

memorandum

DATE: March 10, 2014

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-545)

TO: Jason Hunt
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-Olympia

Proposed Action: Vegetation management along the Paul-Allston No. 2 Transmission Line Corridor

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 2832

Location: Lewis and Cowlitz counties, Washington; Columbia County, Oregon; Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Olympia District

Proposed by: BPA

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove select vegetation along and adjacent to the transmission line corridor and access roads of the 500-kilovolt (kV) Paul-Allston No. 2 transmission line, from structure 1/1 to 49/3. Other transmission lines included in this corridor are Paul-Centralia Thermal PH No. 1, Centralia Tap to Chehalis-Covington No. 1, and Lexington-Longview structures 8/7 to 9/9.

The proposed project area measures 450 feet in width and is approximately 50 miles long, totaling approximately 2,826 acres of terrain. The corridors cross county, private timber, rural residential, and farm lands. No Federal or Tribal lands are traversed.

In order to comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) standards, BPA proposes to remove 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.

The vegetation management would include cutting or chemical treatment of tall growing and noxious weeds within the corridor and 2.4 miles of access roads. In addition, approximately 86 trees that have been identified as a potential hazard to safety and operation of the transmission ROW will also be removed over the 50 mile segment, a removal frequency of 1.7 trees per lineal mile of ROW. Six of these trees are in the 30-40 inch range, as the surrounding timberlands are managed private forestlands.

All vegetation control 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 site-specific Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist was developed by the BPA Natural Resource Specialist 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: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Prescription and evaluated in the Effects Determination. To avoid adverse impacts to aquatic species, 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. To avoid water temperature changes, 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 preserve 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. Private water wells/springs were identified along the ROW. No herbicide application would occur within a 50 foot radius of the wellhead/spring (164 feet when using herbicides with ground/surface water advisory). Locations are identified on the Vegetation Control Prescription.

Threatened and Endangered Species: There are no incidences of avian or terrestrial T&E species within 2.7 miles of the project. 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 determines that the project would have "No Effect" for any of the ESA species under the County general list 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.

Additionally, eagle nest proximity to the work areas was assessed, and no nests were less than 0.25 miles (1300 feet) away from the line; this is substantially in excess of the larger 660 foot buffer recommended by USFWS. There should be no adverse impacts on eagle nesting.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the NOAA Fisheries database identified Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) present in the project area. Measures identified for water resources would protect

EFH from adverse impact. Based on project conservation measures, it was determined that the project would not adversely affect EFH.

Cultural Resources: Ground disturbing activities are not within the scope of the project. If a site is discovered during the course of vegetation control, work would be stopped in the vicinity and the BPA Environmental Specialist and BPA Archeology would be contacted.

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 fall 2014. A follow-up treatment would occur 6-12 months after the initial treatment. 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/ Andrew B.Chang

Andrew B. Chang
Biological Scientist

CONCUR: /s/ Stacy Mason

Stacy Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: March 10, 2014

References:

Vegetation Management Prescription
Effects Determination
Vicinity Aerial Photo