APPENDIX A. AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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APPENDIX A. AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This appendix lists permits, licenses, consultations, or approvals that could be required from federal, state, and local agencies before construction of the North Plains Connector Project (Project) could commence and dates of consultation or application if they have occurred.

A.1. FEDERAL AGENCIES AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

The federal environmental authorizations and consultations listed in Table A.1-1 could be required for the Project. Additionally, government-to-government consultation between federal agencies and any potentially affected American Indian tribe[1] is required. The Department of Energy, Grid Deployment Office sent Section 106 consultation invitations to the tribal governments listed below via email (February 7, 2025) and mail (February 10, 2025):

- Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana
- Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana
- Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of the Cheyenne River Reservation, South Dakota
- Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation, Montana
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation
- Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of the Crow Creek Reservation, South Dakota
- Crow Tribe of Montana
- Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe of South Dakota
- Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana
- Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana
- Lower Brule Sioux Tribe of the Lower Brule Reservation, South Dakota
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe of the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Montana
- Oglala Sioux Tribe
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe of the Rosebud Indian Reservation, South Dakota
- Santee Sioux Nation, Nebraska
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation, South Dakota
- Spirit Lake Tribe, North Dakota
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North & South Dakota
- Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation)
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota
- Yankton Sioux Tribe of South Dakota

[1] The term "Indian tribe" means any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe. (25 USC § 5130)

Table A.1-1
Federal Agencies—Potential Requirements

Agency	Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Submittal or Consultation Date [a]
U.S. Department of Energy (Lead Federal Agency)	National Environmental Policy Act Review (42 USC § 4332(2))	August 2024
	Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Grant	
	Section 106 consultation with Indian tribes	February 2025
U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Cooperating Agency)	Special Use Permit (36 CFR § 251 Subpart B)	September 2024
	Applicant-Prepared Biological Evaluation (FSM 2672.41)	
U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (Cooperating Agency)	ROW grant and short-term ROW grant, under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (43 USC §§ 1761–1771)	September 2024
	Mineral material sales contract (43 CFR § 3600)	
U.S Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (Cooperating Agency)	Revokable ROW Permit/Easement (43 USC §§ 1761–1771)	September 2024
U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Endangered Species Act Consultation (16 USC § 1536 7(a)(2))	
	Biological Assessment / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Issues Biological Opinion (16 USC § 1536 7(b)(3))	
	Non-Purposeful Take Permit for Bald/Golden Eagles under Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (50 CFR § 22.26)	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Omaha District	Clean Water Act, Section 404 Permit (33 CFR § 1344)	
Federal Aviation Administration	Notice of Construction or Alteration (14 CFR Part 77)	At least 45 days prior to construction
Federal Highway Administration	Permits to cross Federal Aid Highway (Interstate 94) (23 USC § 111)	
U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
Bonneville Power Administration	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021

Agency	Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Submittal or Consultation Date [a]
Western Area Power Administration	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021

BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CFR = Code of Federal Regulations; FSM = Forest Service Manual; Proponent = North Plains Connector LLC (a Grid United LLC Company); ROW = right-of-way; USC = United States Code

Notes:

[a] Blank cells in this column indicate that the applicable permit, approval, or consultation has not yet begun at the time of this document publication.

A.1.1. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service

The High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Transmission Line portion of the proposed Project would cross the Little Missouri National Grassland (LMNG) in western North Dakota. The LMNG is part of the Dakota Prairie Grasslands (DPG)—a National Forest unit consisting entirely of National Grasslands—and is comprised of 1,033,271 acres, making it the largest grassland in the country (USDA Forest Service Undated).

In accordance with the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA; United States Code, Title 16, Section 1600 [16 USC § 1600 *et seq*.]), along with its implementing regulations under the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Section 219 (36 CFR § 219) and the guidance provided in the USDA Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2670.22, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service focus for meeting requirements of NFMA and its implementing regulations is on assessing habitat to provide for a diversity of species.

The Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the DPG Northern Region (USDA Forest Service 2001) was approved in 2001. The 2001 LRMP and signed amendments since that date represent the LRMP required by NFMA for the proposed Project. The LRMP sets forth Grassland-wide, resource-specific direction (desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines) for managing the DPG. The LRMP also subdivides the DPG into Geographic Areas and Management Areas, each with different land plan allocation area-based goals and appropriate management practices, standards, and guidelines. The proposed Project area falls within Management Area 3.65 (Rangelands with Diverse Natural-Appearing Landscapes) of the Badlands Geographic Area and Management Area 6.1 (Rangeland with Broad Resource Emphasis) of the Rolling Prairie Geographic Area. See Section 3.8, Land Use and Recreation, of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for more discussion about these Management Areas. NFMA also requires that projects and activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands be consistent with the governing LRMP (16 USC § 1604(i)). Compliance with the LRMP requires adherence to all other relevant federal and state regulations, including but not limited to the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Clean Water Act. The LRMP requires all actions and projects to be consistent with the Secretary of Agriculture regulations (36 CFR § 219), which are based on the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, as amended by the NFMA. By using both management acts,

it is expected that all applicable requirements will be met. The proposed Project is compliant with the LRMP, and no plan amendment is anticipated.

Additionally, the portions of the proposed Project crossing NFS lands are required to maintain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species and avoid activities that could lead to species becoming threatened or endangered. The proposed Project would occur on both private and NFS lands; only actions on federal lands need to comply with the LRMP.

The LMNG also manages scenic resources through the Scenery Management System as outlined in the LRMP. The LRMP Standard and Guidelines, applicable to all lands, state that activities should be managed consistent with the scenic integrity objectives for specific Management Areas. Management applies only to the area within the Management Area boundary.

This Draft EIS analyzes information provided by North Plains Connector LLC (the Proponent—a Grid United LLC Company) on the proposed Project's potential impacts on these lands, which serves as the USDA Forest Service's analysis of the Project. In addition, the USDA Forest Service will review an Applicant-Prepared Biological Evaluation and Special Use Permit application.

Dakota Prairie Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan Compliance

The DPG LRMP (USDA Forest Service 2001) provides direction for the entire DPG, individual geographic areas within the DPG, and Management Areas within each Geographic Area. Grassland-wide direction includes national and regional goals, as well as grassland-wide goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines. Management directions for the geographic areas are too specific to apply for the entire grassland. The management direction for each Geographic Area is applied in addition to the grassland-wide direction and the direction for the individual Management Areas within the geographic areas. Management Areas are defined areas of the grassland managed for a particular purpose.

The Badlands Geographic Area is comprised of approximately 573,700 acres of land within the LMNG, divided between the McKenzie Ranger District (approximately 189,900 acres) and the Medora Ranger District (383,800 acres). The LRMP notes that the focus in the Badlands Geographic Area is on grass and grass-like life forms.

The Rolling Prairie Geographic Area is comprised of approximately 454,600 acres of land within the LMNG, also divided between the McKenzie Ranger District (approximately 311,000 acres) and the Medora Ranger District (approximately 141,600 acres). The desired landscape of the Rolling Prairie Geographic Area is to maintain the scenic nature, while perpetuating diverse and healthy mixed grass and short grass communities.

Management Areas within the DPG include small points, linear paths, or large or small parcels. Each Management Area includes a prescription outlining the desired conditions and applicable standards and guidelines. Prescriptions are organized into six major categories, ranging from least evidence of disturbance to most evidence of disturbance. For example, Management Area 1.2a, Suitable Wilderness, would have the least number of facilities and Management Area 6.1, Rangeland with Broad Resource Emphasis, would have the greatest evidence of facilities such as roads, oil wells, pipelines, etc. Table A.1-2 details the applicable standards and guidelines for

the proposed Project, organized by grassland-wide standards and guidelines, and the two Management Areas.

Table A.1-2
Applicable Standards and Guidelines

Resource Area	Standards / Guidelines
Grassland-Wide	
Air Resources	1. Conduct all land management activities in such a manner as to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local air-quality standards and regulations: Federal Clean Air Act, as amended, 1990 (42 USC 7401–7671); North Dakota Air Pollution Control Law, (33-15-02); and South Dakota Air Pollution Control Program (Title 74, #36). **(standard)**
	2. Ensure emissions from projects on the grassland management activities are within Class I or Class II ranges (See LRMP, Appendix A regarding Class 1 Areas). **(standard)**
Water Resources	1. Manage land treatments to conserve site moisture and to protect long-term stream, wetland, and riparian area health from damage by increased runoff. **(standard)**
	2. Allow only those actions next to perennial and intermittent streams, seeps, springs, lakes, and wetlands that maintain or improve long-term proper functioning of riparian ecosystem conditions. **(standard)**
	3. Design activities to protect and manage the riparian ecosystem. Maintain the integrity of the ecosystem, including quantity and quality of surface and ground water. **(standard)**
	4. Maintain and protect the hydrologic regime that supplies ground water to the wetlands so as to support species and habitat dependent on the existing water table and its natural variations. **(standard)**
	5. To provide protection riparian areas, locate activities and facilities away from the water's edge or outside the riparian areas, woody draws, wetlands, and floodplains unless alternatives have been assessed and determined to be more environmentally damaging. **(guideline)**
	6. Do not deposit waste material (silt, sand, gravel, soil, slash, debris, chemicals, or other material) below high water lines, in riparian areas, in areas immediately adjacent to riparian areas, or in natural drainage-ways. In addition: do not deposit foreign material or agricultural waste in natural drainage-ways; locate the lower edge of disturbed or deposited soil banks outside the active floodplain; prohibit stockpiling of topsoil or any other disturbed soil in the active floodplain; do not allow new rods to parallel streams when road location must occur in riparian areas except where absolutely necessary - located crossing at points of low bank slope and firm surfaces. **(guideline)**
	7. Design and construct all stream crossing and other in-stream structures to provide for sufficient passage of flow and sediment, withstand expected flood flows, and allow free movement of aquatic life. **(standard)**

Resource Area	Standards / Guidelines
Water Resources (cont.)	8. Maintain long-term ground cover, soil structure, water budgets, and flow patterns of wetlands to sustain their ecological function and meet regulations found in Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act. The 404 regulations were established by the [US]EPA and constitute the substantive environmental criteria used in evaluating activities - design projects to minimize sediment discharge into streams, lakes, and wetlands; apply chemicals in a way that minimizes contamination risk to surface and ground water; protect seeps, springs, wetlands, and riparian ecosystems. **(standard)**
	9. Cross streams at right angles during construction of new roads. **(guideline)**
	12. Immediately initiate hazardous material cleanup on identified sites. **(standard)**
Soils	1. Keep ground disturbances to a minimum when constructing roads and other facilities. Ensure road length and road width fit the purpose and are compatible with local topography. **(guideline)**
	2. Stabilize and maintain roads and other facilities sites during and after construction to minimize erosion. **(standard)**
	3. Reclaim roads and other structures when use ends to prevent resource damage. **(guideline)**
	4. Prohibit soil-disturbing activities (road construction) on slopes greater than 40% and on soils susceptible to mass failure, unless the alternative causes more environmental damage. **(guideline)**
Paleontological Resources	3. Prior to ground-disturbing, conduct paleontological surveys in any area where there is a high potential to encounter these resources according to the process outlined in the LRMP, Appendix J. **(standard)**
Fish, Wildlife, and Rare Plants	4. Delay mowing of grassland until July 15 or later to protect ground-nesting birds, including their nests and young broods. Project-level analyses will determine the earliest mowing date. **(guideline)**
	10. Protect standing dead trees that are 10 inches (diameter at breast height) or more for cavity-dependent species. This guideline does not apply in areas where tree presence would be detrimental to grassland wildlife or public safety. **(guideline)**
	11. Protect mapped pronghorn winter habitat from disturbance, January 1 through March 31. **(guideline)**
	12.Protect bighorn sheep lambing areas from activities and land use disturbances if adverse impacts to the survival or reproductive success of bighorn sheep or abandonment of the lambing area are likely. **(standard)**
	14. Limit construction or placement of non-oil and gas structures or facilities within 1/4 mile of an active prairie grouse display ground (leks) if structures are likely to adversely affect reproductive success of these species. Project-level analysis should consider the type, source, frequency, and duration of the potential disruption, as well as the affected species and presence of screening vegetation or topography. **(guideline)**

Resource Area	Standards / Guidelines
Fish, Wildlife, and Rare Plants (cont.)	15. Limit activities within 1.0 miles of sharp-tailed grouse display grounds and 2.0 miles from active sage grouse display grounds from March 1 to June 15 if they are likely to adversely affect the reproductive success of these species. Project-level analysis should consider the type, source, frequency, and duration of the potential disruption, as well as the affected species and presence of screening vegetation or topography. **(guideline)**
	16. Manage prairie grouse display ground viewing activities to reduce disturbances and adverse impacts to the birds on the display grounds. **(guideline)**
	17. Emphasize quality nesting and brooding habitat, consistent with Geographic Area objectives within 1.0 mile of active sharp-tailed grouse display grounds and 3.0 miles of active sage grouse display grounds. Consult Appendix H [of the LRMP] for a description of quality habitat for prairie grouse. **(guideline)**
	18. Manage for late seral condition sagebrush in selected sagebrush stands to provide quality wintering habitat for sage grouse (see LRMP, Appendix H). **(guideline)**
	19. Manage wet and sub-irrigated meadows, seeps, riparian habitat, and other wetland areas that occur in or adjacent to sage grouse habitat as key foraging areas during the spring, summer, and fall. **(guideline)**
	29. Avoid placing new facilities, roads, trails, fences, salting and mineral areas, and other developments such as water tanks and impoundments, in habitat occupied by sensitive plant species. **(guideline)**
	30. Identify sensitive plant habitat and rare plant communities as priorities for noxious weed and invasive plant monitoring and control. **(guideline)**
	31. Avoid use of noxious weed and invasive plant control methods that may negatively impact sensitive plants. **(guideline)**
	33. Do not authorize vegetation management and construction projects that would further isolate or prevent re-colonization of sensitive plant and animal populations from adjacent populations. **(guideline)**
	36. Ensure that management actions do not contribute to the loss of population viability for [USDA] Forest Service sensitive plant species. **(standard)**
	37. Protect known sensitive plant populations from land use activities that cause increased trampling or soil compaction within key habitat. **(guideline)**
	41.Design vegetation management activities (e.g., prescribed burning, mowing, grasshopper spraying, livestock grazing) and pesticide application projects in known habitats of sensitive butterfly and skipper species to reduce mortality and to maintain or enhance nectar and larvae host plant species. **(guideline)**
	56. Restrict activities (i.e. construction and reclamation) within the minimum distances of active raptor nests and winter roost sites during the periods specified in the table on pg. 1-17 (Column 3), if such activities are likely to adversely affect raptor reproductive success or degrade winter roost quality. The buffers may be modified or determined unnecessary during project-level analysis. Project-level analysis should consider the type, source, frequency, and duration of the potential disruption, as well as the affected species, and presence of screening vegetation or topography when evaluating the disturbance. **(guideline)**

Resource Area	Standards / Guidelines
Noxious Weeds and Invasive Species	1. Manage invasive plant species using integrated management techniques, including mechanical, chemical, and biological control methods. **(guideline)**
	2. To prevent the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plant species, include necessary provisions in contracts and permits for use of the National Grasslands and its resources. **(standard)**
	4. Contain and control infestation based on the following: rate of species spread; invasions within special Management Areas such as RNAs, Wildernesses, activity corridors, and high use areas; probability of successful treatment in meeting desired conditions; prevent the introduction of new invasive species; conduct early treatment of new infestations. **(guideline)**
	5. Once appropriate consultation with state agencies has taken place, allow only certified noxious weed seed-free products for recreational animal feed or re-vegetation projects. This includes use of certified hay or straw, and heat-treated, or other appropriately processed products. **(standard)**
	6. Where technically and economically feasible, use genetically local (at the ecological subsection level) native plant species in re-vegetation efforts. To prevent soil erosion, nonnative annuals or sterile perennial species may be used while native perennials are becoming established. **(guideline)**
	10. Prohibit pesticide use where it would have adverse effects on species at risk. **(guideline)**
Scenery Management	1. Manage activities to be consistent with the scenic integrity objectives as referenced by the Adopted Scenic Integrity Objective map in Chapter 2 of the Grassland Plan. **(guideline)**
Heritage Resources	1. Consult with designated representatives of federally recognized American Indian tribes during design of projects with potential to affect cultural rights and practices to help ensure protection, preservation, and use of areas that culturally important to them. **(standard)**
	3. Leave human remains undisturbed. In case of accidental disturbance take steps outlined in the LRMP, Appendix M. **(standard)**
	4. Prohibit disturbance of heritage resources by management activities or vandalism through project design, specified protection measures, monitoring, and coordination. **(standard)**
Special Grassland Products	4. Protect the distribution and species viability of plants associated with medicinal and traditional cultural values. **(guideline)**
	5. Protect American Indian tradition collecting areas for religious purposes. **(guideline)**
Special Uses	1. Permit utility companies to construct new utility corridors, unless prohibited by management direction provided in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the LRMP. **(guideline)**
	2. Consolidate utility lines within existing corridors or in areas adjacent to roads wherever possible. **(guideline)**

Resource Area	Standards / Guidelines
Special Uses (cont.)	4. Unless information indicates that other activities will not degrade the special resources of the area, do not locate new utility corridors in Experimental Forests; developed recreation sites; and areas of significant paleontological, archeological, and/or historical resources. **(guideline)**
	6. Route new roads, pipelines, gathering lines, and technically required overhead powerlines in a manner as to minimize visual impacts and conform to approved corridors. When these facilities leave corridors, they should be subordinate to the landscape (see LRMP Scenic Integrity Glossary). **(guideline)**
	7. Design and construct power lines to minimize the risk of raptor electrocution. **(standard)**
	8. Design night lighting to minimize light pollution. Limit continuous or dusk-to-dawn lighting at facilities. Exceptions may be made for the lighting of towers or lines to facilitate flight safety, and staffed, around-the-clock operations. **(guideline)**
	11. Require a special use road permit for motorized access to private land where access for the general public is not available. **(guideline)**
Infrastructure Use and Management	1. Allow wheeled motorized vehicle use on existing roads and trails only, except where motorized use is specifically prohibited by site-specific decisions or in Management Area direction, or where site-specific decisions allow for off-highway use. **(standard)**
Management Area - 3.65 Rangelands with Diverse Natural-Appearing Landscapes	
Minerals and Energy	1. Honor all valid existing oil and gas leases. **(standard)**
	2. Allow oil and gas leasing development. **(guideline)**
	3. Allow removal of mineral materials. **(guideline)**
Special Uses	1. Locate new utilities along road corridors or within other areas already disturbed. **(guideline)**
Management Area - 6.1 Rangeland with Broad Resource Emphasis	
General	1. Landscape fragmentation from road construction will be discouraged. However, valid existing rights will be honored when development is proposed. **(guideline)**
	2. Management activities that contribute to the loss of ecological integrity will be discouraged. **(guideline)**
Minerals and Energy	1. Allow oil and gas leasing development **(guideline)**
	2. Allow removal of mineral materials **(guideline)**

Source: USDA Forest Service 2001

LRMP = Land and Resource Management Plan; RNA = Research Natural Area; USC = United States Code; USEPA = U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

A.1.2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service

While reviewing the easement access, the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) also needs to review relevant management plans to evaluate the impacts on ARS-managed lands. As a part of the Construction, Mitigation, and Reclamation Plan (included as Appendix E of this EIS), the

Agricultural Impact and Mitigation Plan has been developed for the proposed Project crossings of the USDA ARS Fort Keogh site to describe avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to address potential damage to drain tile/lines, interference with irrigation systems, segregation of topsoil, soil decompaction, fence repair, livestock management, stone removal, and special mitigation where crossing or adjacent to specialty practices such as organic farms or apiaries.

A.1.3. Bureau of Land Management

The proposed Project would cross Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in Montana managed by the Miles City Field Office and their 2015 approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 2015) and in North Dakota managed by the North Dakota Field Office and their 1988 approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 1988). In addition to managing land development activities for vast resources of oil, gas, and coal deposits in the area, and in accordance with Code of Federal Regulations, Title 43, *et seq.*, the Resource Management Plan also establishes goals, objectives, and management decisions for wildlife habitat, rangelands for grazing, recreational activities, and other resources.

A.1.3.1. Applicable Resource Management Plan Guidance

Table A.1-3 shows the goals, objectives, and management decisions as selected in the 2015 Miles City Approved Resource Management Plan, as amended (BLM 2015). These apply only to BLM-managed lands in the Miles City Field Office.

Table A.1-3
Miles City Resource Management Plan Guidance

Resource Area	Goal / Objective / Management Decision [a]
Air Quality (AQ)	Goal AQ 1: Maintain or enhance air quality and air quality related values (AQRVs) in the planning area and at sensitive areas (e.g., Class I areas) in and near the planning area.
	MD AQ-1: Air resource and climate change monitoring will be conducted as described in Appendix M, Monitoring, and in Appendix I, Air Resources and Climate.
	MD AQ-2: Emission reduction mitigation measures and conservation actions will be considered during project-level planning.
Cultural Resources (CR)	Goal CR 1: Identify, preserve, and protect significant cultural resources on BLM-administered lands.
	Goal CR 2: Ensure cultural resources are available to present and future generations for appropriate uses such as scientific studies, public education and traditional cultural values.
	MD CR 1: Surface-disturbing activities are allowed in significant cultural sites as long as the activities will not have an adverse effect.
Fish, Aquatic, and Wildlife Habitat (WF)	Goal WF 1: Provide habitats for well-distributed and diverse fish and wildlife.

Resource Area	Goal / Objective / Management Decision [a]
Fish, Aquatic, and Wildlife Habitat (WF) (cont.)	Goal WF 2: Maintain, enhance, or restore habitats for special status fish and wildlife species to ensure BLM actions do not contribute to the need to list these species.
	Objective WF 1: Maintain or enhance plant communities and habitat needed to maintain or restore fish, aquatic or wildlife populations.
	Objective WF 2: Provide sufficient habitat for native wildlife species in order to support viable native wildlife populations.
	Objective WF 5: Minimize fragmentation of large intact blocks of important wildlife habitat, particularly habitat areas for GRSG and grassland birds.
	Objective WF 6: Maintain, improve and increase sagebrush habitats to sustain sagebrush obligates and other sagebrush dependent species.
	Objective WF 7: Maintain or reestablish connectivity between and within sagebrush habitats with emphasis on communities occupied by BLM priority species for management.
	MD WF 1: BLM-authorized activities associated with all resource and resource use programs are subject to mitigation or minimization guidelines as defined in Appendix L, Mitigation Measures and Conservation Actions.
	MD WF 3: For migratory bird conservation and to restore, enhance, and maintain habitats for all birds, the BLM will follow Appendix J, Fish, Aquatic and Wildlife Habitat Including Special Status Species, which outlines the recommended strategies for migratory birds.
	MD WF 6: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed in Big Game Crucial Winter Range areas with design features which maintain the functionality of the crucial winter range habitat (760,000 surface acres).
	MD WF 8: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed on and within 2 miles of sharp-tailed grouse lek sites with design features to protect breeding, nesting, and brood-rearing habitats at a level capable of supporting the long-term populations associated with the lek (800,000 acres).
	MD WF 10: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed within 0.5 miles of water bird nesting colonies, with design features to maintain functionality of the water bird nesting colonies habitat (650 acres).
	MD WF 13: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed in bighorn sheep habitat with design features to maintain functionality of the bighorn sheep habitat (70,000 acres).
	MD WF 16: Surface disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed within 0.5 miles of bald eagle nest sites active within the preceding 5 years, with design features which will minimize disturbance to the nest site and maintain functionality of the bald eagle habitat (2,000 acres).
	MD WF 18: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed within 0.5 miles of raptor nest sites active within the past 7 years with design features which maintain the functionality for the raptor nest site and nesting habitat.

Resource Area	Goal / Objective / Management Decision [a]
Fish, Aquatic, and Wildlife Habitat (WF) (cont.)	MD WF 21: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed within 0.25 miles of piping plover habitat with design features which maintain the functionality of the piping plover habitat (4,000 acres).
	MD WF 23: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed within 0.25 miles of interior least tern habitat with design features which maintained the functionality of the least tern habitat (10,000 acres).
	MD WF 25: Surface occupancy and use is prohibited within 0.25 miles of black-footed ferret habitat (complex of prairie dog towns within 1.5 km of each other comprising a total of at least 1,500 acres) (NSO, 0 acres).
	MD WF 27: In the absence of black-footed ferrets, surface-disturbing activities are allowed within black-tailed prairie dog colonies active within the past 10 years with design features which maintain the functionality of the black-tailed prairie dog habitat (11,000 acres).
	MD WF 29: Surface-disturbing and disruptive activities are allowed within 0.25 miles of the water's edge of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers with design features which maintain the functionality of the pallid sturgeon habitat (11,000 acres).
	Goal FOR 1: Promote healthy, resilient, and vigorous forestland communities. Forestland mosaics are managed for diversity of stand structures and species components that complemented other resource values, including (but not limited to) recreation, wildlife, rangelands, fisheries, and wood production.
	MD FOR 1: All management activities that will remove dead or live trees will take into consideration other resources values (such as wildlife habitat, watershed health, soils stability, snag recruitment and large tree retention, local economic opportunities, public safety, hazardous fuels, visual integrity, and any other relevant concerns).
Forest and Woodland Products (FOR)	Goal INV 1: Manage for healthy native plant communities and aquatic systems by reducing, preventing expansion of, or eliminating the occurrence of invasive species.
	MD INV 1: Surface-disturbing activities are allowed on BLM-administered lands in areas of invasive species infestation only with approved mitigation measures in place.
Invasive Species (INV)	MD INV 2: Using Early Detection Rapid Response, treatment areas will be prioritized in publicly accessible areas, riparian areas, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation areas, and special status species habitat areas.
	Goal LR 1: Provide public lands, interests in land, and authorizations for public and private uses while maintaining and improving resource values
	Goal LR 4: Strive to increase and diversify the nation's sources of both traditional and alternative energy resources, improve the energy transportation network, and ensure sound environmental management.

Resource Area	Goal / Objective / Management Decision [a]
Lands and Realty (LR)	Goal LR 5: Effects of infrastructure projects, including siting, will be minimized using the best available science, updated as monitoring information on current infrastructure projects becomes available.
	Goal LG 1: Provide forage for livestock grazing consistent with other resources and uses as part of an ecologically healthy system consistent with multiple use and sustained yield.
	Goal MIN 1: Provide opportunities for mineral use in an environmentally responsible manner.
Livestock Grazing (LG)	Goal PALEO 1: Identify, preserve, and protect significant paleontological resources on BLM-administered lands.
Minerals (MIN)	Goal PALEO 2: Ensure that paleontological resources are available to present and future generations for appropriate uses such as scientific studies and public education.
Paleontological Resources (PALEO)	Objective PALEO 1: Ensure that proposed land uses initiated or authorized by the BLM avoid inadvertent damage to significant paleontological resources.
	MD PALEO 1: Surface-disturbing activities are allowed as long as the activities will not impact the quality of significant paleontological localities.
	Goal REC 1: Provide a diverse array of quality resource-based recreation opportunities while protecting and interpreting the resource values, providing educational opportunities, minimizing recreational use conflicts, and promoting public safety.
	Goal REC 3: Manage recreation opportunities and experiences to provide a sustained flow of local economic benefits and protect non-market economic values.
Recreation (REC)	Goal RIP 1: Manage riparian and wetland systems to be healthy, diverse, and functional.
	MD RIP 1: Surface-disturbing activities are allowed in and within 300 feet of the boundary of riparian and wetland areas with approved design features to maintain or improve functionality and resiliency.
Riparian and Wetland Areas (RIP)	Goal SL 1: Maintain or improve the chemical, physical, and biotic properties of soil.
	Objective SL 1: Prevent or limit accelerated soil loss, minimize degradation of soils, and control sedimentation.
Soils (SL)	Objective SL 2: Maintain or improve adequate vegetation and ground cover (including biological soil crusts and litter) to promote soil health, productivity, and stability.
	MD SL 1: Reclamation measures for surface-disturbing activities will be implemented as described in Appendix N, Reclamation.
	MD SL 2: Surface-disturbing activities on sensitive soils are allowed with specialized design features to maintain or improve the stability of the site.
	MD SL 4: Surface disturbing activities on badlands and rock outcrop is allowed with specialized design features to maintain or improve the stability of the site.

Resource Area	Goal / Objective / Management Decision [a]
Soils (SL) (cont.)	Goal SE 1: Provide for a diverse array of stable economic opportunities in an environmentally sound manner.
	Goal SE 3: Protect humans and the environment from exposure to hazardous materials.
Social and Economic Considerations (SE)	Goal VEG 1: Manage vegetation communities to restore, maintain, or enhance vegetation community health, connectivity, resiliency, and diversity.
	Objective VEG 2: Maintain shrub overstory in a variety of spatial arrangements and sizes across landscapes.
Vegetation (VEG)	Objective VEG 3: Provide plant communities that reflect the potential natural community or the desired plant community appropriate for the ecological site.
	Objective VEG 4: Provide adequate organic matter (ground litter and standing dead material) in sufficient quantities to control erosion, replenish nutrients, and maintain soil health.
	Objective VEG 5: In all GRSG PHMA, the desired condition is to maintain all lands ecologically capable of producing sagebrush (but no less than 70%) with a minimum of 15% sagebrush cover or as consistent with specific ecological site conditions. The attributes necessary to sustain these habitats are described in Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (BLM Tech Ref 1734-6).
	Goal VR 1: Maintain scenic qualities consistent with the management of resources and uses.
	Objective VR 1: Manage visual resources according to established guidelines for VRM class objectives.
Visual Resources (VR)	The objective of VRM I class is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
	The objective of VRM II class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic (design) elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
	The objective of VRM III class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
	The objective of VRM IV class is to provide for management activities, which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic (design) elements.

Resource Area	Goal / Objective / Management Decision [a]
Visual Resources (VR) (cont.)	Goal WR 1: Maintain or enhance the beneficial uses of surface water and groundwater.
	Objective WR 1: Support natural surface water flow regimes.
Water Resources (WR)	Objective WR 2: Protect water resources from point source and nonpoint source pollution.
	MD WR 1: The BLM activities conducted will meet or exceed Montana water quality standards.
	MD WR 2: Surface-disturbing activities are allowed in 100-year floodplains with specialized design features to minimize impacts on the functionality and resiliency of the floodplain in compliance with Executive Order 11988.
	MD WR 7: Surface-disturbing activities are allowed within State-designated Source Water Protection Areas with specialized design features to minimize impacts on surface or groundwater quality.

Source: BLM 2015

BLM = Bureau of Land Management; GRSG = Greater Sage-Grouse; MD = Management Decision; NSO = no surface occupancy; PHMA = Priority Habitat Management Area; VRM = Visual Resource Management

Notes:

[a] Any mention of appendices in this table is in reference to the appendices of the 2015 *Miles City Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan.*

Table A.1-4 shows the objectives, allocations, and management actions, as selected in the 1988 North Dakota Approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 1988). These apply only to BLM-managed minerals in the North Dakota Field Office in the event that federal mineral materials that lie under fee surface are accessed and used in the development of this Project.

Table A.1-4
North Dakota Resource Management Plan Guidance

Resource Area	Objective / Allocation / Management Action
Mineral Materials and Locatable Minerals	**Objectives for Resource Condition and Use** (1) To maintain the availability of federally-reserved locatable, salable, and non-energy leasable minerals for authorized uses. (2) To maintain the integrity of federally-reserved locatable, salable, and non-energy leasable minerals for future authorized uses.
	Allocation of Resources or Land Use (1) All the federally-reserved saleable and non-energy leasable mineral deposits are available for application.
	Management Actions (1) Manage the locatable, salable, and non-energy leasable. minerals program to at least the minimum acceptable levels addressed in the M&O as established for the Montana BLM organization. M&O activities include: (a) receiving and processing mineral material and mineral patent applications, and (b) conducting necessary appraisals.

Source: BLM 1988

BLM = Bureau of Land Management; M&O = maintenance and operation

A.2. STATE AND COUNTY AGENCIES

The state environmental authorizations and consultations listed in Table A.2-1 could be required for the Project and have been obtained or are being pursued by the Proponent. In addition to county authorizations (i.e., Custer, Fallon, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, Morton, Oliver, and Rosebud), the following cities may require consultation or authorization: Baker, Colstrip, Forsyth, Plevna, and Miles City.

Table A.2-1
State Agencies–Potential Requirements

Agency	Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Submittal or Consultation Date [a]
State of Montana		
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (Lead State Agency)	Montana Environmental Policy Act, Analysis of Impacts (§ 75-1-102, MCA)	
	Major Facility Siting Act, Certificate of Compliance (§ 75-20-101, *et seq*., MCA)	September 2024
	Water Quality Certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (§ 75-5-401, MCA)	
	Short-Term Water Quality Standard for Turbidity Related to Construction Activity (§ 75-5-31, MCA)	
	General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity (MTR100000)	
	Construction Dewatering General Permit (MTG070000)	
	Air Quality Registration – Concrete Batch Plants (ARM 17.8.1702)	
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, State Board of Land Commissioners	ROW grant or easement for Department of Natural Resources and Conservation State Trust Land crossings (§ 77-2-101-106, MCA)	September 2024
	Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (310 Law, § 75-7-101 through 75-7-124, MCA)	
	Montana Land Use License or Easement on Navigable Waters (§ 77-2-303, MCA)	
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team	Sage Grouse Avoidance and Mitigation Plan (§ 76-22-101 through 76-22-113, MCA; Executive Orders 12-2015 and 21-2015)	

Agency	Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Submittal or Consultation Date [a]
Montana State Historic Preservation Office	Section 106 of the NHPA Consultation (54 USC § 306108)	October 2024
Montana Department of Transportation	Utility Occupancy (§ 60-4-402, MCA), Driveway (ARM 18.7.102)	
Montana Department of Commerce	Initial Coordination	Fall 2021
Montana State Department of Trust Lands	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
Montana State Senators and Representatives	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
Montana Natural Heritage Program	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
Montana Counties (Rosebud, Custer, and Fallon Counties)		
County Road Authorities	Utility, Driveway, Oversize / Overweight Permits	
County Weed Boards	Weed Plan Approvals	November 2023
County/Local Soil Conservation Districts	Floodplain Development Permits	
State of North Dakota		
North Dakota Public Service Commission	Certificate of Corridor Compatibility and Transmission Facility Route Permit (NDCC § 49-22-07(1))	
North Dakota Department of Trust Lands	ROW easement for crossing North Dakota Department of Trust Lands (NDCC § 47-05)	April 2022
North Dakota Department of Water Resources	Sovereign Lands Permit (NDAC § 89-10-01-04)	
North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality	Water Quality Certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (associated with Section 404 Permit) (33 USC § 1341)	
	Temporary Discharge Permit (NDCC § 61-28-04)	
	Authorization to Discharge under the North Dakota Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NDR11-0000)	
State Historical Society of North Dakota	Section 106 of the NHPA Consultation (54 USC § 306108)	October 2024
North Dakota Department of Transportation	Utility (NDCC § 24-01-41) Driveway (NDCC § 24-01-42) Oversize/Overweight Permits (NDCC § 39-12-02)	
North Dakota Transmission Authority	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021

Agency	Permit, Approval, or Consultation	Submittal or Consultation Date [a]
North Dakota Game and Fish Department	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
North Dakota Department of Commerce	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
North Dakota Senators and Representatives	Initial engagement by the Proponent	Fall 2021
North Dakota Counties (Golden Valley, Slope, Hettinger, Grant, and Morton Counties)		
County Governments	Conditional Use Permits	
County Weed Boards	Weed Plan Approvals	April 2023
County Road Departments	Utility, Driveway, Oversize / Overweight Permits	
County/Local Soil Conservation Districts	Floodplain Permits	

ARM = Administrative Rules of Montana; MCA = Montana Code Annotated; NDCC = North Dakota Century Code; NDAC = North Dakota Administrative Code; NHPA = National Historic Preservation Act; Proponent = North Plains Connector LLC (a Grid United LLC Company); USC = United States Code
Notes:
[a] Blank cells in this column indicate that the applicable permit, approval, or consultation has not yet begun at the time of this document publication.

A.3. REFERENCES

BLM (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management). 1988. *North Dakota Resource Management Plan*. Accessed: October 2025. Retrieved from: https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/lup/1505069/20016354/250021817/ND_RMP_Desk_Document_1988.pdf

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