

memorandum

DATE: January 3, 2014

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-538)

TO: Christina Leid
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-PASCO

Proposed Action: Vegetation management on the Roundup-La Grande No. 1 Transmission Line Corridor

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 2812

Location: Umatilla and Union counties, Oregon; Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Tri-Cities District

Proposed by: BPA

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation along and adjacent to the transmission line corridor and access roads of the 230-kilovolt (kV) Roundup-La Grande No. 1 transmission line from Roundup Substation to La Grande Substation. The right-of-way (ROW) corridor in the project ranges from 100-foot-wide to 143-foot-wide, and traverses approximately 47 miles over the Blue Mountains between Pendleton, Oregon and La Grande, Oregon. The line crosses Umatilla Indian Reservation and US Forest Service (USFS) lands. BPA has received clearances from both the Tribe and the USFS to complete the proposed vegetation management activities.

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.

Approximately 123 acres of unwanted vegetation 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. In addition, 11 danger trees will be removed that have the potential to grow, fall or bend into the transmission line. An additional eight trees will be side limbed to prevent contact to the energized conductors. Approximately 0.3 miles of access roads along the right of way will be brushed to remove encroaching vegetation. 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 feet 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, spring 2014 to late summer 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

Shawn L. Barndt

Environmental Scientist, Tri-Cities District

CONCUR: /s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: January 3, 2014

References:

Vegetation Management Prescription

Effects Determination