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Comments: The Bureau of Reclamation, an agency of the United States Department of the Interior, would like to submit the following scoping comments to be considered in the Environmental Impact Statement that is being prepared for the proposed Stibnite Gold project to be located on the Payette and Boise National Forests.

The Stibnite Gold Project Plan of Restoration and Operations states that the existing 42-mile long 69 kV electric transmission line that passes through Cascade would be upgraded to a 138 kV capacity line. The construction of the upgraded electric transmission line would require that existing power poles be replaced with new, taller structures of either single-pole or H-frame design. The Plan also states that access for transmission line construction and maintenance would occur via existing roads and some new temporary spur roads.

A portion of the existing 69 kV electric transmission line on the east side of Lake Cascade is located on Bureau of Reclamation project lands. Reclamation granted an easement to Idaho Power for this portion of the 69kV line in 1955. Most of the adjoining Reclamation lands are managed for the benefit of wildlife as the Hot Springs Creek Wildlife Management Area and the Gold Fork Wildlife Management Area. The primary reason for establishment of these WMAs is to preserve long-term, viable habitat for waterfowl, birds of prey, mammals, and other wildlife, including sensitive, threatened, or endangered species.

The Bureau of Reclamation has concerns about the potential effects of the proposed electric transmission line upgrades to these Wildlife Management Areas and the wildlife populations that are dependent upon them. Other related resources that could be affected by the proposed upgrades include visual resources and recreation. These and other potential effects of the proposal must be analyzed in the EIS. The EIS should also address the potential need to obtain a new or amended easement from Reclamation to accommodate the upgraded transmission line.

Thank you for taking these scoping comments into consideration for the development of the EIS.