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United States Government **Department of Energy**

Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: September 16, 2013

REPLY TO ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-525)

TO: Christina Leid
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-PASCO

Proposed Action: Vegetation management along the Ashe-Slatt No. 1, Ashe-Marion No. 2, and Ashe-White Bluffs No. 1 Transmission Line Corridor

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 2781

Location: Benton County, Washington; BPA Tri-Cities District

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation along and adjacent to the transmission line corridor and access roads of the 500-kilovolt (kV) Ashe-Slatt No. 1 and Ashe-Marion No. 2 transmission line corridor from Ashe Substation to 54/2. Also included in this corridor is the Ashe-White Bluffs No. 1 230-kV transmission line from Ashe Substation to 3/3. The ROW corridor in the project area measures 125-feet-wide, and traverses approximately 54 miles of federal and state lands, as well as rural farm properties between Ashe Substation and the Columbia River.

In order to comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) standards, BPA proposes to manage vegetation with the goal of removing tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon become a hazard to the transmission line (a hazard is defined as one or more branches, tops, and/or whole trees that could fall or grow into the minimum safety zone of the transmission line(s) causing an electrical arc, relay and/or outage). The overall goal of BPA is to establish low-growing plant communities along the ROW to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods would be used to perform the work. The work consists primarily of mowing vegetation on access roads and clearing incompatible vegetation from around transmission structures and within the ROW. All methods including selective cutting, mowing, and herbicide treatments are consistent with the methods approved in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. Debris would be disposed of using on-site chip, lop and scatter, or mulching techniques. All on-site debris would be scattered along the ROW or hauled off site, if necessary.

Analysis: A Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist was developed for this corridor that incorporates the requirements identified in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000) and Record of Decision (August 23,

2000). The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures outlined in the Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist.

Water Resources: The water bodies occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Prescription. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and localized treatment with Garlon 3A (Triclopyr TEA) would be used within a 100 foot buffer up to the water's edge of any stream containing threatened or endangered species. Trees in riparian zones would be selectively cut to include only those that will grow into the minimum approach distances of the conductor at maximum sag, other trees would be left in place or topped to preserved shade. Shrubs that are less than 10-feet-high would not be cut where ground to conductor clearance allows. No ground disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented thus eliminating the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near the streams. No private water wells/springs have been previously identified along the ROW. If any wells are found during project activities, no herbicide application would occur within a 50 foot radius of the wellhead/spring (164 feet when using herbicides with ground/surface water advisory).

Threatened and Endangered Species: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project would have any effects on any listed species. Species lists were obtained for federally listed, proposed and candidate species potentially occurring within the project boundaries from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Based on the ESA review conducted and project conservation measures, BPA made a determination that the project would have "No Effect" for all ESA listed species under USFWS jurisdiction. BPA also conducted a review of species under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). A determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA listed species under the jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries with the implementation of project conservation measures including measures listed in the Water Resources section above.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the NOAA Fisheries database did identify Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) present in the project area. Measures identified for water resources would be followed for EFH. Based on project conservation measures, it was determined that the project would not adversely affect EFH.

Cultural Resources: No ground disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented along the project corridor. If cultural resources are discovered during the course of vegetation control, work would be stopped in the vicinity and the BPA Environmental Specialist and BPA archeologist would be contacted immediately.

Re-Vegetation: Native grasses and low-growing shrubs are present on the ROW and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly disturbed soil.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period, fall 2013 to spring 2014. A follow-up treatment would occur 6-12 months after the initial treatment, if necessary. Additional monitoring for follow-up treatment would be conducted, as necessary. A diary of inspection results would be used to document formal inspections and will be filed with the contracting officer.

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. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Philip W. Smith, for:
Shawn L. Barndt
Environmental Scientist, Tri-Cities District

CONCUR: */s/ Stacy Mason* DATE: *September 16, 2013*
Stacy Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

References:
Vegetation Management Prescription
Effects Determination