

# Corridor 81-272

## Rio Grande Corridor

### Introduction

Corridor 81-272 (Figures 1 and 2) extends south-north from northeast of Hatch, New Mexico at the southern border of Sierra County to just north of Socorro, New Mexico where the corridor terminates at the Sevilleta NWR. Federally designated portions of this corridor have a 3,500-ft width and are entirely on BLM-administered lands. Corridor 81-272 is designated multi-modal for future electrical transmission and pipeline projects. Portions of the corridor near the Jornada Experimental Range, south of MP 0 and at Sevilleta NWR, north of MP 108.5, were not included in the corridor designation due to the New Mexico Governor's request and because of USFWS objections, respectively. There are 70.6 miles of designated corridor on BLM-administered lands; the overall route including gaps is 108.5 miles. There are 70.6 miles of designated corridor on BLM-administered lands; the overall route including gaps is 108.5 miles. The designated area is 29,547.3 acres or 46.2 square miles. This corridor is in Sierra and Socorro counties in New Mexico under the BLM jurisdiction of the Las Cruces District Office and Socorro Field Office. This corridor is entirely in Region 2.

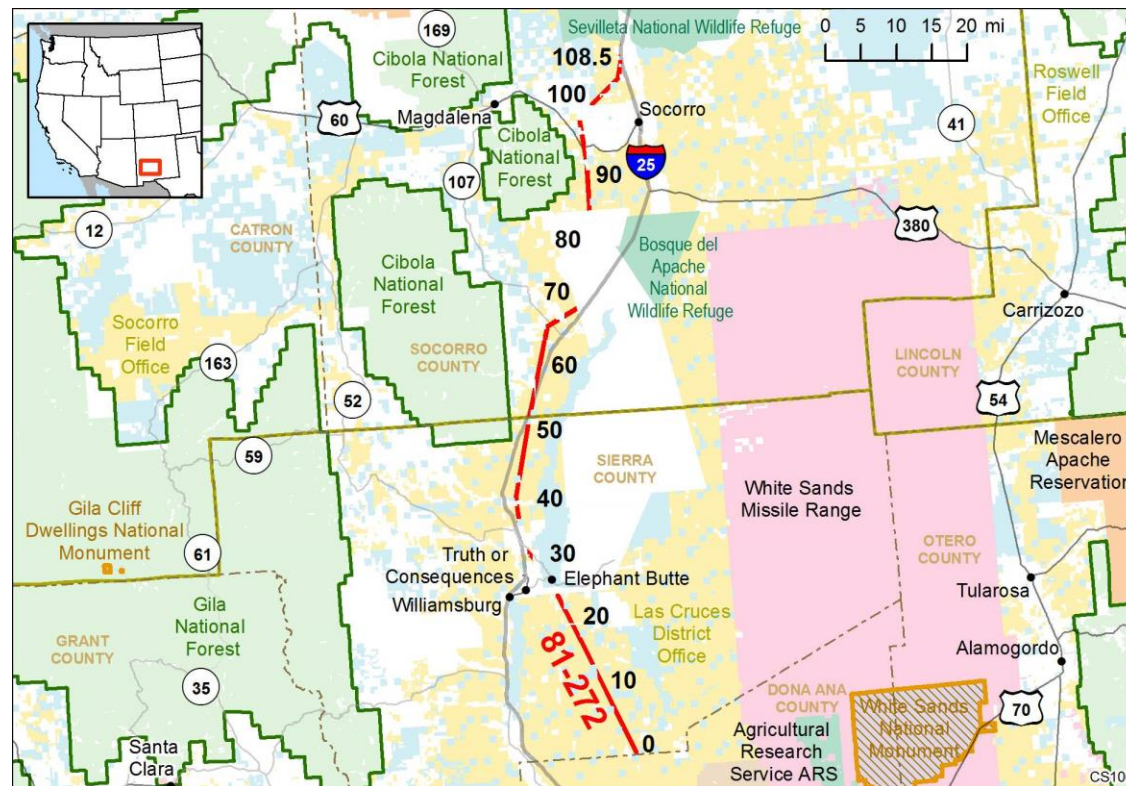
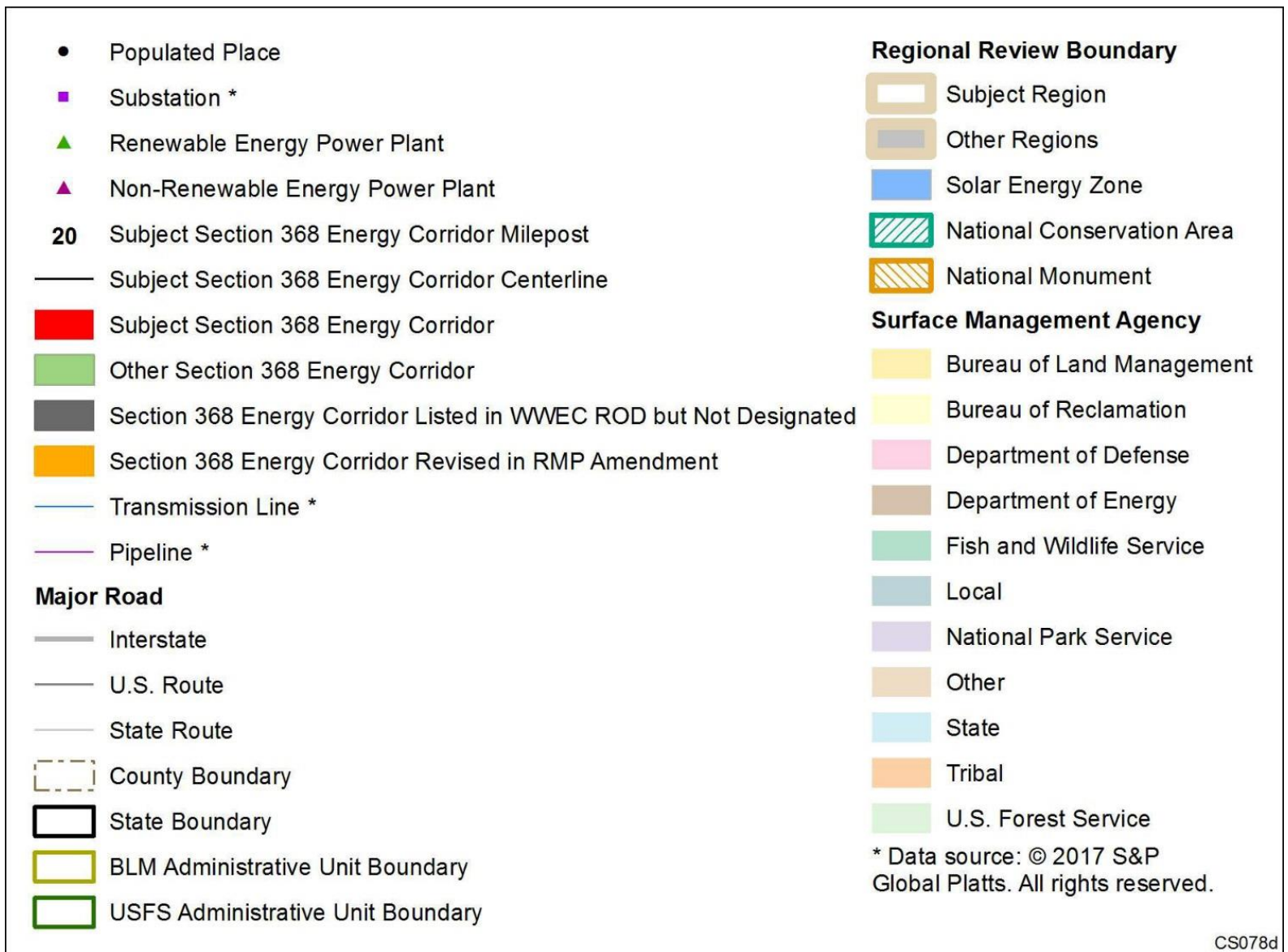


Figure 1. Corridor 81-272



Key for All Figures



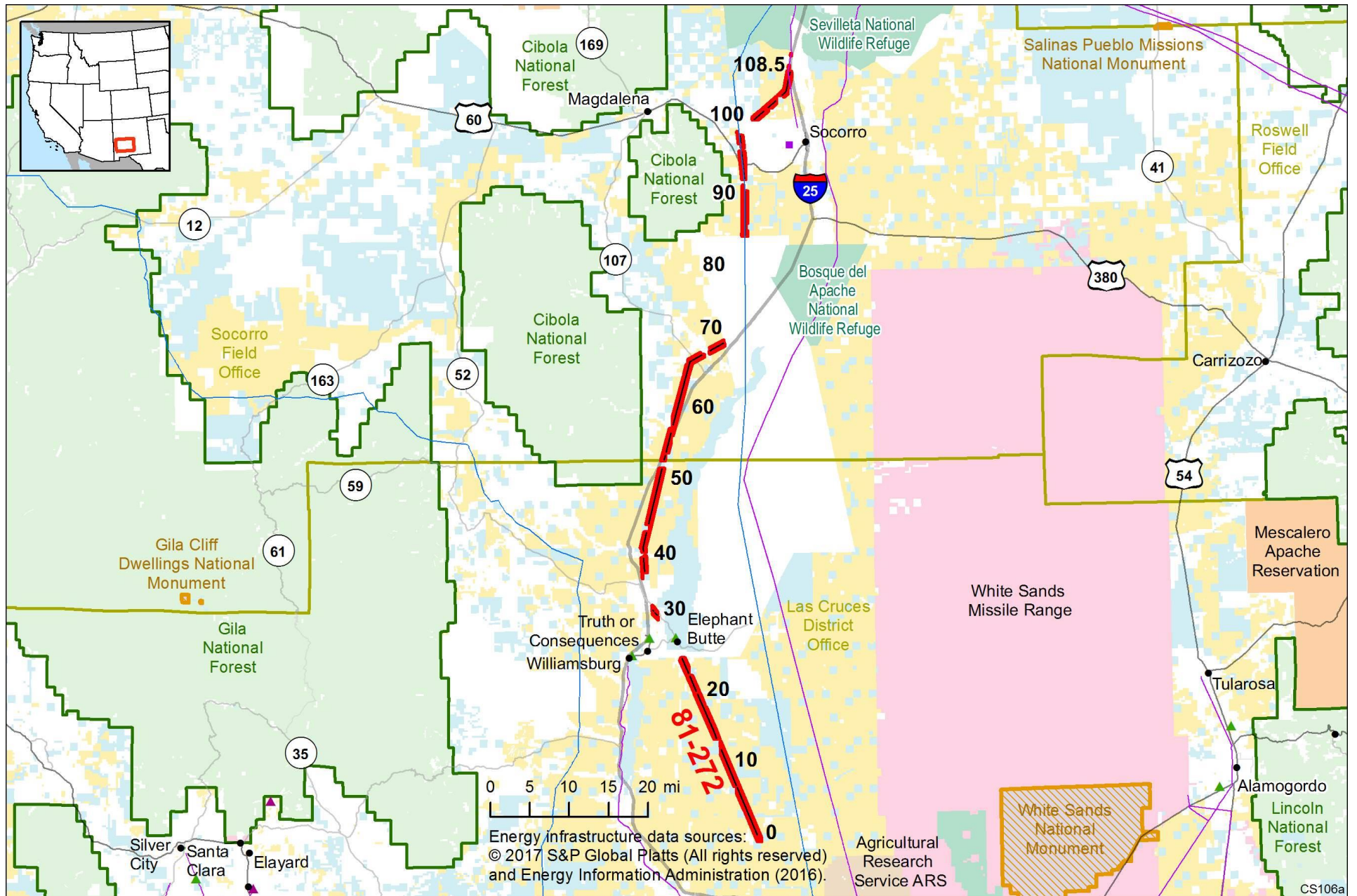


Figure 2. Corridor 81-272, Including Existing Energy Infrastructure

## Corridor Rationale

During scoping for the WWEC PEIS, routes generally following this corridor were suggested by Chevron and the Western Utility Group. The corridor was designated to provide a pathway for electrical energy transmission through this portion of central New Mexico.

*Existing Infrastructure:* Corridor 81-272 generally follows the Rio Grande, I-25, a railroad, and existing electric transmission infrastructure. The corridor follows a 115-kV electric transmission line operated by Tri-State G&T Association, Inc. (MP 0 to MP 59.7, MP 105.7 to MP 108.5) and a 345-kV transmission line operated by El Paso Electric Company (MP 74 to MP 98.1). There are 7 substations within 5 mi of the corridor, one power plant within a corridor gap, and one power plant within 2.6 miles of the corridor. No new development has occurred within the corridor since the corridor was designated in 2009.

*Potential for Future Development:* The Platts data indicate two planned 500-kV electric transmission lines-- the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project by Arizona Public Service Co. was authorized a ROW in September 2016 and the High Plains Express Transmission Project is proposed by Western Area Power Administration. These transmission lines generally follow the corridor from MP 39.2 to MP 99.8. During interviews for the corridor study, the BLM Las Cruces District Office indicated that the SunZia Project planned to use part of this corridor and that BLM recommended the use of Corridor 81-272 during pre-application meetings. Since the ROW was issued for the SunZia Southwest 500-kV transmission project, and it is likely that there will be no future need for additional transmission facilities in the corridor for the foreseeable future.. However, there may be a future need for additional pipelines coming from the Permian and San Juan basins towards California; there are no pending pipeline projects.

## Corridor of Concern Status

Corridor 81-272 is a corridor of concern. Concerns regarding Sevilleta NWR and NCAs were identified in the Settlement Agreement. These issues are highlighted in yellow in the Corridor Analysis table. There are no NCAs in close proximity to Corridor 81-272, so they are not identified in the analysis table below.

## Conflict Map Analysis

Figure 3 reflects a comprehensive resource conflict assessment to help the Agencies identify a corridor's proximity to environmentally sensitive areas. The potential conflict assessment (low, medium, high) shown in the figure is based on [criteria](#) found on the WWEC Information Center at [www.corridoreis.anl.gov](http://www.corridoreis.anl.gov). The conflict assessment criteria table was used to identify if the corridor meets the Settlement Agreement siting principles to provide maximum utility and minimum impact on the environment. This facilitates balance between resource protection and potential development. Where feasible, corridors should be sited in the areas of low conflict; however, to meet the requirements in the Energy Policy Act and the siting principles in the Settlement Agreement, corridors may be located in high potential conflict areas. Many energy corridors were designated in land use plans prior to being carried forward into Section 368 designation. In almost all instances, these existing corridors (pre-Section 368) contained existing infrastructure. Corridor 81-272 is mostly in areas of medium potential conflict however, the corridor crosses areas of high potential conflict between MP 0 to MP 2, MP 10 to MP 25, and MP 42 to MP 50. West of the corridor between MP 0 to MP 25 there are BLM-administered lands along I-25 that avoid high potential conflict areas and also contain existing infrastructure.



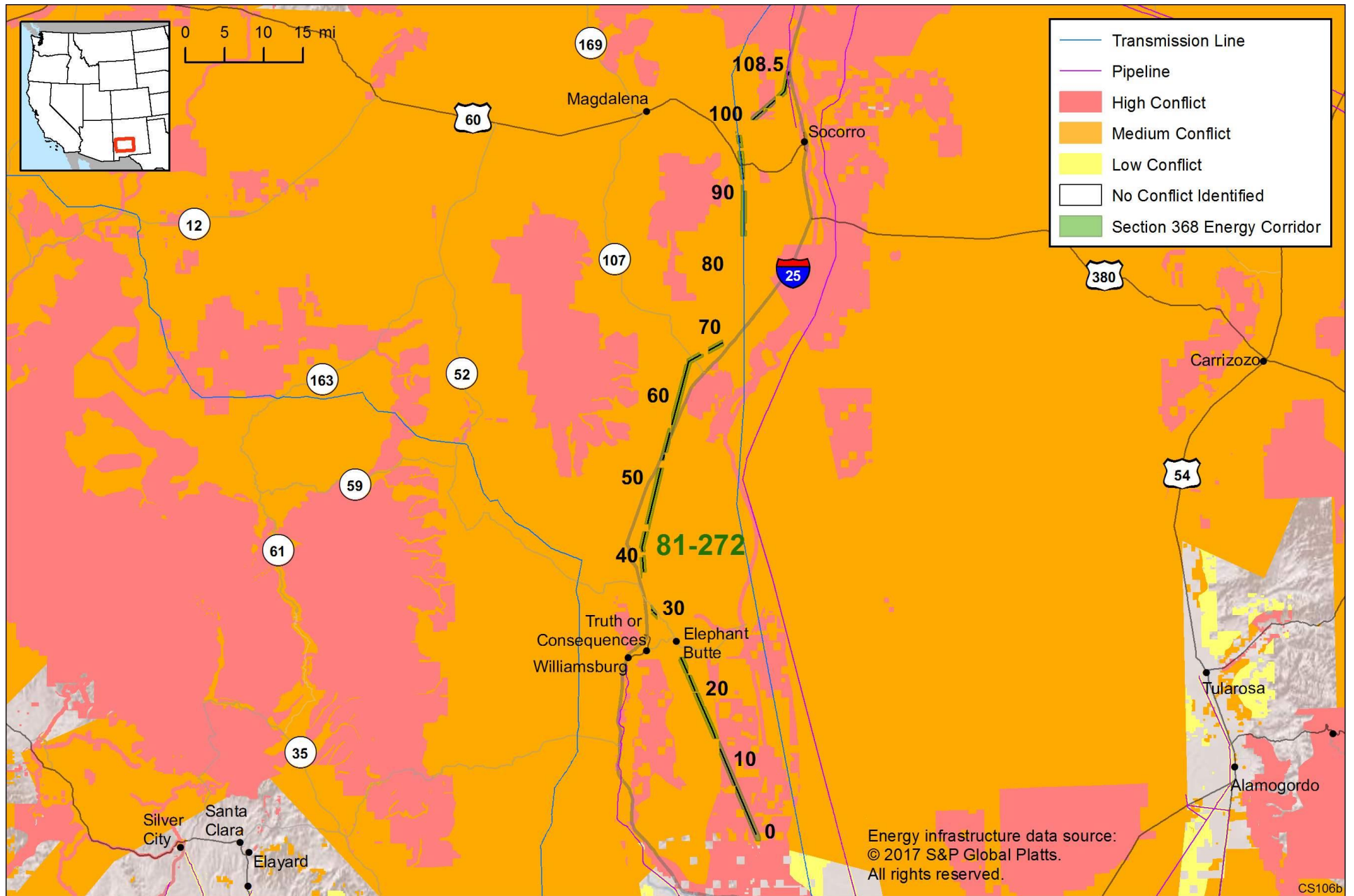


Figure 3. Mapping of Conflict Areas in Vicinity of Corridor 81-272

## Corridor Analysis

The corridor analysis table below identifies issues potentially affecting Corridor 81-272, locations of resources within the corridor, and the results of the analysis by the Agencies. Issues are checked below if they are known to apply to the corridor.

### ☒ Energy Planning Opportunities

#### ☒ Energy Planning Issues

- ☐ Physical barrier
- ☒ Jurisdiction
- ☒ Existing Infrastructure/ Available Space

### ☒ Land Management Responsibilities and Environmental Resource Issues

- ☐ Cultural resources
- ☒ Ecological resources
- ☒ Hydrological resources
- ☒ Lands and realty
- ☒ Lands with wilderness characteristics
- ☒ Livestock grazing

### ☒ Paleontology

- ☒ Public access and recreation
- ☐ Soils/erosion
- ☒ Specially designated areas
- ☐ Tribal concerns
- ☒ Visual resources

### ☒ Interagency Operating Procedures

**REGION 2 – CORRIDOR 81-272 – ANALYSIS TABLE**

ID	Agency	Agency Jurisdiction	County	Primary Issue	Corridor Location (by Milepost [MP])	Source	Agency Review and Analysis <sup>1</sup>
<b>ENERGY PLANNING OPPORTUNITIES</b>							
81-272 .001	NA	NMEMNRD/ BOR	Sierra, NM	Substations	MP 26.9 to MP 29.1	GIS Analysis: two substations located in corridor gaps. Five substations within 5 mi of corridor in vicinity of Truth or Consequences.	Nearby substations provide an opportunity for the corridor to accommodate additional transmission.
81-272 .002	NA	NMEMNRD/ BOR	Sierra, NM	Elephant Butte - hydroelectric – power plant	MP 28	GIS Analysis: Elephant Butte hydroelectric power plant is located in a corridor gap.	The power plant provides an opportunity for the corridor to accommodate additional transmission and renewable energy.
81-272 .003	NA	Private	Sierra, NM	Wal-Mart Truth or Consequences PV – solar energy power plant	MP 26	GIS Analysis: Truth or Consequences PV solar energy power plant is located 2.6 mi west of corridor.	The power plant provides an opportunity for the corridor to accommodate additional transmission and renewable energy.
<b>ENERGY PLANNING ISSUES</b>							
<b>Jurisdiction</b>							
81-272 .004	NA	State	Socorro and Sierra, NM	discontinuous sections of corridor	Entire corridor	GIS Analysis: State lands located in corridor gap.	BLM can only authorize projects on BLM-administered lands. Development in corridor gaps would require coordination outside of the Agencies.

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81-272 .005	NA	Private	Sierra, NM	Elephant Butte, NM	MP 30.2 to MP 31.5	GIS Analysis: community in a corridor gap.	BLM can only authorize projects on BLM-administered lands. Development in corridor gaps would require coordination outside of the Agencies.
81-272 .006	USFWS	Sevilleta NWR	Socorro, NM	Sevilleta NWR	MP 108.5	<p>Settlement Agreement; RFI: re-route to avoid the Sevilleta NWR.</p> <p>Agency Input: there is a 345-kV transmission line and highway through the NWR north of corridor but it is restricted, and no corridor can be designated north.</p> <p>GIS Analysis: the northernmost end of the corridor terminates 0.3 mi from the NWR.</p>	The corridor does not cross the Sevilleta NWR.
81-272 .007	DoD	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	DoD-administered lands north of White Sands Missile Range	Not specified.	Agency Input.	Management prescriptions would require early consultation and coordination with DoD to identify potential conflicts to military operations that may be affected by development in the corridor. Projects would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.
<b>Corridor Alignment and Spacing</b>							
81-272 .008	NA	NMEMNRD/ BOR	Sierra, NM	Existing transmission line	MP 28	GIS Analysis: transmission line enters corridor gap and terminates at substation.	Proposed project siting and colocation alternatives to address impacts would be analyzed during the ROW application process.
81-272 .009	BLM	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	Existing transmission line	MP 105.7 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: transmission line, pipeline, and corridor intersect at angles.	
81-272 .010	BLM	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	Existing transmission line	MP 94.9 to MP 95.2	GIS Analysis: transmission line and corridor intersect at angles.	
81-272 .011	BLM	Las Cruces DO and Socorro FO	Socorro and Sierra, NM	I-25	MP 33.4 to MP 35.8, MP 52 to MP 56.5, and MP 107.8 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: I-10 and corridor cross each other several times.	Generally does not affect the use of the corridor. Consistent with BLM ROW regulations, notification to adjacent ROW holders would be provided.

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81-272 .012	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	State Highway 195	MP 27.6 to MP 34.7	GIS Analysis: road runs parallel through corridor.	
81-272 .013	BLM	Las Cruces DO and Socorro FO	Socorro and Sierra, NM	State Highway 51, State Highway 107, and U.S. Highway 60	MP 26.5 to MP 28, MP 65.8 to MP 65.9, and MP 93.8 to MP 94	GIS Analysis: roads and corridor intersect.	
81-272 .014	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	Railroad	MP 2.5 to MP 3.2	GIS Analysis: railroad and corridor intersect.	
LAND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE ISSUES							
Ecology: Wildlife							
81-272 .015	BLM			Connectivity flowlines	Not specified.	RFI: re-route to avoid "Very High" risk to the number and magnitude of flowline crossings by WVEC segments. Where flowlines must unavoidably be crossed, minimize impacts to connectivity.	Not a corridor-level planning issue. Connectivity flowlines is not a BLM-recognized term, but impacts on habitat connectivity would be addressed at the project level and through management prescriptions in the RMP.
81-272 .016	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	Desert Bighorn Sheep Corridor	Not specified.	Agency Input: desert bighorn sheep wildlife corridor intersects the Section 368 energy corridor.	The species is no longer State-listed, but there is a conflict with the existing Socorro RMP, which has a requirement to “avoid the authorization of right-of-way and leases within the Desert Bighorn Sheep Corridor.”
Ecology: Special Status Animal Species							
81-272 .017	BLM	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher critical habitat (ESA-listed: endangered)	MP 106.1 to MP 108.5	RFI: consult with USFWS to avoid adverse modification to Southwestern Willow Flycatcher designated critical habitat within 1.2 mi.  GIS Analysis: critical habitat as close as 0.9 mi east of corridor.	It is unlikely that development within the corridor would impact critical habitat for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. However, consultation with the USFWS would still be required prior to authorizing development in the corridor.
81-272 .018	BLM	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	Yellow-billed Cuckoo critical habitat (ESA-listed: threatened)	MP 106.8 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: critical habitat as close as 1.1 mi east of corridor.	It is unlikely that development within the corridor would impact critical habitat for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. However, consultation with the USFWS would still be required prior to authorizing development in the corridor.



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ID	Agency	Agency Jurisdiction	County	Primary Issue	Corridor Location (by Milepost [MP])	Source	Agency Review and Analysis <sup>1</sup>
<b>Ecology: Vegetation</b>							
81-272 .019	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	Vegetative treatment area	MP 8.6 to MP 20.6, MP 36.4 to MP 38.8, MP 40.4 to MP 42.8, and MP 47.8 to MP 49.9	GIS Analysis: Treatment area intersects designated corridor	Generally does not affect use of the corridor and would be addressed at project level planning.
<b>Hydrology: Surface Water</b>							
81-272 .020	BOR	NMEMNRD/ BOR	Sierra, NM	Elephant Butte Reservoir	MP 27.2 to MP 30	GIS Analysis: reservoir is in a corridor gap.	BLM can only authorize projects on BLM-administered lands. Development in corridor gaps would require coordination outside of the Agencies.
81-272 .021	BOR	BOR	Sierra, NM	Elephant Butte Dam	MP 28	GIS Analysis: dam is in a corridor gap.	BLM can only authorize projects on BLM-administered lands. Development in corridor gaps would require coordination outside of the Agencies.
81-272 .022	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	Rio Grande	MP 28.1	GIS Analysis: river and corridor gap intersect.	Not a consideration for corridor-level planning. Linear ROWs can either span rivers or be buried underneath them.
81-272 .023	BLM	Las Cruces DO and Socorro FO	Sierra and Socorro, NM	Five intermittent stream crossings: Alamosa Creek, San Jose Arroyo, Nogal Canyon, Milligan Gulch, and Ryan Hill Canyon	MP 39.7, MP 50.8, MP 56.2 to MP 56.5, MP 67.6, and MP 82.2	GIS Analysis: intermittent streams and corridor intersect.	Not a consideration for corridor-level planning. Linear ROWs can either span intermittent streams or be buried underneath them.
<b>Lands and Realty: Rights-of-Way and General Land Use</b>							
81-272 .024	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	Proposed and/or pending projects	Not specified.	Agency Input authorized project uses the corridor.	The corridor conforms to the White Sands RMP to promote the maximum utilization of existing ROWs, including joint use whenever possible. Consistent with BLM ROW regulations, notification to adjacent ROW holders would be provided.
81-272 .025	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	ROW Avoidance	MP 0 to MP 12.7 and MP 19.1 to MP 25.3	GIS Analysis: ROW Avoidance area intersects corridor.	Future development of corridor may conflict with existing White Sands RMP. Avoidance areas are those where future rights-of-way may be granted only when no feasible alternative route or designated ROW

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ID	Agency	Agency Jurisdiction	County	Primary Issue	Corridor Location (by Milepost [MP])	Source	Agency Review and Analysis <sup>1</sup>
							corridor is available. Special terms and conditions may be required.
<b>Lands and Realty: Military and Civilian Aviation</b>							
81-272 .026	BLM	Las Cruces DO and Socorro FO	Socorro and Sierra, NM	Military Training Route – VR	MP 2.2 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: VR and corridor intersect.	Adherence to IOP 1 under Project Planning in the WVEC PEIS RODs regarding coordination with DoD would be required.
81-272 .027	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	DoD Special Use Airspace - Restricted Area	MP 0 to MP 26.8	GIS Analysis: restricted area and corridor intersect.	Adherence to IOP 1 under Project Planning in the WVEC PEIS RODs regarding coordination with DoD would be required.
<b>Lands with Wilderness Characteristics</b>							
81-272 .028	BLM			Citizens' Proposed Wilderness	Not specified.	RFI: Chupadera Wilderness Addition, Magdalena Mountains 1, Magdalena Mountains 2, Organ Foothills, Point of Rocks, Polvadera Mountain	This citizens' proposed wilderness is not in the RMP management prescriptions and is therefore not a consideration at the time of this review.
81-272 .029	BLM	Las Cruces DO	Sierra, NM	Lands with wilderness characteristics	MP 0 to MP 3	Agency Input: BLM wilderness characteristic unit: NM-030-094a	Future development in this corridor may affect the wilderness characteristics of this unit.  Management decisions for lands with wilderness characteristics are made through a land use planning effort. Lands with wilderness characteristics in Sierra, Otero, and Dona Ana Counties are being evaluated in the Tri-County RMP which is currently in draft.
<b>Paleontological Resources</b>							
81-272 .030	BLM	Las Cruces DO, Socorro FO	Sierra and Socorro, NM	Paleontological resources	MP 0 to MP 2, MP 5 to MP 14.5, MP 15 to M 16.1, MP 17 to MP 20.2, MP 31.6 to MP 39.5, MP 40.7 to MP 56, MP 56.6 to MP 90.5, MP 93.5 to MP 104, and MP 106 to MP 106.2	Agency Input: approximately 90% of the corridor within Socorro FO is in PFYC Class 4 indicating a high potential for occurrence of important fossil resources.  GIS Analysis: PFYC areas intersect designated corridor.	Not a consideration for corridor-level planning. Issues will be addressed during the ROW application review process. Portions of corridor in PFYC Class 4-5 will require surveys. Proposed ground disturbing activities will require assessments, possible mitigation, and or monitoring depending on findings as part of the ROW application process.

## REGION 2 – CORRIDOR 81-272 – ANALYSIS TABLE

ID	Agency	Agency Jurisdiction	County	Primary Issue	Corridor Location (by Milepost [MP])	Source	Agency Review and Analysis <sup>1</sup>
<b>Public Access and Recreation</b>							
81-272 .031	NA	NMEMNRD	Socorro and Sierra, NM	Elephant Butte Lake State Park	MP 24.8 to MP 73	GIS Analysis: the Park runs parallel to corridor between MP 32 and MP 73. The corridor crosses the Park in a corridor gap between MP 26 and MP 30.	BLM can only authorize projects on BLM-administered lands. Development in corridor gaps would require coordination outside of the Agencies.
<b>Specially Designated Areas</b>							
81-272 .032	BLM	NMDOT	Socorro and Sierra, NM	Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway	MP 28 to MP 34.7	GIS Analysis: Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway intersects and is adjacent to corridor.	The Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway is administered by NMDOT, and future development in the corridor would require coordination with this agency.
81-272 .033	BLM	NMDOT	Socorro and Sierra, NM	El Camino Real National Scenic Byway	Intersects: MP 33 to MP 34.6, MP 54.9 to MP 56.4, and MP 59.2 to MP 60.4  Runs parallel: MP 34.6 to MP 54.9, MP 56.4 to MP 59.2, MP 60.4 to MP 72.9, and MP 105.3 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: El Camino Real Scenic Byway intersects and runs parallel to corridor as close as 0.5 miles	The El Camino Real National Scenic Byway is administered by NMDOT, and future development in the corridor would require coordination with this agency.
81-272 .034	BLM	Las Cruces DO and Socorro FO	Sierra and Socorro, NM	El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail	MP 2 to MP 3 and MP 107.8 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: NHT and corridor intersect.	There may be an opportunity to review the corridor to avoid the conflict with the trail. The White Sands RMP is amended by the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHTCMP (2004), which states major transmission (outside existing corridors) would be avoided within 5 miles of the trail. This corridor may conflict with the NHTCMP because it was designated after the NHTCMP.  Point of Rocks and Jordana del Muerto both are High Potential resources for the Trail. Currently, there is a single 365-kV line, and new development within the corridor would pose additional impacts.

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							<p>The trail is a Congressionally designated trail. Adherence to IOPs would be required. Through project-specific environmental reviews, impacts would be analyzed in relation to any other alternatives that would be identified.</p> <p>The Agencies have identified the need for a new IOP to address development in Section 368 energy corridors while protecting values in Congressionally designated NHTs.</p>
81-272 .035	BLM	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	Ladron Mountain - Devil's Backbone Complex ACEC	MP 100.4 to MP 104.2	GIS Analysis: ACEC and corridor intersect.	There is a conflict with the existing Socorro RMP, which has a requirement to "exclude the authorization of right-of-way and leases within the ACEC."
<b>Visual Resources</b>							
81-272 .036	BLM	Socorro FO	Socorro, NM	VRM Class I	MP 61.6 to MP 64.8	GIS Analysis: VRM Class I areas are as close as 1.2 mi east of corridor.	In the Socorro RMP, VRM Class I areas are identified as exclusion areas; however, the corridor is not located within Class I areas.
81-272 .037	BLM	Las Cruces DO, Socorro FO	Sierra and Socorro, NM	VRM Class II	MP 0 to MP 13.7 and MP 100.3 to MP 104.5	GIS Analysis: VRM Class II areas and corridor intersect.	The El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHTCMP designated areas on BLM-administered lands that are visible within approximately 5 miles of high-potential sites and segments, and also in relatively undisturbed areas, as VRM Class II areas. In the Socorro RMP, VRM Class II areas are designated as avoidance areas. Avoidance areas in the Socorro FO do not allow power lines larger than 14 kV or new roads wider than 14 feet of driving surface and would require an RMP amendment for development outside of these parameters. This is an opportunity to review corridor placement to avoid conflict with VRM



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ID	Agency	Agency Jurisdiction	County	Primary Issue	Corridor Location (by Milepost [MP])	Source	Agency Review and Analysis <sup>1</sup>
							Class II areas associated with the NHT, possibly following the existing I-25 corridor.
81-272 .038	BLM	Las Cruces DO, Socorro FO	Sierra and Socorro, NM	VRM Class III	<p>MP 14.2 to MP 25.3, MP 31.5 to MP 32.9, MP 36.9 to MP 41.5, MP 43.8 to MP 51.1, MP 89.3 to MP 93.3</p> <p>MP 31.2 to MP 32.3</p> <p>MP 37.3 to MP 41</p>	<p>GIS Analysis: VRM Class III areas and corridor intersect.</p> <p>Agency Input: corridor in VRM Class III area and crosses Highway 195, the El Camino Real National Scenic Byway, and other high volume local roads, near many other roadways outside of the corridor and adjacent to residential area.</p> <p>Agency Input: corridor is within a VRM Class III area crossing Rock Canyon Road and within ½ mile and more to Interstate 25 and the El Camino Real National Scenic Byway increasing potential conflict with the VRM class objective.</p>	VRM Class III allows for moderate change to the characteristic landscape, although minimizing visual contrast remains a requirement. Management activities may attract the attention of the casual observer, but shall not dominate the view.
81-272 .039	BLM	Socorro FO and Las Cruces DO	Sierra and Socorro, NM	VRM Class IV	MP 11.5 to MP 12.6, MP 41.3 to MP 100.5, and MP 103.9 to MP 108.5	GIS Analysis: VRM Class IV areas intersect the corridor.	Corridor meets Settlement Agreement general principles for corridor siting for minimum impact on the environment in terms of visual resources. VRM Class IV objectives allow for major modification to occur and management activities may dominate the view, although minimizing visual contrast remains a requirement.

<sup>1</sup> Impacts would be analyzed and mitigated as part of the project-specific environmental review required under the ROW application process.

## Abstract Acronyms and Abbreviations

Abbreviations: ACEC = Area of Critical Environmental Concern; BLM = Bureau of Land Management; BOR = Bureau of Reclamation; DO = District Office; DoD = Department of Defense; FO = Field Office; GIS = geographic information system; IOP = Interagency Operating Procedures; MP = milepost; MS = Manual Section; NA = not applicable; NCA = National Conservation Area; NHT = National Historic Trail; NHTCMP = National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan; NMDOT = New Mexico Department of Transportation; NMEMNRD = New Mexico Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department; NPS = National Park Service; NSO = no surface occupancy; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; PEIS = Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement; PFYC = Potential Fossil Yield Classification; RFI = Request for Information; ROD = Record of Decision; ROW = right-of-way; USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; VR = Visual Route; VRI = Visual Resource Inventory; VRM = Visual Resource Management; WWEC = West-wide Energy Corridor.