

Scoping Summary

Grand Coulee Line Replacement Project
Grand Coulee Dam, Washington

prepared by:
point environmental, inc.
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Project
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What’s Being Proposed?

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has been asked by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to design and construct six new 500-kV transmission lines at Grand Coulee Dam.

These proposed new overhead lines would replace six existing underground lines. The existing lines consist of eighteen aging, oil-filled cables between Grand Coulee’s third power plant and the 500-kV spreading yard, both of which are operated and maintained by Reclamation.

The new lines would transfer power that is generated at the third power plant, across the Columbia River to the visitor center area, and then proceed uphill where they will connect to existing lines that transfer power from this area into the Regional power grid. The project would help ensure safe and reliable transmission of power from Grand Coulee Dam.

National Environmental Policy Act Review

BPA and Reclamation will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The EA will be used by the responsible Federal official to determine whether to prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or an Environmental Impact Statement.

Public Involvement

BPA and Reclamation have sought public comments by mailing two scoping notices to local, state and federal agencies; community organizations; individuals; and local newspapers and by holding Public

Open Houses at Coulee Dam Town Hall on July 16 and August 11, 2009. Maps and other information about the project were available for review at the Public Open Houses and BPA and Reclamation project managers and NEPA planners were on hand to answer questions and to take comments on the range of alternatives and impacts to be considered in the EA.

Scoping Comments Received

Based on public comments received, five “key issues” have been defined. Most public comments related to how new lines and towers would impact tourism. Many people noted that Grand Coulee Dam and associated tourism is critical to the local economy. This document identifies these key issues and associated public comments.

CONTACT

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project website:

http://www.efw.bpa.gov/environmental_services/Document_Library/Grand_Coulee/



KEY ISSUE 1 – Laser Light Show

Would proposed new towers and/or conductors (lines) interfere with or otherwise detract from performance or the public’s enjoyment of the popular laser light show at Grand Coulee Dam?

What impact will the laser light show have on the lines?

Donna M. Hamilton

Address impacts on the laser light show.

Public meeting participant

...the proposed route would cut off a large portion of the Bureau’s laser light show, which helps the local economy greatly by drawing tourists nightly. Placement of new towers would block that portion of the show that is seen on the Third Powerhouse. Some have dubbed the laser show the largest in the country precisely because it reaches that mile across the river.

Scott Hunter

Many visitors choose to watch the laser show from the park and, during the summer, many times the parking lots on either end of that park are both full for the show.

Sherry Snow

The placement of that tower (in front of the visitor center) will destroy the use of the park and have a huge impact on the laser light show at the dam.

Sherry Snow



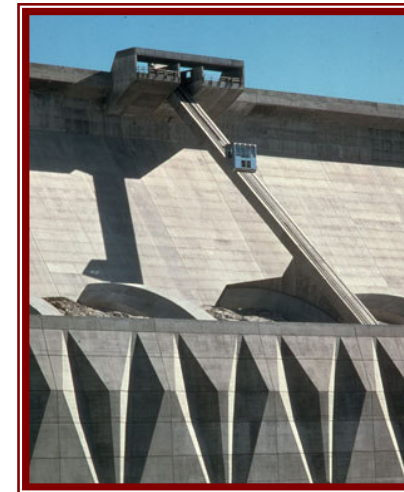
KEY ISSUE 2: Public Tour

Would proposed new conductors interfere with public tours of the Third Powerhouse, either directly through displacement or safety risks or indirectly by making visitors uncomfortable?

I'm also concerned about what impact there will be to tours of the Third Powerhouse. Will running 500 kV lines on either side of the inclined elevator have any effect on the tours? That elevator is our only access to the powerhouse for tours and, if we are not able to use it, we will not be able to conduct public tours at the dam...all other tour routes have already been taken away from us. What a shame it would be to deprive the public of the opportunity to see, firsthand, the biggest and best project ever constructed by the Bureau of Reclamation!

Sherry Snow

We operate a glass and metal incline elevator from the top of the dam, down the outside and into the powerhouse at two different areas. The (proposed 500 kV) lines will be on both sides of that elevator as we come down. We also have an observation deck on the outside of the powerhouse overlooking the river and the project. The lines will be on both sides of that deck. If we are not allowed to conduct those tours, or have to do away with any part of that tour, or if it causes a problem with the laser show, it will have a tremendous impact on the tourism in the area.

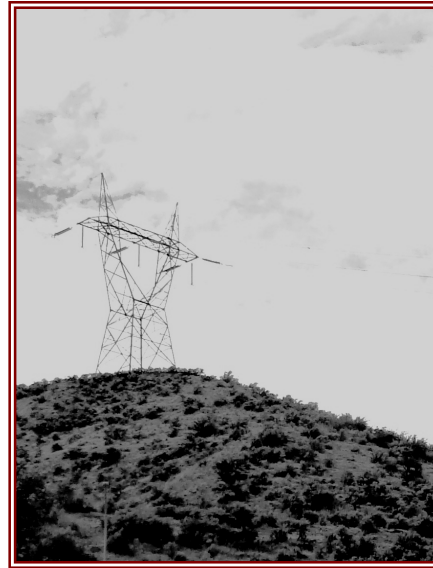


David Marrs



KEY ISSUE 3 – Public Safety

Would the proposed new towers and/or conductors pose a risk to human safety at the Visitor Center, adjacent roads and businesses or otherwise harm residences or businesses, including the Columbia River Inn?



My concern about the overhead power lines going over the river just down from the power house has to do with safety. Is there any health risk to that part of engineer's town where people live, work, or visit? The Visitor Center, the Columbia River Inn and the Chevron gas station plus the residents are all of concern.

Donna M. Hamilton

I cannot believe there is no risk with overhead power lines for accidents or terrorist threats, especially when the lines are so in-your-face and easy to approach.

Donna M. Hamilton

I also wonder about running those lines directly over the Visitor Center. How safe is that for the people who work in that building? The article I read in the newspaper stated that the lines would not go over any residences, but failed to consider public buildings. I know that the proprietor of the motel across from the Visitor Center is concerned about those lines coming so close to his business.

Sherry Snow

...address impacts of electromagnetic fields.

Public meeting participant

...evaluate how living under the lines could affect humans, animals

Public meeting participant

...conduct studies that look at effects this project may have on health and safety. Specifically, I would like to see a sufficient study of electric magnetic fields in relation to forms of cancer.

Jon Meyer



I would also like to know how far the electric and magnetic fields caused by this project will extend.

Jon Meyer

Please study the impact of humans living in area.

Sheri Edwards

I am concerned about the health effects to myself and my animals living under the lines. My house is the first house nearest to the lines; also the effects it will have on my vegetables and ornamentals and soil. What will the magnetic and electric fields do to all in the area. My exposure mainly, as I am an avid gardener. Will this effect my hearing?

Cheryl Chrysler

...some information published by Midwest Today by a Mr. Neal Lawrence which pretty much sums up a lot of my concerns about routing high voltage power lines over facilities that people live in either on a temporary basis, such as our Motel or on a permanent basis such as our employees.

Cheryl Chrysler

There has been some comment in this area about the proposed line crossings. Some feel that the sight of, and the EMF from, these lines would create problems or hazards. Whether perceived or factual, these people will continue to have a problem with the present siting.

Ron Richards

...look at "Do High Voltage power lines cause cancer" go to <http://www.midtod.com/9603/voltage.phtml>

Ron Richards

Will there be adequate safe clearances?

Tim Alling

How will EMF effect the visitors and workers under these proposed 500kV lines? Have you done or plan on doing any EMF studies?

Tim Alling

...the lines will come directly over the Visitor Center at the dam. I work there as a tour guide and wonder what affect that may have on myself and the others working in that building. I know that question came up at the last meeting in Coulee Dam and the answer was that it was being investigated. Frankly, I and my fellow workers do not want to be the guinea pigs in that investigation!

David Marrs



KEY ISSUE 4 – Alternatives

Are reasonable alternatives available that would achieve the underlying purpose and need but at a lower environmental cost?

...the lines will be crossing our property and that will be a major concern for us and frankly I see no necessity for doing so. It is fairly clear that there is a lot of room to have the lines moved much farther South which would then be over government property instead of over private property. Our customers will not relish the thought, nor do I, of having these lines directly overhead, and there would be no question that it would severely impact our business.

Michael Bradley

...has there been no advancement in the science of running the lines through a cable set up that has been in operation for thirty plus years? I understand that are and have been problems with the current situation. Are there no possible remedies for the current situation? What has been considered?

Donna M. Hamilton

Has there been any consideration of putting the lines across the river on the south side of the dam, crossing behind the dam and up the hill near where

the water is pumped into the canal? Would that not be a much safer route for the power lines?

Donna M. Hamilton

Has the only consideration been to change the existing system to the overhead power lines? What consideration has there been to improve or rebuild the existing system?

Donna M. Hamilton

Relocate laser units at the dam’s Visitor Arrival Center to accommodate moving the lines to the south.

Public meeting participant

Position the clearance/right-of-way of the line to avoid the laser show and dam’s Visitor Arrival Center.

Public meeting participant

Please study alternative routes.

Sheri Edwards

I bought my little house on the tree lined streets of Coulee Dam knowing the wires were not live. Please do not use the exiting lines. Please build all new lines closer to the dam and further from the hotel, school district office, and homes of west Coulee Dam

Sheri Edwards



Take down the old lines and open up that area of the park more.

Sheri Edwards

Could the lines go east from third power house and then west across the river behind the dam, thus avoiding homes, businesses, park, etc.?

Sheri Edwards

How will the studies conducted affect the project? And will they stop the work if there is a concern? What do the existing studies show?

Cheryl Chrysler

I suggest an alternate route. Down river approximately 1/2 mile is a Federal right-of-way with towers (230kV) on either side of the river and conductor between them. This right-of-way is likely left from the time when the Right Powerhouse switchyard was located near where the Third Powerhouse is now located. The routing out of the Third Powerhouse transformer deck could be problematic, but not insolvable. The lines would travel primarily over Federal land. I believe the corridor is wide enough for 3 double circuit 500kV towers. The height of the towers could be kept lower if ceramic fiber conductor is used. And the number of towers could be reduced. Tourism is a great boon to this area. Anything that can be done to mitigate any impact to tourism in this area would help immensely

Ron Richards

What kinds of aesthetic blending will be incorporated into the towers design?

Tim Alling

With all of this proposed construction, could the power supply to the Old Colored Light Bank be replaced so the Grand finale to the Laser Light Show could be restored?

Tim Alling

Would it be possible to incorporate into this project a permanent stage, say under one of the towers for community events?

Tim Alling

Please consider an alternative route, perhaps up and over the back of the Third Powerhouse, placing the lines in a position to hang from shore to shore across Lake Roosevelt, behind the dam. The larger towers required might cost more in terms of line length and pounds of steel. But those costs could not begin to compare with the amount of tax dollars the federal government would have paid to impoverished local towns over the decades had the dam been.

Scott Hunter



My concern is the part below the Visitor Center. Please consider the location of the third tower so as not to be in the middle of the park area - these towers are the only ones in the area with a fence around them making a larger foot print, delete the fencing.

Birdie Hensley/Chamber

Also we would like the electrical system upgraded and extended toward the Dam so that more area would be available.

Birdie Hensley/Chamber

Also put in a large system for festival booth usage.

Birdie Hensley/Chamber

We should move the line to only be over the park and not over buildings in town.

Public meeting participant

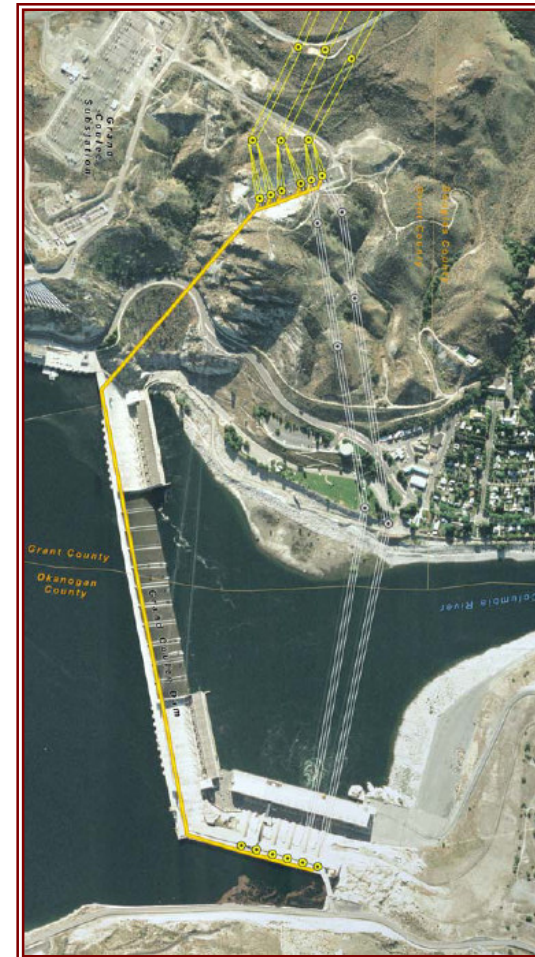
Move the lines away from the inhabited areas (motel) and place them over the park.

Public meeting participant

The project will directly impact the operations of our motel, since the proposed route for the transmission lines will go directly over our motel and swimming pool. The thought of my customers lounging around

our pool and looking directly up at these active high voltage power lines gives me great concern for their safety and health.

Cheryl Chrysler



KEY ISSUE 5 - Tourism and Economy

Would alternatives harm the local or regional economy, including visitation, production, real estate values, jobs or spending?

Would the project adversely affect tourism?

Have you or will you do an economic impact study for this proposed project?

Tim Alling

The proposed route would hurt local businesses, nearby homeowners, and the tourism economy here.

Scott Hunter

The Bureau of Reclamation is well aware that this community (which exists primarily to serve its workers and their families), while benefitting from its payroll, suffers from a lack of taxable property due to its heavy ownership. This greatly impacts our school system and other public facilities. The Grand Coulee Dam Project, were it owned by private enterprise, would have paid enormous sums in property taxes over the last seven decades. We ask that the local economy and local families — federally employed families — not be forced to suffer further from this federal presence.

Scott Hunter

Any loss of tourism would have an extremely negative impact on the local economy. Tourism is our only industry!

David Marrs

Tourism is the lifeblood of this entire community, and I feel that more thought should be given to the impact this plan will have on an already depressed economy in the area. Many of the merchants in the area are struggling as it is. If the laser show and tours are compromised, it will have a devastating effect on the four towns that depend on tourism for their livelihood. We have seen a prime example of that this summer when the laser show was delayed by a week in the spring and the incline elevator was not operable until August. Since the incline went back into service, the number of visitors to the facility, and therefore to the community, has probably tripled over the previous two or three months.

Sherry Snow

I hope you will take into consideration the problems the placement of this one tower will have on hundreds of people in the area. If we lose the tourist dollars, it will mean job losses and business closures. We're all struggling here and we can't afford to have that happen! Surely that tower can be located in a more appropriate place, where it will not have an adverse effect on the lives of the citizens of the Grand Coulee Dam area. The government should be working to help the communities where they have.

Sherry Snow



Would Economic Benefits/Use of Visitor Center Grounds be Reduced?

I am extremely concerned about BPA's proposal to place a tower virtually in the middle of the park below the Visitor Center at Grand Coulee Dam. The placement of that tower will destroy the use of the park and have a huge impact on the laser light show at the dam.

Sherry Snow

It would do away with the 4th of July Festival that is held there every year and the entertainment enjoyed by all the people who come specifically for that purpose, and to see the laser show and fireworks from the top of the dam on that date. That is the biggest tourist weekend of the season, and putting a tower in the middle of the park will put an end to it!

Sherry Snow

As a tourism related business and retired USBR Power Plant operator, I am concerned about the effects these New Overhead 500kV lines will have on visitors to Grand Coulee Dam (tours of the Dam, visitor's center, park below the visitor's center and Laser Light Show).

Tim Alling

The proposed addition of another tower in the midst of the Bureau's park below the Visitor Center would also impinge greatly on the park's usefulness for community events, which the Chamber of commerce has put to good use for many years with festivals that further encourage tourism and raise funds for the Chamber.

Scott Hunter

How will these proposed lines and towers affect Community and Chamber of Commerce events?

Tim Alling

Would Real Estate Values Decline?

Concerned about real estate values decreasing.

Public meeting participant

Study the impact on value of houses, businesses.

Sheri Edwards

Nearby property owners are certain to suffer a loss in their property values due to the widely held public perception that such lines pose a health risk and due to the sheer intimidating nature of newly constructed towers rising at least 50 feet higher than those that currently exist to carry dormant lines.

Scott Hunter



Would Local Businesses be Harmed?

I also cannot dismiss the economic negative impact that these active power transmission lines would have on our business operations. We all ready get some negative comments and questions from our customers about the existing emergency power lines that pass over our property and have been able to assuage our customers by informing them that (the lines) are not active and are only used on a emergency basis when the current underground lines must be shut down for repairs

Cheryl Chrysler

The Columbia River Inn owners know that the proposed route for newly live lines would devastate that business, with hot lines passing right over the motel's swimming pool.

Scott Hunter



The Columbia River Inn

OTHER ISSUES RAISED

Note: issue reference ID in parentheses.

(AL5) Would a new electrical transmission corridor be established outside of existing corridors?

Is there a current easement across our property which allows you to violate the air space that belongs to our property? If so, I would like someone to clearly have title easement drawn up on a site plan as it goes across our property and then have the transmission lines drawn in so we can see the interface.

Michael Bradley

(C1) Would alternatives alter the integrity of national monuments, historic trails/places, or other properties designated or eligible for designation under the National Historic Act (Section 106)?

Historic district charm could change
Public meeting participant

I am concerned about the impact the project will have on the historic character of the dam and adjacent neighborhood. The dam and Town are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the bridge is already listed on the NRHP. The project would adversely affect this potential district.

Susan Ellis

(SAF5) Would alternatives interfere with TV or radio reception?

Living under the line and how it could affect radio, cell phone and television reception. How will Bonneville Power and the Bureau of Reclamation address this if it becomes a problem?

Public meeting participant

I would like to know if this project will affect other services such as cell phones and radio.

Jon Meyer

Study the impact on reception to cell phones, TV, satellite, ect.

Sheri Edwards

(VEG5) Would any landscaping be lost, including trees?

Impacts to any trees near the line
Public meeting participant

Study the impact on trees

Sheri Edwards

(VIS1) Would the transmission towers, lines, roads, substations, or other project components alter views from residences, businesses, lodging, parks, or other place where people enjoy views of the landscape?

Aesthetics may not be an important consideration, but the addition of that many huge power lines in front of the dam may give the impression of a tinker toy addition gone berserk.

Donna M. Hamilton

(WILD2) Would construction or operation disturb ecologically significant areas...including breeding (e.g. raptor nests, elk calving), foraging (e.g. bald eagle perch trees), or shelter habitats (e.g. deer/elk winter range)?

Study impacts to rock chucks and deer

Public meeting participant



Yellow bellied marmots, or "rock chucks," near Grand Coulee Dam
photo: David McKillip <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dmckillip/page2/>

