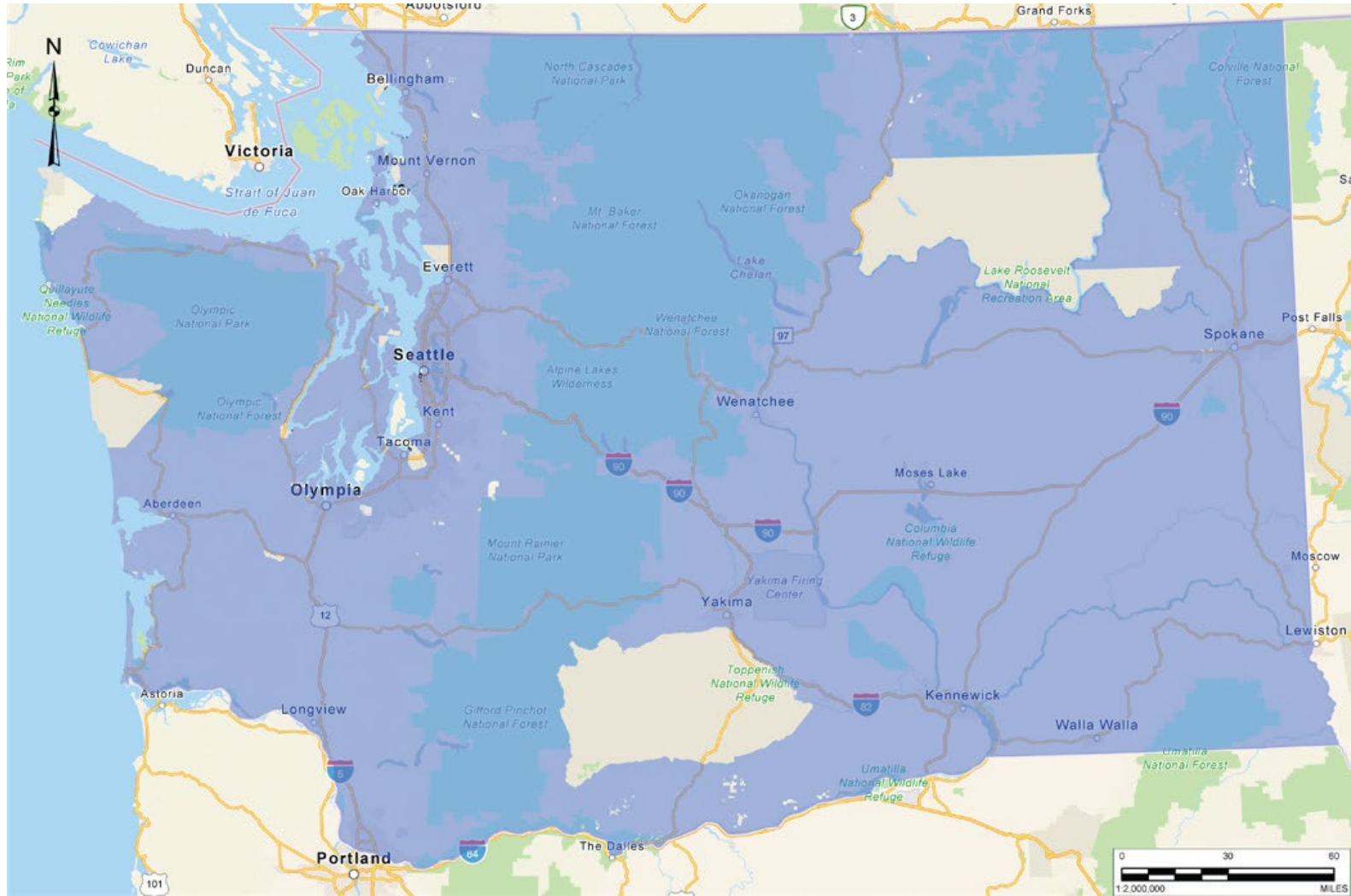
Standard EIS Terms

- Mitigation Measure: A specific step or action taken to address the impacts of a project development or action. (WAC 197-11-768)
- Cumulative Effects: A qualitative assessment of potential compounding and incremental impacts from the development of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.

Examples

- Hist/Cultural-6: Following a cultural resources survey or desktop search, develop and follow an archaeological monitoring and discovery plan
- Transportation: a measurable consequence on supply chains or the management and distribution of people and materials; prolonged road closures or detours that cause major inconvenience to commuters

Study Area



- Exclusions:
 - Tribal lands, pending Tribal input
 - Islands without bridge connections
 - Marine areas



Assessed Resources

SEPA Resources

- Earth
- Air
- Water
- Plants
- Animals
- Energy & Natural Resources
- Environmental Health
- Land & Shoreline Use
- Housing
- Aesthetics
- Light & Glare
- Recreation
- Historic & Cultural
- Transportation
- Public Services
- Utilities

RCW 43.21C.405 Resources

- Habitat Connectivity
- Migration Corridors
- Environmental Justice
- Tribal Rights, Interests, and Resources
- Agricultural and Ranching Land Use
- Military Installations and Operations



Impact Examples

Water Resources

- Changes in sedimentation
- Changes in water chemistry
- Increased water usage
- Altered hydrology
- Temporary water diversions
- Groundwater extraction

Cultural and Historic Resources

- Physical impacts to historic and cultural resources
- Visual impacts to historic and cultural resources
- Physical impacts to Traditional Cultural Properties and Tribal resources
- Visual impacts to Traditional Cultural Properties and Tribal resources

Habitat, Wildlife, and Fish

- Direct habitat loss
- Indirect habitat loss
- Mortality of species
- Barriers to movement
- Habitat fragmentation



Impact Determination Scale

Nil	Negligible	Low	Moderate	High
Analysis confirmed that no foreseeable impacts are expected.	Minor, adverse environmental impacts would occur, but BMPs and design considerations are expected to be effective.	Adverse environmental impacts would occur even with the implementation of BMPs and design considerations. Impacts would be short term and nonsignificant.	Adverse environmental impacts would occur even with implementation of BMPs and design considerations. Moderate impacts may be long-term, occurring over one or more project phases. Moderate impacts have the potential to be significant.	Adverse environmental impacts would have significant and potentially severe effects even after implementation of BMPs and design considerations. High impacts may be permanent or continue for the duration of the project.

Note: Identification of environmental impacts and assignment of discipline-specific ratings is based on professional judgment and information available at the time of writing. A precautionary approach has been taken for the assessment where information is currently unknown or unavailable.



Programmatic EIS Key Terms

- General Conditions: Conditions that are clearly identified as a baseline for being able to use the analysis in the Programmatic EIS
- Design Considerations: Guidance documents, manuals, and/or best management practices
- Avoidance Criteria: Criteria that limit the scope of the environmental review and provide a consistent baseline for evaluating the potential impacts of project-specific applications

Examples

- Gen-2: Projects will adhere to relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations. If a project cannot comply with a relevant law or regulation, then an explanation would be provided.
- Written WDFW agency management recommendations and guidelines
- Avoid-23: Avoid constructing facilities that would physically impact Tribal resources and Traditional Cultural Places



Decision Tree

STEP 1

Determine if the project-specific application fits the definition of a **transmission facility**¹ analyzed within the prescribed Study Area² of this Programmatic EIS.

NO

Follow applicable SEPA environmental review and permitting processes. The SEPA Lead Agency would conduct an environmental review in accordance with Chapter 43.21C RCW and Chapter 197-11 WAC for the project-specific application and make a SEPA Threshold Determination. Regarding this Programmatic EIS, the SEPA Lead Agency could **INCORPORATE BY REFERENCE**.

STEP 2

YES | Would the project-specific application have a federal nexus?

YES
Federal environmental review processes (e.g., NEPA) apply, which would include coordination with EFSEC for environmental review. Regarding this Programmatic EIS, the SEPA Lead Agency could:
– Adopt the NEPA document as part of their SEPA environmental review process and documentation. **Proceed to Step 3. OR**
– Incorporate the NEPA document by reference and complete a separate SEPA analysis. **Proceed to Step 3.**

STEP 3

NO
STEP 3.1

Does the project comply with all state, federal, and local regulations³?

YES
STEP 3.2

Are design considerations and BMPs³ accounted for in the design of the project-specific application?

YES
STEP 3.3

Would the project comply with the identified **general conditions**⁴ within this Programmatic EIS?

YES
STEP 3.4

Does the project comply with the identified **avoidance criteria**⁵ within this Programmatic EIS?

YES
STEP 3.5

Are all probable significant adverse environmental impacts of the project identified and analyzed in this Programmatic EIS?

YES
STEP 3.6⁶

NO | This Programmatic EIS did not analyze this scenario.

THE FOLLOWING IS REQUIRED:

- **APP** Identify the regulations that cannot be followed and provide an explanation.
- **SLA** Complete additional environmental review and identify mitigation.^{3,7}

Proceed to Step 3.2.

NO | This Programmatic EIS did not analyze this scenario.

THE FOLLOWING IS REQUIRED:

- **APP** Identify the design considerations and BMPs³ that are not proposed as part of the project-specific application and provide an explanation.
- **SLA** Complete additional environmental review and identify mitigation.^{3,7}

Proceed to Step 3.3.

NO | This Programmatic EIS did not analyze this scenario.

THE FOLLOWING IS REQUIRED:

- **APP** Identify the general conditions that are not complied with and provide an explanation.
- **SLA** Complete additional environmental review and identify mitigation.^{3,7}

Proceed to Step 3.4.

NO | This Programmatic EIS did not analyze this scenario.

THE FOLLOWING IS REQUIRED:

- **APP** Identify avoidance criteria that are not complied with and provide an explanation.
- **SLA** Complete additional environmental review and identify mitigation.^{3,7}

Proceed to Step 3.5.

NO | This Programmatic EIS did not analyze this scenario.

THE FOLLOWING IS REQUIRED:

- **SLA** Identify and complete additional environmental review for probable significant adverse environmental impacts not analyzed in this Programmatic EIS and identify mitigation.^{3,7}

Proceed to Step 3.6.

STEP 4

The **SLA** has the responsibility to determine the appropriate level and type of environmental review for each project-specific application:

STEP 4.1

ADOPT the Programmatic EIS without the need for an addendum or supplemental analysis. This indicates that there are no additional project-specific details or analyses of impacts that should be recorded in the SEPA documentation.

OR

STEP 4.2

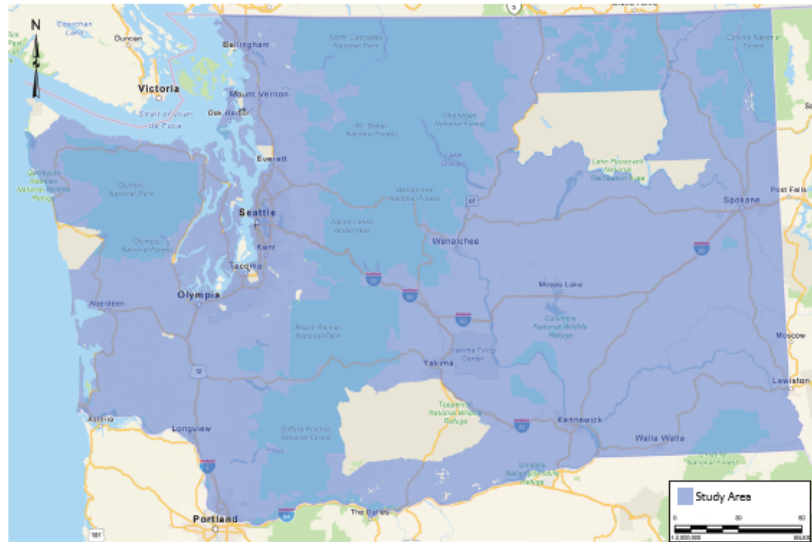
PREPARE AN ADDENDUM, in addition to adopting the Programmatic EIS, that adds analyses or information about the project but does not substantially change the analysis of significant impacts and alternatives addressed in this Programmatic EIS.

OR

STEP 4.3

PREPARE A SUPPLEMENTAL EIS, in addition to adopting the Programmatic EIS, that adds new analyses or information related to probable significant adverse environmental impacts of the project that have not been addressed in this Programmatic EIS. This may include project-specific impacts that were not identified in this Programmatic EIS or that were identified in this Programmatic EIS, but are determined by the SEPA Lead Agency through project-specific environmental review to have been insufficiently evaluated.

OR



REFERENCES



GoldSET Cards

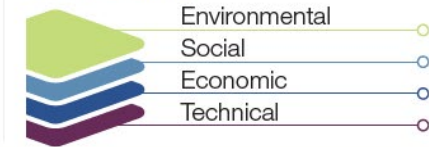
- Suitability Maps
 - Provided for most resources in Chapter 3
 - Identify areas of highest and lowest conflict for a variety of resources
 - Could be used by Applicants to site transmission facilities along least-conflict corridors

Data Acquisition & Processing

STUDY AREA



DATA CATALOG

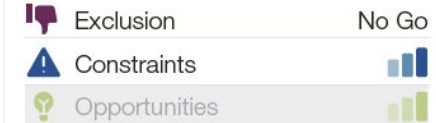


Criteria Assessment

SELECTION



CLASSIFICATION



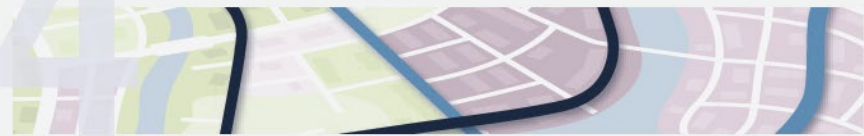
Sustainability Analysis

SCENARIOS EVALUATION & CRITERIA AGGREGATION



Corridor/Route Optimization

CORRIDOR ANALYSIS & DETAILED ROUTING

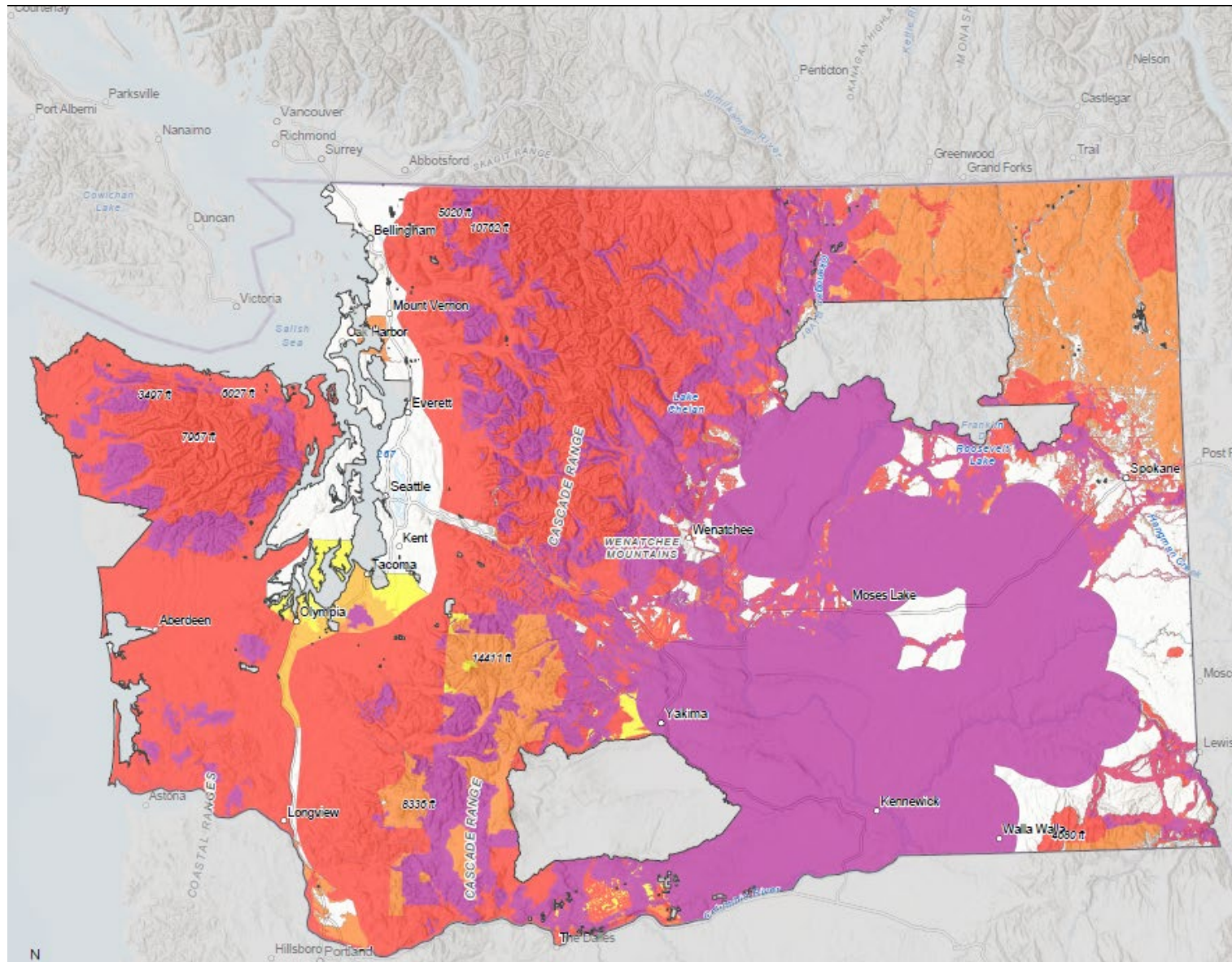


Option Analysis

BENCHMARKING & OPTIONS EVALUATION



Suitability Map Example



LEGEND

□ Study Area

Conflict Indicator Key

- Neutral
- Low
- Low-Medium
- Medium
- Medium-High
- High
- Very High



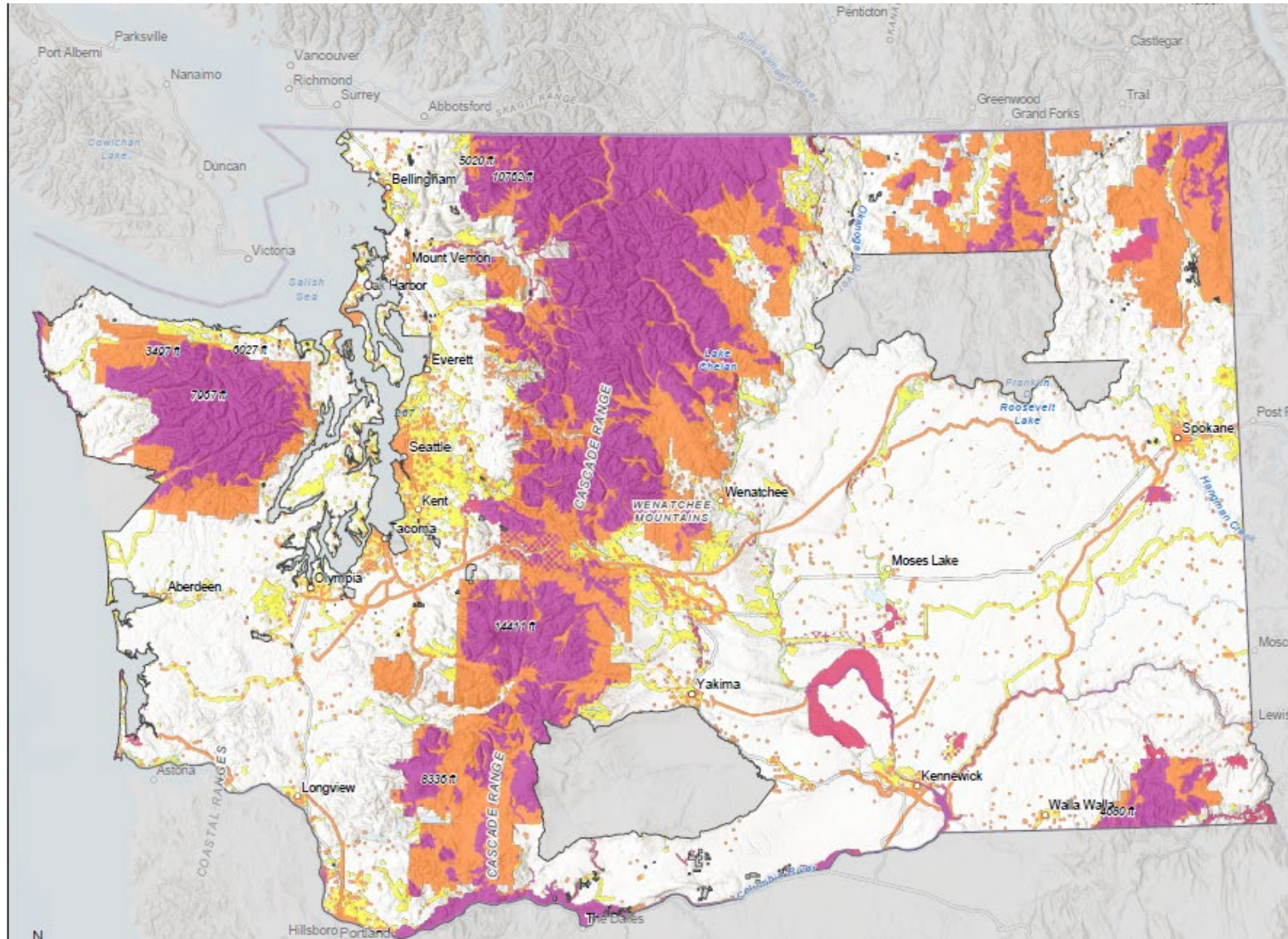
EFSEC
Energy Facility Site
Evaluation Council

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. WA STATE PARKS GIS, ESRI, TOMTOM, GARMIN, FAO, NOAA, USGS, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, EPA, NPS, USFWS, ESRI, USGS
2. THE CONFLICT INDICATOR KEY CAN BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND HIGHLIGHT AREAS WHERE DIFFERENT PROJECT CONSTRAINTS MAY OVERLAP POTENTIALLY LEADING TO CONFLICTS. THE KEY USES DIFFERENT COLORS TO REPRESENT THE INTENSITY OR LIKELIHOOD OF CONFLICT.

PROJECT: DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC EIS
HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION

Suitability Map Example



Conflict Indicator Key

- Neutral
- Low
- Low-Medium
- Medium
- Medium-High
- High
- Very High



EFSEC

Energy Facility Site
Evaluation Council

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. ESRI, CGIAR, USGS; WA STATE PARKS GIS, ESRI, TOMTOM, GARMIN, FAO, NOAA, USGS, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, EPA, NPS, USFWS
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PROJECT

DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC EIS HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION



Next Steps

- Public Comment Period
 - March 31 through April 30, 2025
- Programmatic EIS Public Comment Hearings
 - April 22 & 24, 2025 from 5:00pm to 8:00pm PDT
 - efsec.wa.gov/energy-facilities/transmission-programmatic-eis
- Review Comments and Develop Final Programmatic EIS
- Final Programmatic EIS publication
 - June 30, 2025



Where to Find the Programmatic EIS

- Programmatic EIS website

<https://www.efsec.wa.gov/energy-facilities/transmission-programmatic-eis>

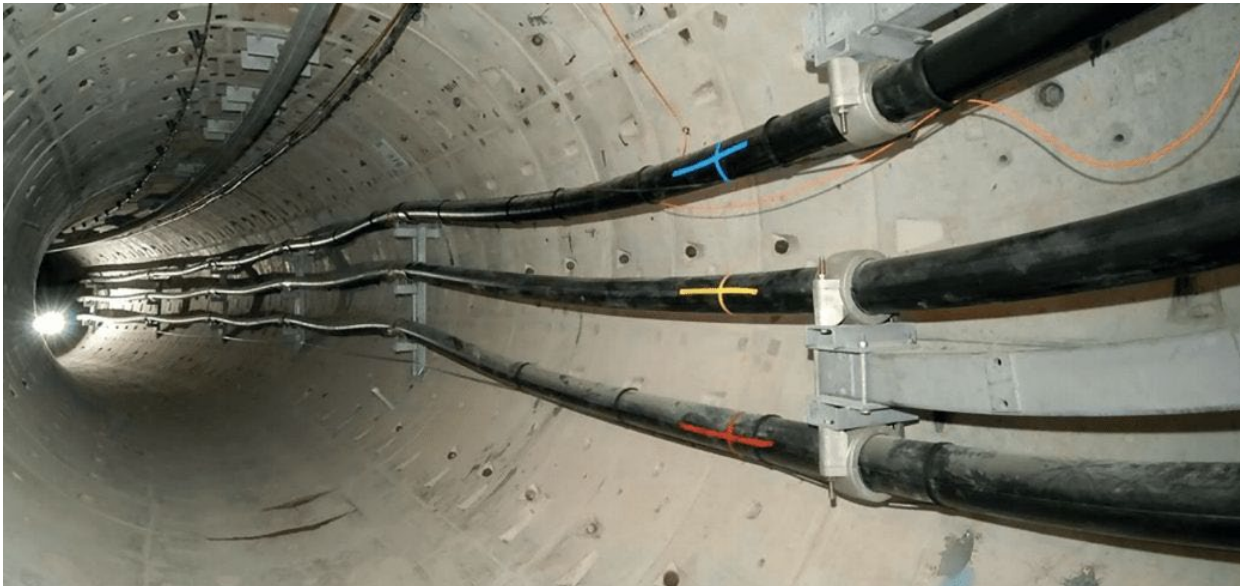
- Request personal copy

Request a physical or digital copy for the cost of production

- EFSEC Office

- Libraries

- Asotin County Library
- Cathlamet Public Library
- Central Skagit Library
- Columbia County Library
- Davenport Public Library
- Ellensburg Public Library
- Fort Vancouver Regional Libraries
- Jefferson County Library
- King County Library System
- Libraries of Stevens County
- Longview Public Library
- Mid-Columbia Libraries
- NCW Libraries
- North Olympic Library System
- Pend Oreille County Library
- Pierce County Libraries
- Ritzville Public Library
- San Juan Island Library
- Spokane County Library District
- Sno-Isle Libraries
- Timberland Regional Libraries
- Walla Wall County Library District
- Whatcom County Library System
- Whitman County Library
- Yakima Valley Libraries





Comments

Substantive

- Identification of additional environmental impacts
- Suggested changes to EFSEC determinations on impact severity
- Comments on the effectiveness of proposed mitigation
- Identification of errors or omissions

Not Substantive

- General comments in support of or opposed to the development/use of the Programmatic EIS
- Opinions on types of energy production
- Opinions on EFSEC
- Comments unrelated to transmission or the Programmatic EIS



Public Input

- Programmatic EIS Public Comment Hearings
April 22 & 24, 2025 from 5:00pm to 8:00pm PDT
- Online comments (Preferred)
<https://comments.efsec.wa.gov>
- Email comments
comments@efsec.wa.gov
- Mail comments
Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council
PO Box 43172
Olympia, WA 98503-3172
- Phone comments or questions
(360) 664-1345
- In-person comments or document review
EFSEC Office
621 Woodland Square Loop
Olympia, WA 98504-3172

