



## Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration  
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TRANSMISSION SERVICES

November 5, 2010

In reply refer to: TEP-TPP-3

### **To: Parties Interested in the Grand Coulee Transmission Project**

#### **Background**

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) was asked by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to design and construct six new 500-kilovolt transmission lines at Grand Coulee Dam to replace lines that have long outlived their reliable service. The proposed new lines would replace six existing underground transmission lines at the dam. This letter reviews what is being proposed and provides an update on the environmental process and schedule.

#### **Proposal**

The six existing underground transmission lines, consisting of 18 aging, oil-filled cables, are currently located between Grand Coulee's Third Powerplant and the 500-kV spreading yard. Both the powerplant and the spreading yard are operated and maintained by Reclamation. Under the proposal, BPA would replace the aging lines with new overhead transmission lines that would transfer power generated at the Third Powerplant across the Columbia River and past the visitor center area. These new lines then would run uphill where they would connect to existing transmission lines that transfer power from this area into the regional power grid (please see the enclosed map). The project would help ensure safe and reliable transmission of power from Grand Coulee Dam.

#### **Environmental review schedule**

The project consists of two phases. Phase I includes environmental clearance, public involvement, and design work. Upon completion of Phase I, Reclamation and BPA will decide whether to proceed with Phase II, which would include construction of the project.

In July 2009, BPA began Phase I by notifying the public about the proposal and BPA's and Reclamation's intent to prepare an environmental assessment (EA). We also held two public scoping meetings on July 16 and August 11, 2009, in Grand Coulee, Wash., to allow the public to learn more about the proposed project and to provide comments on the scope of the EA and the project's potential impacts.

BPA and Reclamation then began work on the preliminary EA, which will address comments received during the scoping process and discuss potential impacts caused by the proposed project and alternatives on the natural and human environment. The preliminary EA also will identify possible mitigation measures that could be incorporated into the project to help minimize potential impacts.

As a result of scoping comments, Reclamation and BPA have been working together over the past few months to identify routing alternatives for the proposed lines (see attached map). Because environmental analysis of these alternatives has required more time than expected, release of the preliminary EA is now anticipated in early spring 2011. When the preliminary EA is released, BPA will open a public comment period and hold a public meeting in Grand Coulee, Wash.

After the review of all comments, BPA will prepare a final EA that responds to the issues raised. Based on the final EA findings and public input throughout the process, BPA and Reclamation will determine whether to proceed with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or to begin the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. If a FONSI is supported, BPA and Reclamation will decide by late spring 2011 whether and how to proceed with the actual construction of the project .

**What you might see during the environmental review process**

As part of the environmental analysis process, BPA is currently conducting environmental and topographic surveys and other work in the vicinity of the proposed project. You might see surveyors and their vehicles in some areas. On Reclamation land, we will be taking sediment samples at various locations to gather information that is necessary to evaluate subsurface conditions in the area. This sediment sampling requires limited use of drilling equipment and a backhoe. Additional field work to aid with preliminary design for the proposed project and alternatives may also occur over the next few months.

**For more information**

If you have questions regarding the environmental process, please contact our environmental project lead, Andrew M. Montano, toll free at 800-282-3713, direct at 503-230-4145 or by e-mail at [ammontano@bpa.gov](mailto:ammontano@bpa.gov). If you have other questions or would like more project information, please contact me, Mark Korsness, at the toll-free number above, call directly at 360-619-6326; or e-mail [makorsness@bpa.gov](mailto:makorsness@bpa.gov).

For general project information, please visit our website: [www.bpa.gov/go/coulee](http://www.bpa.gov/go/coulee)

You will receive notification when the preliminary EA is available online. If you want a CD or printed copy (200-300 pages) and have not already informed us, contact us toll free at 800-622-4519. Please be sure to reference the "Grand Coulee Transmission Project."

Thank you for your interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Mark Korsness  
Project Manager

Enclosure