

Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-804)

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 4,672
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Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Activities

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to conduct routine vegetation management actions along high-voltage transmission corridors in the Tri Cities District, located in south central and southeast Washington and northeast Oregon. Specifically, BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation along the corridors and associated access roads of the following high-voltage transmission lines: Ashe-Slatt No. 1; Badger Canyon – Leslie Road No. 1; Boardman – Lone No. 1; Franklin – Walla Walla No. 1; Hatton Tap – Connell Tap; Ice Harbor – Franklin No. 3; Leslie Road – Reata No. 1; McNary – Coyote Springs No. 1; McNary – Franklin No. 2; Radar USBR Tap – Scootene Tap; and the Scootene Tap to Midway – Benton No. 1. These lines run through Adams, Franklin, Grant, Benton, and Walla Walla counties, Washington, and Morrow and Umatilla counties, Oregon.

Vegetation management prescriptions for the transmission lines have been developed. Proposed actions include clearing vegetation growing within and adjacent to approximately 5 miles of access roads; cut lop and scatter small trees and brush in about 100 acres of transmission right-of-way (ROW) corridor; cut approximately 30 corridor trees and 15 danger trees (trees that could fall in to the energized line), side limb approximately 50 trees, mow approximately 15 acres, clear vegetation and selectively apply herbicide around approximately 725 structure sites, and treat approximately 60 acres of corridor with herbicide to manage noxious weeds and other undesirable vegetation. The work would take place in fiscal year 2022.

The project area primarily runs through private lands with small portions crossing federally-managed lands including planned access road maintenance at Ashe-Slatt 4/2 that crosses the Hanford Reach National Monument, which is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and spans 4/5 to 18/5 of the Boardman-lone transmission line that borders the Naval Weapons Systems Training Facility Boardman, which is managed by the US Navy. Letters, on-site meetings, emails, and phone calls would be used to notify landowners approximately three weeks prior to commencing vegetation management activities. Door hangers would also be used at properties where special treatments are anticipated. Any additional measures proposed by landowners or land managers through ongoing communication would be incorporated into the vegetation management plan during project implementation.

To comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards, BPA proposes to manage vegetation with the goal of removing tall-growing vegetation that is currently or will soon become a hazard to the transmission line (a hazard is defined as one or more branches, tops, and/or whole trees that could fall or grow into the minimum safety zone of the transmission line(s) causing an electrical arc, relay, and/or

ouage). The overall goal of BPA is to establish low-growing plant communities along the ROW to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods would be used to perform the work, and may include hand cutting, mowing, herbicidal treatment, or a combination of those methods. Herbicides would be selectively applied using spot treatment (stump or stubble treatment, basal treatment, and/or spot foliar) or localized treatments (broadcast application and cut stubble treatments) with chemicals approved in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000), to ensure that the roots are killed - preventing new sprouts - and selectively eliminating vegetation that interferes with the operation and maintenance of transmission infrastructure.

Additional vegetation management may be necessary in subsequent years in discrete areas of noxious weeds, or where BPA personnel discover vegetation that poses a hazard to the transmission line. All debris would be disposed of onsite, along the ROW, using on-site chip, lop and scatter, or mulching techniques.

Analysis

A Vegetation Control Cut Sheet was developed for this corridor 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 outlined in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets.

Water Resources

Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and localized treatment with Garlon 3A (Triclopyr TEA) would be used within a 100-foot buffer up to the water's edge of any stream containing threatened or endangered species, and 35-foot buffer for all other wetlands and waterways. Trees in riparian zones would be selectively cut to include only those that would grow into the minimum approach distances of the conductor at maximum sag; other trees would be left in place or topped to preserved shade. Shrubs that are less than 10-feet-high would not be cut where ground to conductor clearance allows. No ground-disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented, thus eliminating the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near the streams. Where private water wells/springs or agricultural irrigation sources have been identified along the ROW and noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets, no herbicide application would occur within a 50-foot radius of the wellhead, spring, or irrigation source (164 feet when using herbicides with ground/surface water advisory).

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). Based on the ESA review conducted, BPA made a determination of "No Effect" for Columbia basin pygmy rabbit, yellow-billed cuckoo, bull trout, and the threatened plant white bluffs bladderpod.

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). With the implementation of

mitigation measures described in the Water Resources section above, BPA made a determination of “No Effect” for anadromous salmonids in the Interior Columbia Recovery Domain, critical habitat, and EFH in present in the project area.

Cultural Resources

The proposed vegetation management actions do not result in ground disturbance to the physical environment, so the action is not one that typically has the potential to affect historic and/or cultural resources. If a site is discovered during the course of vegetation control, work would be stopped in the vicinity and the BPA Environmental Specialist and the BPA archeologist would be contacted.

Re-Vegetation

Existing naturalized grasses and woody shrubs are present on the entire ROW and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly-disturbed soil predominantly located on the ROW roads.

Monitoring

The entire project would be inspected during the work period; fall of 2021 and through the end of the fiscal year (September 2022). 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, EPR-4
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Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 7, 2021

References:
Vegetation Control Cut Sheets
Endangered Species Act Effects Determination Memo