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United States Government **Department of Energy**

memorandum

Bonneville Power Administration

DATE: JAN 0 6 2010

REPLY TO ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplemental Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-414)- Custer-Intalco #1 **Project #: 1494**

TO: Jacob Grinolds – TFBV-SNO
Natural Resource Specialist

Proposed Action: Vegetation management along the Custer-Intalco No.1, 230-kV transmission line corridor.

Location: The project line is located in Whatcom County, Washington, and is located in the Snohomish Region. Previous SAs prepared for this corridor include DOE/EIS-0285/SA-143, April 2003.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove tall growing and noxious vegetation from the right-of-way (ROW) and access roads that can potentially interfere with the operation, maintenance and reliability of the transmission lines. Unwanted tall growing and noxious vegetation, danger trees and reclaimed trees would be removed and/or controlled inside the ROW using manual, mechanical and herbicide treatments. This proposal covers the ROW width of approximately 125 feet along seven miles of transmission line. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. The work would provide system reliability.

The overall long-term goal is to develop low-growing plant communities within the ROW. Limited noxious weed control would also be conducted along the ROW. The proposed project would begin in March of 2010 and be completed by September of 2010.

Analysis: This project meets the standards and guidelines for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000) and Record of Decision (ROD).

A Vegetation Management Checklist was completed for this project in accordance with the requirements identified in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS and ROD. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures outlined in the Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist.

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are listed in the Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and basal treatment with Garlon 3A (Triclopyr TEA) would be used within a 35 foot buffer up to the water's edge of any stream containing threatened or endangered species. Danger trees in riparian zones would be selectively cut to include only those that are within 25 feet of the conductor at maximum sag. Trees would be topped where shrubs are not present to provide shade and a silt buffer. Shrubs would not be cut that are less than 10 feet high where ground to conductor clearance is more than 25 feet. No ground disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented thus minimizing the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near the streams. No in-stream work would be conducted with the proposed project.

Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species and Habitats: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act, BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project would have any effects on any listed species. A species list was reviewed from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on December 29, 2009 to identify Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species and Critical Habitat Units that might exist in the project area. This review also covered species under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries.

T & E Species: Steelhead and Coho salmon are both listed species that have been identified as having standing populations in waterways that fall within the ROW. Measures identified for water resources would be followed to avoid impacting listed aquatic species.

No other listed species were found to occur within ½ mile of the ROW. A determination of "No Effect" was made for listed T&E species that potentially occur in the project area.

Critical Habitat: Critical habitat for bull trout and Chinook salmon is present within the proposed ROW vegetation maintenance project. Measures identified for water resources would be followed to avoid impacting these critical habitats. No other critical habitat is found within the proposed ROW vegetation maintenance project. A determination of "No Effect" was made for critical habitat that occurs in the project area.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the NOAA database identified Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) occurring in the project area for Chinook, coho, and pink salmon. Measures identified for water resources would be followed to avoid impacting EFH. A determination of "No Effect" was made for EFH waters that occur in the project area.

Cultural Resources: No ground disturbing activities are planned for this project that could affect the cultural resources. However, if a site is discovered during the course of vegetation control, work will be stopped in the vicinity and the BPA Environmental Specialist, and the BPA archeologist will be contacted.

Monitoring: The ROW identified in the checklist would be inspected after completion of the work to determine if all hazard trees have been removed from these areas. Re-seeding using a

native seed mix would occur as necessary to stabilize travel surfaces. Follow-up monitoring for vegetation control would occur 6-12 months after the initial treatment.

Findings: This Supplemental 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 Supplemental Analysis also finds the proposed actions will not affect threatened or endangered species. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

Chad Browning
Biological Scientist (Environmental)

CONCUR: Katherine S Pierce DATE: January 8, 2010
Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachments:
Vegetation Management Checklist
Effects Determination