



# OREGON-CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Mountain-Prairie Region  
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To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great concern that I write to convey my expert conclusions about the proposed route NPPD has chosen to use for its R-Project corridor. If this route is allowed to go through, there will be devastating consequences to wildlife habitat and important cultural historic sites.

My passion for the history of the Sutherland area started at a very early age and continues as a life-long quest to preserve and protect the historical history for future generations to come. I was editor/writer of the Sutherland Centennial book, compiling 627 pages based on documentary sources. For the last six years I have been entrusted to manage the Sutherland Historical Center for the Village of Sutherland, housing a museum full of items and photos that preserve the treasured legacy which encompasses the surrounding area. I provide tours at all the historic settings mentioned below to further the knowledge to students, tourists, and residents. My membership in the Oregon-California Trails Association has been long standing for many years, and includes serving on the Nebraska Chapter Committee and conducting tours. Backed by countless years of research, training in genealogy, history and preservation, I strive to serve the community.

At the south end of this 345KV line is pristine prairie land never disturbed by a plow. It has been kept just as it was in 1840 when early pioneers traversed this country going to the gold fields in California. It is known from diaries of pioneers that there are graves atop this bluff from Indian conflicts. To put transmission lines directly across this land will not only ruin the unique viewscape of the original Oregon Trail ruts and swales, but puts these treasures in danger of being destroyed during construction of the line or during emergency repairs to the line sometime in the future.

This is on the top of O'Fallons Bluff, the highest point in the area, leaving the line susceptible to every type of weather event. At the base of the bluff, a 240' swath of trees and South Platte River habitat will be destroyed by clearing for the line. This will end the duck, geese and migratory bird sanctuary that has been established for decades. This line would cross three rivers on the current path if allowed, and result in a huge amount of clearing at every location it crosses the water ways.

The North Platte River basin is just as subject to destruction and degradation as the South Platte River. It supports an ecosystem just as vital to the area. Clearing this habitat will also effect the terns, piping plovers and the same birds as mentioned above. Wild turkeys are now reestablished on the north river and they provide food for the whole food chain that would be impacted.



Given my longstanding expertise and training in historic resource matters, I summarize various historic resources that will be impacted by the R-Project's current route, and provide my evaluation and conclusions below to assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NPPD in assessing alternative (but financially viable) routes that could eliminate, or at least substantially reduce harm, to these unique and iconic historic and cultural resources.

### O'Fallons Bluff

O'Fallons Bluff, situated in the sandhills, where the bluffs come close to the river, was one of the Oregon Trail landmarks early pioneers looked for to judge the distance they had traveled. It is on the south side of the South Platte River, and is a series of sandhills interspersed with ravines and gulches, which strike the river's bank, forming abrupt bluffs. They turned the emigrants back from the river, forcing them to cross these sandhills, a distance of ten miles, through loose yielding sand, devoid of vegetation. Here, as well as at all the points where the bluffs come near the river, the emigrants used to suffer severely, at times, from the attacks of the Indians. The land on both sides of the river was occupied exclusively for grazing purposes. An early Fur Trader/Explorer/Indian Agent and Commissioner of Indian Affairs named Major Benjamin O'Fallon, is the person for whom the Platte River bluffs were inexplicably named. He traveled through this area in 1823 on an expedition and stayed in a cave in the bluff. Being the nephew of William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame, put exploring in his blood.

*"We passed Bishop ranch, later known as the Beers ranch, next the well-known Leu Baker Road Ranch and stage station, dreaded on account of its frequent Indian attacks. Mr. and Mrs. Leu Baker seemed to be out of place here. They were both so good and homelike. The best was never too good for anyone who stayed at this ranch. It was known as the O'Fallons Road Ranch. Often they had to flee to save themselves from capture by the marauding bands of Indians (both Cheyenne and Sioux) whose excuse was to hunt buffalo but in reality to hunt scalps and livestock!"* TRAILS OF YESTERDAY by John Bratt-University Publishing Company-1921-The Lakeside Press-R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company-Chicago.

The Baker's had to escape the marauding Indian attacks by running to the shelter of the Pony Express station and later Fort Heath. Their son was the famed Johnny Baker, a star in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Others mentioned include the Bob Williams Rancho at the foot of O'Fallons Bluff where Indians harassed the family, and set fire to the Rancho trying to run the family out.

*"This is undoubtedly the best place between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains for skulking Indians to hide."* OVERLAND STAGE TO CALIFORNIA - by Root and Connelley.

*"Dr. James Guffey recalls that he remembers hearing his father tell about helping get the heavy wagons up out of the valley at the east edge of the Bluffs...then up over and across the sandy deep rutted trail roads...and then back down off the Bluffs to the valley road. The job took three days."* Reminiscing by Dr. James Guffey with Lois Alden 1960's in Sutherland.

There are places on the Bluffs and coming down off of them, where one can still see the ruts of the trails which were cut deep into the ground. These are the very swales and ruts we are trying to save for the huge historical significance they hold for Nebraska and the United States as a whole. So future generations can walk them as we do today and feel the importance of them in our country's history. There are fourteen swales that can be seen on top of the bluff. They will be crushed by heavy equipment and decimated by drilling equipment during construction of the proposed R-Project.

To put transmission lines directly across this land will not only ruin the iconic viewscape of the original Oregon Trail ruts and swales. Seeing and walking them now lets a person feel what our ancestors went through to make this trek. Also, if emergency repairs are done to the line sometime in the future, the only thing being considered will be the urgency of restoring the line and not the swales and ruts carved 180 years ago.

### Fremont Slough

Just when the explorer and pathfinder John C. Fremont visited this site is unknown. His historically famous name was consistently used except by an obscure traveler of 1860 named Dr. Clark, who speaks of "Buffalo Ranch" probably because this area had immense buffalo herds that roamed freely into the 1870's. The slough is formed at the base of the tall bluff at a limestone outcropping, and flows eastward for sixty plus miles. This water is pure, seeping out of the limestone hills, and served as a vital water source for the early explorers and emigrants. The beginning of the Slough is directly below where power line poles are to be set if the R-Project is to proceed at O'Fallons Bluff. This pure water is filtered by the limestone and then feeds the meadows downstream. Any contamination on the top of the bluff by oil or fuel when work to drill would be done, will affect the water source and eco-system in years to come. We cannot afford to do that to the environment!

### Indians

There were several known Indian villages in this area. One in particular was between the channels of the South Platte River just north of O'Fallons Bluff. It was a dangerous place to be traveling alone. They called it Shanghai or Dillon Island, and it was covered with brush and timber.

The Sioux and Cheyenne Indians were known for attacking the stage coaches on the route. William Trotter, a stage coach driver for 20 years witnessed the burning of the stations at O'Fallons Bluff and Willow Island by the Indians, and was within twelve hours of the burning of Alkali and Butts Stations. In these raids a vast amount of property was destroyed, and a great deal of stage stock stolen in 1864.

*"On October 19 a coach left Denver carrying Holladay's attorney, Hughes, and five other passengers. The coach messenger was in charge of two hundred fifty thousand dollars in treasure. Twice in the region of O'Fallons Bluff the coach was attacked, but each time escape to a near-by station was effected and a successful defense made. During the second attack two companies of West Virginia Cavalry arrived in time to save the party."* Army and Navy Journal, III, 17, 82, 98; Content, History of Wyoming, I, 500, 501 Frank Root, a messenger on the Overland Stage told in his account of the OVERLAND STAGE TO CALIFORNIA, about the area around O'Fallons Bluff and how the Indians would come to the road to beg, and how one time an Indian woman was wearing a paisley shawl (who got killed to obtain this?) over her native garments. Root also gave several accounts of Indian attacks at the bluffs. Still to this day, Indian artifacts are found in this whole area. The bluffs provide a perfect spot to hunt arrowheads, spear points, metal objects, and trinkets left by the Indians as they were scouting and attacking unsuspecting emigrants in the wagon trains, stages and freighters traversing the swales and ruts of the trail on top of the bluff. Heavy equipment and drilling rigs will crush anything left that is in their path.

### Pony Express

A Pony Express rider did not have to worry about getting stuck in the sand; his worry was to keep away from any Indian that might be hiding in the brush along Fremont Slough, the South Platte River at the base of the bluffs, or in the cedar trees and brush in the ravines that make up the north edge of O'Fallons Bluff. He made good money for this work, and used it to buy his food along the route and clothing for the four seasons.

The station called Fremont Springs, Nebraska Station No. 23, was unlike its neighbors. It was spoken of as a home station, being placed on the fringe of the east bluffs, which seems reasonable in light of the fifty mile distance from Midway Station. According to Burton, *"The building is of a style peculiar to the south, especially Florida, - two huts connected by a roof work of thatched timber, which acts as the best and coolest of verandahs."* Look of the West 1860-by Sir Richard Burton – Reprinted from NEBRASKA HISTORY Volume 41, Number 2 June 1960 – Reprinted from THE PONY EXPRESS: ACROSS NEBRASKA FROM ST. JOSEPH TO FORT LARAMIE – by Merrill Mattes and Paul Henderson. Fremont Springs Station site is marked with one of the Pony Express Official Plaques along the Oregon Trail Road between Sutherland and Hershey, NE. The station served as a stopping point for the riders to get a fresh mount and food before starting the dangerous section of travel along the bluffs. Ten miles separated Fremont Springs Station and Dansey's Station. This was an average spacing between the Pony Express Stations, but this stretch was particularly daunting and the riders had to travel at a faster pace to get through so Indians didn't kill them. They carried military orders from one Post to another along with mail and news from the eastern cities.

The Mail Contract refers to "Dansey's", as presumably the Pony Express proprietor. Burton speaks of "Half-Way House" and Root and Connelley use "Elkhorn" as the name of the west bluffs Pony Express Station. This was given the designation of Nebraska Station No. 24 on the overland route. Sir Richard Burton, who traveled across this country in 1860 says of this place, *"It was a well-established business, having been run for 20 years and owned by a Mr. M... (Now known to be Moore Brothers Bull or Ox Corrals or Moore and Grimes Rancho, Neb. Ter.), with about any and all supplies one would need in their travels, valued then at \$16,000 per annum."* It was a trading post, pony express station, stage station, and post office. There was a blacksmith shop, and the sod corral perimeter can still be seen today on this pristine site. Some 40,000 people traveled through this location each year during the peak migration.

Sod ox or bull corrals were needed to house the livestock that was swapped-out for the weary animals who had made it this far on the trip. The oxen or bulls were pastured on the lush vegetation in the valley, and brought back to health for the next wagon train needing fresh stock, this coming at a high cost to the purchasing wagon team. Oxen played an important part in pulling the freight wagons that resupplied these road ranches.

*"Moore and Grimes keep the west station here, at O'Fallons Bluffs. Probably as good if not the best one on the road. Hay is abundant for the coming emigration, and almost every article that will be required on the road. Wood can be procured at this point, being the last opportunity of getting it for nearly one hundred miles."* ON THE ROAD – letter, Feb 13, 1860 – OMAHA NEBRASKIAN, Saturday, Feb 25, 1860 2:7. Though this station is not setting next to the swales and ruts to be protected, without it, safe passage in the area could not be guaranteed without the fort soldiers' escort service to this point. Each station played an important part in securing the trail and supplying the everyday wares the wagon trains needed.

### Fort Heath

The first post west of Post Cottonwood (Ft McPherson) was established at the east end of the bluffs. Company B arrived at O'Fallons Bluff on September 26, 1864, under the command of Captain John Wilcox (1864-65). They occupied a deserted road ranch, and then built a 120' x 24' sod and log post which included a large stable. This housed 80 men of the Iowa Cavalry. Their primary jobs were to insure safe travel for the emigrants traveling the road, to provide escort for the stage line at the northern most point on the crescent shaped road of the stage coaches, and security for the mail

stations. They named this Fort Heath after one of their commanding officers. Limited Indian conflicts happened when the military post was in existence. So on May 14, 1866, the last of the main body of Calvary began their trip to muster out at Fort Leavenworth. By January 1867, the Union Pacific Railroad line had reached a point just north of the bluffs. The five men who were left at the fort were no longer needed. The soldiers provided escort for the early wagon trains, stage coaches and freight wagons heading west. They crossed the swales and ruts daily adding to the provenance of how historically important the Oregon Trail was to our country in a time of great change for our young nation. They carved a path for the future generations and now those same ruts and swales can be walked on during tours just as our forefathers did from 1840-1870. To experience this unique trip can conjure thoughts of Indians, emigrants enduring the hardships, and the soldiers protecting their very existence. Placing a transmission line across this spot would ruin any visual impact held in your mind of the pioneers crossing in the past.

### Overland Telegraph

By 1861, the Overland Telegraph was built along the Oregon Trail. This helped make it feasible for the Mormon Church trains to travel. Each of the train captains had orders to telegraph Salt Lake from a series of points along the trail to report on progress and problems. These reports were enjoyed by readers of the Desert News a leading territorial newspaper of the time. *"On August 12<sup>th</sup> the company made camp at the base of O'Fallons Bluff, the first great landmark on the trail. Alfred couldn't pass this place without a sketch. That night there was a dance in camp - danced to the accompaniment of clapping hands, laughter, and the lone clarinet. The next morning from Alkali Station, Holladay wired: "All well." It really wasn't. The Indians plagued them into Wyoming territory.*

*"I immediately received an order from General Mitchell by telegram to take a detachment of forty men and a piece of artillery, and proceed to Julesburg; and before I got started the commander at O'Fallons Bluff telegraphed that the Indians had run all around his post, and had halted a train and killed several persons."* INDIAN WARS OF 1864 – by Eugene F. Ware.

This transcontinental telegraph line went directly along the Oregon Trail just south of the swales and on top of the bluffs adjacent to the wagon ruts we are trying to protect. One lone pole is still known to be in existence in this area. Can anyone say in 150 years from now that a transmission line pole will have the same lasting significance as the telegraph poles do that were placed in 1861? For those studying the history of our state and the importance the telegraph played in settling the frontier, I will dare to say, "No"!

### Old Ford Road or Lower Platte Crossing

While crossing the South Platte near O'Fallon's Bluff, some miles below this point, early in the summer of 1852 – seven years before Beauvais established his trading post at O'Fallons Bluff – John H. Clark, in charge of a company of twenty men from Cincinnati, whom he was taking overland to California, wrote in his journal as follows: *"There is perhaps more fun, more excitement, more whipping, more swearing and more whiskey drank at this place than at any other point on the Platte River. Many head of cattle were being driven over when we crossed, and the dumb brutes seemed to have an inclination to go any way but the right one. Loose cattle, teams, horses, mules, oxen, men and boys all in a muss; the men swearing and whipping, the cattle bellowing, the horses neighing and the boys shouting made music for the multitude. It was an interesting scene."* THE OVERLAND STAGE TO CALIFORNIA – By Root & Connelley – Topeka, Kansas – 1901.

This crossing lead to the North Platte River valley and then on to the Birdwood Creek trail, and into the sandhills to the north following the creek. At this point, early rancher John Keith had his land raising thoroughbred horses for the east coast racing market and a large beef herd. His land stretched as far as the eye could see and included a race track in the meadow and the grazing pastures where the O'Fallons Bluff swales are so prominent to be seen today. Keith once entertained Theodore Roosevelt at his ranch for a buffalo hunt. Old Ford Road was used more after the Indians were moved to reservations in the 1870's, but served wagon trains in the 1850's with a safer place to cross where there was an island in the middle of the river. So in the summer when the water was lower, wagons and carts would cross at this location to continue their journey on the north side of the South Platte River or cross over to the north side of the North Platte River. This is where the R-Project would cut through a swath of river bottom removing all trees in its path. This avian sanctuary area is used by migrating ducks, geese, bald eagles and countless other birds on their flights. It has a natural wildlife sanctuary pond and flowing water for birds to land, and is near the beginning of Fremont Slough. If the electric lines go through, countless birds will be lost due to hitting the lines, and flyways will be disrupted. This is a natural habitat that protects bald eagles and provides them with a much needed food source. Nesting is also seen here. By cutting out the trees in such a wide corridor, it will open up an area for the Nebraska winds to play havoc on the trucks and traffic of the Interstate system. This is already a hard place to navigate in icy and windy conditions during the Nebraska winters.

#### Bones

*"W.P.A. workers who are digging clay for road work in Sutherland, unearthed Monday, three skeletons, which were buried in the hills south of here.*

*The bodies were evidently buried in a sitting position. Examination of the bones being conducted has not as yet definitely established the number of years the bodies were buried or the ages of the three. It is advanced that they represent an infant, young boy and young woman.*

*It is definitely established however that they are not white people as brass rings still encircled the arm on one; buck-eye beads were found all through the dirt which would indicate long strings of beads and linking their race with Indian, Gypsy or Mexican. A 10" butcher knife, locket, bits of cloth and leather were also found with the bones. "FIND BONES IN HILLS SOUTH OF SUTHERLAND MONDAY" - Sutherland Courier dated January 12, 1939. Will M. Dunn and Son Publishers. This is just one of many burial sites on the Bluffs that have been mentioned over the years. The sanctity of leaving graves untouched is our human responsibility to those who have passed on and left their legacy. Countless books and diaries telling the stories of the pioneers traveling through the bluffs, share the hardship of death and having to move on so quickly, not properly marking the graves. Once a grave site has been disturbed by an auger drilling to install a pole, no reparations can be made. Drilling might stop, but the damage is beyond repair.*

#### Mormon Trail

During the period between 1847 and the 1860's, the Mormons did travel the Oregon Trail and the Mormon Trail through the Sutherland area. At times the sandhills were drought ridden and the grass needed for their livestock used for pulling the heavy wagons was not easily found in the sandhills. The Buffalo grass found along the South Platte supplied the needed nutrients required by oxen pulling the wagons. The Buffalo grass furnished enough food for the slow moving oxen, and the buffalo chips also were used as fuel for cooking and heat.

All trails were brought close together at O'Fallons Bluff because of the natural land barriers which did not make it easy to follow both river valleys during all seasons of the year. The sandhills to the north meant it was difficult to travel along the North Platte River during dry seasons. High waters along the South Platte sometimes drove travelers across the valley to travel west along the North Platte River. Usually the Mormons got along well with the different Indian tribes of the West, but during the uprisings along the Overland Trail-Oregon Trail and route of the Pony Express, no white man was assured safe passage to the West in the years between 1861 and 1876.

Unlike the stations along the south side of the Platte Valley to the division of the channels near Cottonwood Springs or Fort McPherson (placed about every 15 to 30 miles), there were few stations located along the Mormon Trail. Fewer places for getting needed supplies meant it was difficult for the migrating Mormons, considering there was no place for repairs, safety, supplies or livestock exchange stops. Travel on the south side of the Platte River made all these necessities available at the Road Ranches.

President George Quayle Cannon, Mormon leader told of the O'Fallons Bluffs Indian Massacre in March of 1847, when he was with a party of Mormons traveling along the Oregon Trail at O'Fallons Bluff. His wagon train came upon the two burned out wagons and slain emigrants at the Bluffs. They buried the eleven emigrants in *"the hills back of O'Fallons Bluffs"*. Indians had attacked the two wagons of emigrants one night in March of 1847 on the Oregon Trail at O'Fallons Bluff. Left behind at Cottonwood Springs because of needed repairs, the emigrants pushing on had forgotten to be cautious in their travel, in trying to overtake the wagon train ahead of them. They had been encouraged to remain with the Cannon encampment overnight, but insisted on going on. Anthon Lund, Official of the Mormon Church related the incidents of the O'Fallons Bluff Massacre in 1847, one time as he was traveling with several officials of the Mormon Church as they returned from an eastern visit to some of their churches. As the Union Pacific train neared O'Fallons Bluff he recalled the incident, verifying what President Cannon had told some 20 or more years earlier. It was widely known to cross the whole ten mile length of the bluffs in daylight and not camp overnight on the bluffs because of the Indian attacks that had happened in the past at this point in the trail. Excerpts from PATHWAY TO THE PACIFIC; WESTERN MIGRATION - by William Lee Park.

In early April 1847, the first company, consisting of 148 men, women and children made their trek across Nebraska on the north side of the North Platte Valley. As at O'Fallons Bluff, the bluffs on the North Platte River are just as sandy and hard to cross. The river cut deep into the bank of the hill and forced the emigrants to use the top of the bluff. At this point, where they had to descend the hill, the wagons and handcarts cut deep ravines into the top of the slopes. Some places are at least twelve feet deep due to the massive number of wheels that cut the sod. Ropes had to be used to pull the wagons through and down the steep hill. This is the only place known to have such pristine ruts from the Mormon migration in Nebraska. To place a transmission line directly on top of this trail would destroy the viewscape of an historical place that never can be replaced. Any heavy equipment in the area will crush the ruts and swales that are so visibly pronounced. A guide panel tells the story of the migration right at the foot of the bluff. How does a power line tell about one of the most important moments in our country's religious freedom history?

The Mormon Trail crosses Birdwood Creek, a spring fed creek running north of the North Platte River, northeast of the present town of Sutherland. Birdwood Creek, also called Teepee Creek by early Indians, was an early source of water for the families on the Mormon Trail in wagons and with handcars. Many Mormon emigrants saw the potential in this area for farming/ranching and settled their families in this vicinity before going any farther west in their trek.

### Birdwood

Birdwood Creek is another pristine area that NPPD wants to cross for this transmission line. It has a high quality creek-side habitat, surrounded by native wetlands and sandhills prairie. Birdwood is the Dakota Indian's name for this stream, given because of Birdwood or indigo shrubs along its bank.

The nesting and roosting trees for bald eagles will be cut down for this line. Trees sit right along Birdwood Creek and are a perfect vantage point for eagles to hunt and teach their young. Many nesting pairs of bald eagles live along this stream at the exact point where the transmission line is proposed. This is the flyway for thousands of birds each spring and fall. It includes the endangered Whooping Cranes. Trumpeter Swans winter on the Birdwood Creek. Their species also depend on this wintering habitat and nesting area for survival. Power line collisions make up one of the most significant death factors for Swans, Whooping Cranes, Sandhill Cranes, and Bald Eagles. Putting the transmission line directly across the middle of the flyway on Birdwood Creek would prove catastrophic for these endangered avian. Bird diverters have only proven to be 50% effective and would not be a viable option for protecting flight.

This is an area that looks like it did 10,000 years ago when the migrating Indian tribes used it for their main route to follow buffalo herds and travel from their winter to summer camps. Archaeological treasures have been found by just walking the ground. Test plots to find older relics have yielded countless items only one foot down. There is no replacing these artifacts once drilling has started in a site. They are just destroyed. Transmission poles are planned to be placed just 20 yards from one test plot that yielded many relics. To microsite poles 10'-30' away from the original placement site of poles, will not mitigate the damage that will be caused by placement of poles on top of the ridge that was the campsite for the Indians on their treks following the buffalo herds. Birdwood Creek Archeological Site 25LN113 is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D.

*"It's like peeking back in history and to recognize the changing land being traveled and settled. We're really a very young nation. We had a very interesting trip up to Birdwood Creek and the old Folst Place and had to restrain ourselves from not trespassing on Dick Kelso's land hunting for the Indian Campgrounds. My husband has made me realize the interesting life we lead – a sod house to live in - a one room school house with six kids – Gregg's, Kelso's and Johnson's - in the cottonwood grove, living on the flyway of the Whooping Crane, etc."* Letter written by Nona Johnson Cirone to Lois Alden October 30, 1981.

How can NPPD justify setting foot on a location that would impact the Whooping Cranes, approximately 300 Trumpeter Swans left in wild migratory flocks, Bald Eagles and a 10,000 year old Indian encampment site. No mitigation can replace any of this if the eco-system is breeched.

## CONCLUSION

The R-Project proposed route would permanently degrade, destroy, and impair the unique and iconic historic and cultural resources located in the path of the R-Project, including those identified above. This destruction would likely be irreversible, since much of the construction and maintenance activity associated with the R-Project would have a permanent effect on swales, ruts, and other aspects of these iconic resources.

It does not take much human-caused disturbance to result in irreparable consequences. We have seen this in the land NPPD crossed just west of Sutherland for a railroad overpass. The sandhills in that area were repaired twice and they still have huge gullies that have washed and not healed.

In my expert view, NPPD has not set forth a compelling justification for placing the R-Project in this location when other financially viable options exist that would relocate the R-Project only a few miles east, thereby avoiding the major destruction of historic and cultural resources. In practice, this would mean re-routing the R-Project three miles further east from the Gerald Gentleman Station and turning north on a route that was considered by NPPD at an earlier time. By going east this small distance, the habitat of the Oregon, Mormon, and Birdwood Trails will be kept pristine and historic, and cultural treasures preserved for the generations to come.

Under this routing alternative – which is within the corridor approved by the Power Review Board – the greater part of the South Platte River where the bird sanctuary is located would be bypassed, the North Platte River and Birdwood Creek would still need to be crossed, but not in such significant locations. This route could follow the existing roads of Lamont and Birdwood, offering avenues of travel for line building, inspection, and repair without having to construct additional infrastructure to support the transmission line. Accordingly, it is my expert opinion that cultural and historic resources can be avoided, and that there exists reasonable and financially viable alternative routes that would eliminate risk to iconic historic and cultural resources (as well as unique ecological areas for wildlife).

Respectfully,



Linda K. Tacey  
Oregon California Trail Association  
Nebraska Chapter Preservation Officer

Ms. Tacey comprehensively and accurately describes the historical area around O'Fallons Bluff that would be impacted by the R-Project. As she suggests, there are many stories that can be recalled by people who visit the site of these wagon ruts, many of whom may be descendants of those who made them.

Words cannot describe the emotions felt while viewing a site in which one's ancestors were involved. These ruts bring an immediate relevance to a descendant's life that is not artificial. The experience can only be had if those ancestral remnants are tangibly preserved.



Harlan Seyfer  
Oregon California Trail Association  
Nebraska Chapter President