



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

August 1, 2013

In reply refer to: KEC-4

To: Parties Interested in the Montana-to-Washington Transmission System Upgrade Project

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to upgrade parts of its existing high voltage transmission system in Montana, Idaho, and Washington as a result of recent customer requests for transmission service. This letter briefly explains what is being proposed, outlines our environmental review process and schedule, and informs you on how to comment on the proposal. Please note that this proposed project was formerly known as the Colstrip Upgrade Project or "CUP West."

Proposal. BPA is proposing several upgrades on its existing transmission system in order to increase available transmission capacity from BPA's Garrison Substation in Western Montana to load centers west of the Cascades and to market hubs serving the entire Northwest power market. These upgrades would help BPA accommodate requests for long-term firm transmission service that BPA has received for the West of Garrison and West of Hatwai transmission paths. More specifically, these upgrades would increase the firm east-to-west transfer capability of these transmission paths primarily by increasing the series compensation in *existing* 500- kilovolt (kV) lines in the area and would not require any *new* high voltage transmission lines.

To understand the potential environmental impacts of this proposal, BPA will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. We are presently considering two alternatives to be studied in detail in the EIS: the proposed system upgrades listed above and a "no action" alternative in which BPA would not upgrade its system and not be able to provide the requested transmission service. The EIS will describe anticipated impacts to the natural and built environment and include mitigation measures to avoid or minimize impacts. During this process, BPA will work with federal, state and local agencies, tribes, landowners, and interest groups.

BPA activities within the state of Montana. If BPA decides to build the proposed project, we would construct a new series compensation substation along existing BPA transmission lines in either Mineral or Missoula County, Montana (*please see the enclosed project maps*). The new series compensation substation would increase transmission capacity along the *existing* transmission lines. BPA is considering eight potential location options for the proposed series compensation substation and is analyzing the potential environmental impacts of each option. BPA is also proposing to upgrade transmission equipment within the *existing* Garrison and Hot Springs substations that would enable more power to flow through the existing transmission lines and that would support required voltage levels within these facilities.

Public Meetings Held and Ways to Still Comment.

BPA held a series of public meetings to solicit comments on the scope of this proposed project in May through June, 2012. The scoping comment period closed on July 2, 2012; and, the comments that were received can be seen in their entirety at www.bpa.gov/goto/M2WScopingComments2012. In response to the comments received during scoping, BPA is considering a new substation site option not previously identified. Because this is a new addition to the original project proposal, we would like to hear from you about this new project development.

Choose the way you would like to comment:

Mail: **Bonneville Power Administration**
Public Affairs – DKE-7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97293-4428

Online: www.bpa.gov/comment
E-mail: comment@bpa.gov
FAX: 503-230-4019
Toll-free: 800-622-4519

You may return the enclosed comment form or other written correspondence in the postage-paid envelope provided. Please submit comments to us by **October 31, 2013** and reference the “*Montana-to-Washington Transmission System Upgrade Project*.” We will post all comments we receive on our website at www.bpa.gov/comment.

Process and Schedule. Starting as early as fall 2013, you may see BPA staff or contractors in the area as they conduct engineering and environmental surveys. If we need to enter property where we do not have existing access rights, we will contact property owners for permission through a separate mailing.

BPA is planning to produce a draft EIS for review and comment in the fall of 2014. If you would like to receive a copy of the draft EIS, please indicate on the enclosed comment form as to how you would like to receive it once it is available. If you would like to be taken off the project mailing list, please mark the box on the form. If you do not return the form, you will still receive notice when the draft EIS is available.

BPA expects to issue a final EIS for the proposal in the fall of 2015. BPA’s decision concerning the proposed transmission system upgrades will be documented in a record of decision that will follow the final EIS.

For More Information. To find out more about the project, please go to BPA’s project website at www.bpa.gov/go/M2W.

If you have questions regarding the environmental process, please contact me toll-free at (800) 282-3713, directly at (503) 230-4145 or by e-mail at ammontano@bpa.gov. If you have other questions or would like more project-specific information, please contact Amit Sinha, Project Manager, at the toll-free number listed above, directly at (360) 619-6178 or e-mail at axsinha@bpa.gov.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

/s/ Andrew M. Montaña

Andrew M. Montaña, PMP
Environmental Project Manager

Enclosures:
Project Maps
Comment Form
Return Envelope