

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: May 27, 2008

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA-375- Hungry Horse-Conkelley #1 and Hungry Horse-Columbia Falls #1)
Project No. 871

TO: Joe Johnson – TFBV-Kalispell
Natural Resource Specialist

Proposed Action: Vegetation management along the Hungry Horse-Conkelley #1, 230 kV Transmission Line Right of Way (ROW) from structure 1/1 to 10/2 and along the Hungry Horse-Columbia Falls #1, 230 kV Transmission Line Right of Way (ROW) from structure 1/1 to 8/8.

Location: The project is located in Flathead County, Montana.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove tall growing and noxious vegetation from the right of way and access roads that can potentially interfere with the operation, maintenance, and reliability of the transmission lines. 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 on the prescription sheet/checklist.

Tall growing and noxious vegetation and reclaim trees will be removed and/or controlled inside the right of way using selective and nonselective methods that may include hand cutting, mowing and herbicidal treatment. Danger trees adjacent to the right of way will also be removed and/or controlled. Low growing vegetation will be protected along the right-of-way with the exception of brush at the base of transmission structures, tower sites and within access roads. This proposal covers the corridor right-of-way width of 200 feet totaling approximately 193 acres of vegetation control.

Initial treatment will begin in June or July 2008 and will be completed by August 2008. This corridor is maintained on an 8 year cycle. The proposed action will allow safe and timely access to the subject transmission line which will help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. All work performed will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA safety standards.

Analysis: A Vegetation Control Prescription and Checklist was completed for this project in accordance with the requirements identified in the Bonneville Power Administration's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285).

Land along the project corridor consists of small woodlots and Forest Service managed Flathead National Forest lands. Primary uses for lands within the project area include timber production, grazing, game hunting and recreational uses. The ROW also crosses several streams which should be considered fish bearing. No other agency or Tribal involvement exists.

The following summarizes the natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures.

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are listed in the prescription/checklist. Trees in riparian zones will be selectively cut to include only those that are within 25 feet of the conductor at maximum sag. 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 the streams. Herbicides are not planned for this project. No drinking water, irrigation wells or water supplies were identified along the right of way.

Threatened and Endangered Species: 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 website on March 11, 2008, identifying threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitats potentially occurring in the project area. By implementing the conservation and avoidance measures mentioned in the Effects Determination for this project, a determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA listed species and designated critical habitat that occur in the project area.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of NOAA Fisheries Service 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. 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 archeologist will be notified.

Monitoring: The right of way will be inspected periodically during vegetation control activities to determine if all target vegetation has been removed and to assess contract compliance by the contractor. Re-seeding using a native seed mix will occur as necessary to stabilize traveled surfaces or may be prescribed where low growing plant communities are not in abundance or expected to propagate naturally.

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.


Michael A. Rosales
Physical Scientist - Environment

CONCUR 
Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: May 28, 2008

Attachment:
Vegetation Control Prescription and Checklist
Effects Determination

cc:
K. Pierce – KEC-4
J. Meyer – KEP-4
P. Smith – KEP-4
J. Sharpe – KEPR-4
M. Rosales – KEPR-Bell-1
H. Adams – LC-7
B. Moad – TFS-Bell-1
M. McCracken – TFSU/Kalispell
Official File – KEP-4 (EQ-14)