



File Code: 1950

Date: August 27, 2014

**INVITATION FOR COMMENTS**  
**Bonneville Power Administration's**  
**PROPOSED GEOTECHNICAL AND COUNTERPOISE**  
**INVESTIGATIONS**

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Caribou-Targhee National Forest (C-TNF) is seeking comments on a proposal from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to conduct geotechnical and counterpoise investigations. The proposed investigation areas are within the boundaries of the C-TNF northeast of Soda Springs in Caribou County, Idaho.

The Purpose and Need for this proposal is discussed below, followed by a detailed description of the Proposed Action.

**Purpose and Need**

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide BPA with information on the subsurface conditions and the soil resistivity at specific locations along the proposed transmission line as part of BPA's Hooper Springs Transmission Project. BPA needs to obtain the information to design the appropriate structure footings and electrical grounding system.

**Proposed Action**

BPA proposes to conduct geotechnical investigations at 11 proposed transmission structure sites and counterpoise investigations at 23 proposed transmission structure sites located on C-TNF lands. All work on the proposed investigations would be completed under the direction of professional engineers and geologists per applicable state and federal regulations. Disturbance of natural vegetation would be kept to a minimum. Best management practices would be used throughout the course of the investigations.

Geotechnical Investigations: The geotechnical investigations would be conducted by drilling 8-inch diameter holes to a depth of about 25 feet where proposed structures would be located. Borings would be drilled within 20 feet of the proposed structure locations using a truck or track-mounted drill rig. If drilling refusal is encountered by rock before a depth of 25 feet, the boring would be advanced with rock coring drill tools to a depth of 25 feet. The boring would be backfilled in accordance with state regulations. The actual workspace required for each borehole would be 20 feet by 50 feet.



No access road construction would occur during the geotechnical investigations. Access to geotechnical boring locations where no roads are located would be by tracked vehicles.

Counterpoise Investigations: For the transmission line, one to two small wires, called overhead ground wires, would be attached to the top of the structures. When lightning strikes, the overhead ground wire takes the charge instead of the conductors. To take the lightning charge from the overhead ground wires and dissipate it into the earth, a series of wires called counterpoise (electrical grounding system) would be buried in the ground at the base of the steel and wood pole structures and within the transmission line ROW. Counterpoise could be needed at every structure, depending on the soil types present. To design the counterpoise system, the resistivity of the soil is measured. Soil resistivity is a measure of how much the soil resists the flow of electricity. An understanding of the soil resistivity and how it varies with depth in the soil is necessary to design the grounding system for transmission lines and substations.

Each test would include: At the initial testing site, stakes would be spaced out about one meter along the transmission centerline. Stakes would be inserted in the ground 10 to 14 inches and connected to wires strung back to the starting location and attached to the testing unit. The test would be run and the measurement recorded. The spacing of the stakes would be increased in the following increments taking a measurement at each: 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 42, and 60 meters. The entire series of tests would then be repeated in a line perpendicular to the transmission centerline centered on the structure. The initial testing site would be as close to the structure location as physically possible although it may have to be offset due to property boundaries, roads, cliffs, etc.

Soil temperature and moisture also would be taken at each test location. These tests are done as close to 18 inches below ground as possible. A 3/4 inch diameter rod is pounded into the ground to make a hole for the temperature and moisture probes.

No access road construction would occur during the counterpoise investigations. Access would be by foot from existing roads.

### **Implementation Timing**

Should this project be approved, BPA would be allowed to begin implementation in fall 2014.

### **Categorical Exclusion**

The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations provide for categorical exclusions (CE) to allow Federal agencies to exclude from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) certain categories of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. Due to the minimal amount of disturbance associated with the investigations, the Forest Service is considering analyzing this proposed project under a CE.

This proposal is consistent with the types of actions described within the Forest Service's National Environmental Policy Act Handbook (FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30) contained in Sec. 32.2 (8): *"Short-term (1 year or less) mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment, construction of less than 1 mile of low standard road, or use and minor repair of existing*

roads” (36 CFR 220.6(e)(8)). Forest Service resource specialists have reviewed the proposed action and do not anticipate the investigations to lead to any significant impacts or extraordinary circumstances, as described by Forest Service NEPA procedures at 36 CFR 220.6(b)(i-vii).

The C-TNF Soda Springs District Ranger will be the deciding officer on this project, and should the proposed geotechnical and counterpoise investigations be approved, the District Ranger’s decision will be documented in a Decision Memo. Pursuant to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (Pub. L. No. 113-76) and the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) (Pub. L. No. 113-79), this decision is not subject to pre-decisional administrative review or administrative appeal.

We are interested in your comments on this proposed action. Please mail, email, or fax your comments to:

Email: [comments-intermtn-caribou-targhee-soda-springs@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-caribou-targhee-soda-springs@fs.fed.us)

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Please feel free to pass this letter on to others you think may have an interest or concern with this project. Comments must be received within 30 days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,



JACK L. ISAACS  
Soda Springs District Ranger

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.279(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency’s decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within (5) days.

