

Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-844)

**Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 4877 Natural
Resource Specialist/Project Manager: Craig Fackrell – TFBV – BELL-1**

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Activities

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove approximately 11 danger and corridor trees along the Boundary - Nelway and Boundary – Wenata transmission line right of ways (ROW) on United States Forest Service (USFS)-managed property. The sections of the corridor in the proposed project area are located in Pend Oreille counties, Washington. The purpose of the proposed action is to protect the power system by minimizing the risk of trees contacting energized transmission lines. Any additional measures proposed by the USFS through ongoing communication would be incorporated into the vegetation management plan during project implementation.

BPA defines danger trees as those trees with a 50 percent or greater probability of structural failure within five years due to physical damage or environmental conditions. Work would be conducted by utilizing pickup trucks on established access roads to bring a crew to the vicinity of each tree. Personnel would then approach each tree on foot. Once at the tree, the tree would be climbed and cut into sections. Each section would then be allowed to fall to the ground, unless the section is too close to the conductor in which case it would be lowered to the ground using rigging. If necessary, the sections would be cut into smaller lengths when on the ground. The limbs would be removed, and the material would then decompose naturally. No skidding or log removal would be conducted. Because the trees would be cut into sections and would not be removed, the undertaking would have much less ground disturbance than conventional logging.

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. No ground-disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented, thus eliminating the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near the streams.

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 or their habitat located along the Boundary - Nelway and Boundary – Wenata transmission line right of ways (ROW) on United States Forest Service (USFS) property. 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 that the project would have “No Effect” for all ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat under USFWS’ jurisdiction, except Canada lynx, grizzly bear, bull trout, and bull trout critical habitat. BPA determined that the proposed project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the above listed species. BPA also made a *not likely to jeopardize* determination for monarch butterfly (candidate for ESA listing). The USFWS concurred with these determinations in a letter May 4, 2021 (reference code: 01EWF00-2021-I-0878). Conservation measures, agreed upon between BPA and USFWS during consultation, are noted in the USFWS letter of concurrence, the biological assessment created for this region, Vegetation Control Cut Sheets, and other work management documents. Whitebark pine was listed as a threatened species after these initial consultations were finished. After ESA review was conducted for the whitebark pine, BPA made a determination that the project would have no effect on whitebark pine or whitebark pine critical habitat. The North American wolverine was also relisted as a proposed species after the consultations were completed. As a proposed species, the North American wolverine does not require consultation. BPA made the determined that the project may effect, but is not likely to jeopardize the North American wolverine.

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

On June 21st, 2023, BPA engaged in consultation with the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the United States Forest Service, the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians for work proposed on the Colville National Forest. BPA developed an area of potential effects (APE) for the project and determined that the undertaking would have the potential to cause effects on historic properties. In the consultation letter, BPA proposed to conduct cultural resources monitoring during project implementation. The Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the United States Forest Service, the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the Spokane Tribe of Indians did not respond within 30 days and BPA finalized the section 106 process. 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 Archaeologist 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 November 2024 through October 2024. 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/ Zoe Wellschlager

Zoe Wellschlager, EPR-4
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: November 14, 2023

References:

Vegetation Control Cut Sheets