Fact Sheet

MAY 2026

This essential modernization project would replace aging infrastructure, including 70-year-old wood poles, hardware and transmission wire with new 230-kV conductor, H-frame and single-pole structures, and fiberoptic cable.

Hot Springs-Rattlesnake transmission line rebuild

The Bonneville Power Administration proposes to rebuild its Hot Springs-Rattlesnake No. 1 230-kilovolt transmission line. This essential modernization project would replace aging infrastructure, including 70-year-old wood poles, hardware and transmission wire with new 230-kV conductor, H-frame and single-pole structures, and fiberoptic cable.

The rebuild would follow the existing transmission line route, and the access road system supporting the line would also be upgraded for construction and future maintenance. This effort is part of BPA's broader strategy to ensure reliable service across its network.

Project background

The Hot Springs-Rattlesnake No. 1 transmission line extends 59 miles from BPA's Hot Springs Substation in Sanders Country, Montana, and located west of Flathead Lake, across the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Flathead Indian Reservation, to NorthWestern Energy's Rattlesnake Substation, just north of Missoula.

A critical component of this project is upgrading the fiberoptic cable. New fiber would provide a necessary communication link for the western Montana grid. The existing fiberoptic cable on this line, installed in 2001, is one of BPA's earliest fiber installations and is now outdated. Replacing this outdated infrastructure ensures reliable and high-speed communication and improved Remedial Action Scheme, which is essential for monitoring and controlling transmission facilities. Learn more about RAS on the following page.

Environmental review

To assess potential environmental impacts of this proposal, BPA will conduct an environmental review in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. This review will describe anticipated impacts to natural and human resources and will identify mitigation measures to help avoid or minimize impacts. During this process, BPA will work with landowners; tribes; federal, state and local agencies; and interest groups to understand their perspectives and concerns.

Questions and answers

What is the estimated cost of the project?
The estimated cost for this project is approximately $61 million. This cost will be absorbed by all BPA transmission ratepayers and rolled into BPA's network transmission rates.

Would there be added transmission capacity?
No, this project would not increase transmission capacity. The purpose is modernization and reliability

What is the fiberoptic cable for?
The proposed fiberoptic cable will be used exclusively for the BPA transmission system to monitor and control its facilities. BPA currently has no requests for commercial use of its fiber.

Will there be any outages during construction?
BPA plans to conduct the work in sections. This phased approach would ensure continuous power access for the public throughout the construction period.

Project schedule

Scoping comment period:	April 14 to May 19, 2026
Public scoping meeting:	May 5, 2026
Environmental review completion:	Summer/fall 2026
If decision to build, construction start:	Spring 2027

Find more information at

https://www.bpa.gov/learn-and-participate/public-involvement-decisions/project-reviews/hot-springs-to-rattlesnake or scan the QR code below:

REMEDIAL ACTION SCHEME

RAS is a sophisticated control system designed to protect and stabilize the power grid. These schemes monitor the power system and take rapid, millisecond-speed actions to serve as the next line of defense after standard fault protection has activated, preventing minor issues from escalating.

RAS operates without operator intervention, sensing conditions such as overloads, voltage drops or frequency changes and performing pre-defined actions like tripping generation, shedding load or adjusting power flows.

RAS is designed to meet reliability standards established by North American Electric Reliability Corporation. Implementing RAS is often less expensive and faster to deploy than new construction and helps maximize use of existing transmission lines.