Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-847)

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 4,921
Natural Resource Specialist/Project Manager: Kyle Goeke Dee, TFBV-KALISPELL

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Activities

BPA proposes to clear unwanted dead or dying trees in and adjacent to the access road to the Taft Passive Repeater Communications Site in Sanders County, Montana. Vegetation management needs were assessed, and a Vegetation Control Cut Sheet was created for the project.

The access road and project area is approximately 1.5 miles in length and is located on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Lolo National Forest. Lolo National Forest was notified of the planned action and USFS comments have been incorporated into the proposed work plan.

Significant tree mortality is present in the area due to disease, resulting in the road being impassable. In order to reestablish access and maintain a safe travel corridor to the communications site, BPA proposes to cut approximately 550 standing dead or damaged trees along the access road that have a high risk of falling into the access road and blocking maintenance vehicles. The trees are primarily Douglas fir that are roughly 8 – 15 inches in diameter and are between 45 and 90 feet tall. After the removal of fallen debris and roadside danger trees, BPA proposes to brush the road and cut, lop, and scatter existing fallen trees. Equipment to be used would include light duty trucks, ATVs, chainsaws, and a mini-excavator to handle the downed trees. Additionally, as requested by the Lolo National Forest, BPA would pile all cut trees adjacent to the roadway to later be burned by the USFS. Any additional measures proposed by USFS would be incorporated into the vegetation management plan during project implementation.

Analysis

A Vegetation Control Cut Sheet was developed for this project that incorporated the requirements identified in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS and Record of Decision (August 23, 2000). The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures.

Water Resources

No water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occur in the project area.

Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Act

Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA made a determination of whether its proposed project would have any effects on any listed species. A species list was obtained

for federally-listed, proposed, and candidate species potentially occurring within the project boundaries from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

BPA obtained a species list for the project in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Listed species in the project area include grizzly bear, whitebark pine, Canada lynx, North American wolverine, and the candidate species monarch butterfly. The proposed vegetation management activities are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) letter of concurrence (LOC) regarding: Kalispell Inspection and Vegetation Management, consultation number 2022-0090873, sent to BPA in October 2022, and Kalispell Inspection and Vegetation Management, consultation number 06E11000-2021-I-0365, sent to BPA in April of 2021, and conservation measures would be implemented including implementing food attractant storage requirements for grizzly bears, and scheduling vegetation management actions between March 16th and October 15th in those areas with moderate to optimal grizzly bear habitat to avoid impacting bears immediately before and after hibernation.

BPA conducted a review of ESA-listed species, designated critical habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) (as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Act), under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). However, none were found in the project area. BPA made a determination that the project would have *"No Effect"* for all ESA-listed fish species and designated critical habitat under NMFS' jurisdiction, and the project would not adversely affect EFH.

Cultural Resources

An area of potential effects (APE) map was developed for the project, and on May 19th, 2023 BPA initiated consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, USFS Lolo National Forest, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Based on the results of a prior inventory and field survey, BPA made a determination of "No adverse effect to historic properties". No response was received from the consulting parties during the 30-day comment period.

Re-Vegetation

Existing naturalized grasses and woody shrubs are present in the area and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly-disturbed soil.

Monitoring

The entire project would be inspected during the work period, summer of 2023. A follow-up treatment may occur after the initial treatment. Additional monitoring for follow-up treatment would be conducted as necessary. A vendor scorecard would be used to document formal inspections and would be filed with the contracting officer.

Findings

BPA finds that the types of actions and the potential impacts related to the proposed activities have been examined, reviewed, and consulted upon and are similar to those analyzed in the Transmission

System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD. There are no substantial changes in the EIS's Proposed Action and no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns bearing on the EIS's Proposed Action or its impacts within the meaning of 10 CFR § 1021.314(c)(1) and 40 CFR §1502.9(d). Therefore, no further NEPA analysis or documentation is required.

/s/ *Aaron Siemers*
Aaron Siemers
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ *Katey Grange*
Katey Grange Date: *July 3, 2023*
NEPA Compliance Officer

References:
Vegetation Control Cut Sheets