

memorandum

DATE: September 23, 2016

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: EPR-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA-635)

to: Bryon Lorenz – TFBV-Bell-1
Natural Resource Specialist

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Colville-Republic No. 1 Transmission Line Corridor

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 3497

Location: Ferry and Stevens Counties, Washington

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove unwanted vegetation along and adjacent to the right-of-way (ROW) and access roads of the Colville-Republic No. 1 transmission line. The proposal covers approximately 45 miles of transmission line corridor with a ROW width of 100 feet. The line crosses private industrial forest property, small woodlot owners, and State and Forest Service-managed (Colville National Forest) lands. Primary land uses include timber production, grazing, game hunting, and recreation.

Letters, on-site meetings, emails, and phone calls will be used to notify landowners approximately three weeks prior to commencing vegetation management activities. Door hangers will also be used at properties where special treatments are anticipated.

BPA's Natural Resource Specialist has been in contact with the Forest Service and DNR regarding this project. Any additional measures proposed by the Forest Service through ongoing communication will be incorporated into the vegetation management plan during project implementation and duration.

All vegetation management activities will be performed in accordance with the BPA Master Agreement Statement of Work for Vegetation Control on Bonneville Power Administration Transmission Line Rights-of-Way and in accordance with the specific details identified in the Vegetation Control Prescription. Low-growing vegetation will be protected along the ROW with the exception of brush at the base of transmission structures, tower sites, and within access roads.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods, which may include hand cutting, mowing, and herbicidal treatment, would be used to perform the required work. Herbicide application, using spot or localized treatment methods, would be selectively applied using chemicals approved in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000) and Record of Decision (August 23, 2000). Herbicidal treatment is necessary to ensure roots are killed, to prevent new sprouts, and to selectively eliminate vegetation that interferes with the operation and maintenance of the transmission line infrastructure.

Initial treatment of 576 acres of ROW and 28,087 feet of access roads will begin in 2016 with a follow-up treatment to be performed in 2017, depending on initial treatment and vegetation control effectiveness. In addition, 978 danger trees will be removed that have the potential to grow, fall, or bend into the transmission line. A majority of these trees are on Forest Service land and are dead due to beetle kill. An additional 57 trees will be side limbed to prevent contact to the energized conductors. Cut, lop and scatter, or mulching techniques will be used along the ROW to dispose of debris. Reseeding using a native seed mix will occur as necessary to stabilize traveled surfaces. The transmission line ROW, structure sites, and access roads will be maintained on a 5- to 10-year treatment cycle. The project will start October 2016 and end September 30, 2017. All project activities will observe the bald eagle mitigation and nesting season restrictions.

The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the subject transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. All work performed would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA safety standards.

Analysis: A Vegetation Control Prescription was completed for this project in accordance with the requirements identified in BPA's EIS and ROD. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable conservation and avoidance measures outlined in the Vegetation Control Prescription's Conservation and Avoidance Measures cover sheet.

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Prescription. Trees and brush in riparian zones will be selectively cut to include only those that are in violation of current BPA ground to conductor clearance electrical safety standards. Trees will be topped where shrubs are not present to provide shade and a silt buffer. No ground-disturbing vegetation management methods will be implemented, thus minimizing the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near water bodies. Only BPA-approved herbicides using the specified buffer width from the edge of any water resource will be used for stump treatment. No drinking water, irrigation wells, or water supplies were identified along the ROW.

T&E Species and Habitats: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act, BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project will have any effects on any listed species. A species list was obtained from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in August 2016, identifying threatened and endangered species and Critical Habitat Units potentially occurring in the project area. Based on the ESA review conducted, BPA made a determination of "No Effect" for all ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat that occur in the project area under the jurisdiction of the USFWS. BPA also conducted a review of species under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). No ESA-listed Pacific salmon species are found in the project area; thus, a determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA-listed species under NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of NOAA Fisheries' and BPA's integrated GIS system database identified no Essential Fish Habitat streams occurring in the project area. A determination was made that this project will have "No Effect" on essential fish habitat.

Cultural Resources: Vegetation management activities are not anticipated to affect cultural resources as there will not be any ground-disturbing activities. If archaeological material is discovered during the course of vegetation management activities, all work will be halted and the appropriate tribe, the BPA Environmental Representative, and the BPA archaeologist will be notified.

Revegetation: No revegetation would be conducted at this time due to very low ground disturbance. Any need for reseeded would be continually assessed as the project work progresses and would be performed if the need arises. In addition, equipment would be power washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

Monitoring: The ROW identified in the prescription will be inspected after completion of the work to determine if all target vegetation has been removed. Follow-up monitoring for vegetation control would combine work-in-progress inspections and next-season site reviews to determine the effectiveness of control methods.

Findings: This Supplement Analysis finds that: (1) the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD and (2) there are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. This Supplement Analysis also finds the proposed actions will not affect threatened or endangered species. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Michael A. Rosales

Michael A. Rosales

Physical Scientist

CONCUR: /s/ Stacy L. Mason DATE: September 23, 2016

Stacy Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment:

Vegetation Control Prescription

Effects Determination