

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: May 4, 2010

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA 430-Lancaster-Noxon #1 Transmission Line Corridor)
Project No. **PP&A 1470**

TO: Tom Murphy – TFBV-Bell-1
Natural Resource Specialist

Proposed Action: Vegetation management along the Lancaster-Noxon #1, 230-kV transmission line corridor right-of-way (ROW) from mile 1 to mile 63

Location: The project is located in Kootenai and Bonner counties, Idaho and Sanders County, Montana.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove tall growing and noxious vegetation from the ROW, structure sites, 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 BPA Transmission Line Rights-of-Way and in accordance with the specific details identified in the vegetation management checklist and detail/prescription sheet.

Tall growing and noxious vegetation and reclaim trees will be removed and/or controlled inside the ROW using selective and nonselective methods that may include hand cutting, mowing, and herbicidal treatment. Danger trees adjacent to the ROW will also be removed and/or controlled. Low growing vegetation will be protected along the ROW with the exception of brush at the base of transmission structures, tower sites, and within access roads.

Debris disposal will be a combination of lop and scatter, mechanical chipping and mulching. Re-seeding using a native seed mix will occur as necessary to stabilize traveled surfaces. Germination success will be monitored during the next growing season and follow-up seeding will be performed as needed. Initial treatment will begin in 2010 and the transmission line ROW, structure sites, and access roads will be 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 Management Checklist was completed for this project in accordance with the requirements identified in the BPA Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS (May 2000) and Record of Decision (ROD) (August 23, 2000).

Land along the project ROW consists of private timber companies, small woodlot owners and United States Forest Service (USFS) lands. Primary uses for lands within the project area include timber production, grazing, game hunting, and recreational uses. The ROW crosses or is located within ½ mile of water resources that have the potential to be fish bearing. No other agency or tribal involvement exists.

Section 3 of the checklist identifies the natural resources present in the area of the proposed work. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures:

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) that may be impacted by vegetation management activities are listed in Section 3.1 of the Vegetation Management Checklist. Trees and brush in riparian zones will be selectively cut to include only those that are in violation of current BPA ground to conductor clearance electrical safety standards. 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 water bodies. Only BPA-approved herbicides using the specified buffer width from the edge of any water resource will be used for stump treatment. No drinking water, irrigation wells or water supplies were identified along the rights-of-way.

T&E Species and Habitats: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act, BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project will have any effect on any listed species. A species list was reviewed from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in April 2010, identifying threatened and endangered species and Critical Habitat Units 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 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service and BPA’s integrated GIS system database identified several Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) streams occurring in the project area. By implementing the conservation and avoidance measures mentioned in the Effects Determination for this project, a determination was made that this project will have “No Effect” on EFH.

Cultural Resources: Vegetation management activities are not anticipated to affect cultural resources as there will not be any ground disturbing activities. 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 archaeologist will be notified.

Monitoring: The ROW identified in the checklist will be inspected after completion of the work to determine if all target vegetation has been removed from these areas. Follow up monitoring for vegetation control will combine work in progress inspections and next-season site reviews to determine the effectiveness of control methods.

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.

/s/ Philip W. Smith, for:

Michael A. Rosales

Physical Scientist - Environmental

CONCUR: /s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: May 4, 2010

Attachment:

Vegetation Management Checklist

Vegetation Detail Sheets

Effects Determination

cc: