

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: July 10, 2008

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-386-System-wide Emergency Management of Vegetation Encroachment)

TO: Douglas S. Hunter
Manager, Work Planning & Evaluation –TFBW/DOBI

Proposed Action: Emergency Management of Vegetation Encroachment System-wide.

Location: The project is located throughout the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Service Area

Proposed by: BPA

Description of the Proposal: On July 3, 2008 BPA received a Remedial Action Directive (Directive) from the Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) resulting from a vegetation-caused outage on its Big Eddy-Chemawa 230-kV transmission line. The line was determined to be in violation of Federal reliability standards. WECC deemed vegetation poses an imminent threat to BPA's transmission system which constitutes a significant and imminent threat to the reliability of the bulk power system (western interconnection). The WECC Directive requires BPA to inspect and remove vegetation that fails to meet Clearance 2 criteria (a distance that vegetation will never be allowed to encroach on) on approximately 8,000 corridor miles of transmission facilities. Clearance 2 criteria include removal of (1) any vegetation in the right-of-way that is 10 feet or less from a conductor at maximum sag when rated at 230-kV or below (Danger Brush); (2) any vegetation in the right of way that is 15 feet or less from a conductor at maximum sag when rated above 230-kV (Danger Brush); and (3) any vegetation outside the right-of-way that poses an imminent threat to the conductor by entering the minimum clearance (Danger Tree). Removal of identified vegetation will primarily be through the use of manual (chain saw cutting) means. Danger Brush and Danger Trees removed will be documented.

WECC gave BPA the following time requirements from July 3 to inspect and remove vegetation that encroaches into Clearance 2 criteria: (1) within 5 days components of the Pacific AC and DC Interties, and Big Eddy-Chemawa 230-kV line; (2) within 15 days all 500-kV lines; (3) within 30 days all 200-kV to 500-kV lines; and (4) within 60 days all 100-kV to 200-kV lines. BPA is undertaking the above actions to bring its transmission facilities into regulatory compliance for reliability and to meet the WECC Remedial Action Directive. Vegetation management activities began on July 3, 2008.

Findings: Manual vegetation management is addressed by BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS. Vegetation management activities on the transmission line rights-of-way will be consistent with the EIS and the Record of Decision (August 23, 2000). Manual control methods are identified in the EIS as appropriate for selective vegetation removal (Table II-1). The EIS further notes that "Manual techniques—mainly using a chainsaw—can be used in many circumstances, with relatively low environmental impacts (page 25). The Right-of-Way Methods Package selected in the ROD identified manual methods (chainsaws) as a tool that will be heavily relied upon for all types of vegetation control. Vegetation being removed as a part of this emergency action is being documented and any necessary follow-up will be conducted. Landowners in areas where emergency vegetation management activities take place are being notified.

Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act, BPA has notified the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (NOAA) of its emergency vegetation management actions. Follow-up consultation will occur with USFWS and NOAA as needed.

The emergency vegetation management activities will have no effect on historic properties, as there will be no ground disturbing activities. The Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) have been notified of BPA's vegetation management actions being taken in response to the Directive. The SHPOs agree with our initial determination of no effect. Follow-up consultations will occur if necessary. In addition, BPA's transmission lines cross or come near tribal lands of ten Indian tribes. The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Nez Perce Tribe, Nisqually Indian Tribe, and Squaxin Island Tribe have all been notified of BPA's requirements under the Directive. BPA has agreed to provide notice before entering tribal lands. The tribes contacted understand BPA's requirements to meet the Directive. If cultural resources are discovered during the course of emergency vegetation management activities, the BPA Environmental Representative and the BPA archeologist will be notified for appropriate follow-up.

This Supplement Analysis finds that the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD. There have not been substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns and there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts within the meaning of 10 C.F.R. § 1021.314(c) and 40 C.F.R. § 1502.9(c). Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

Handwritten signature of James R Meyer in blue ink, written over a horizontal line.

James R Meyer
Manager, Pollution Prevention and Abatement

CONCUR: 
Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: 