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United States Government **Department of Energy**

Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: July 15, 2009

REPLY TO ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-401) Taft-Bell #1 PP&A Project #1192

TO: Thomas Murphy
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-BELL-1

Proposed Action: Vegetation management activities along the 500-kV Taft-Bell #1 Transmission Line Corridor Right-of-Way (ROW) and access roads from structure 1/1 to structure 67/1.

Location: The transmission line is located in Mineral County, Montana and Shoshone and Kootenai Counties, Idaho in the Kalispell and Spokane Districts.

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-kV Taft-Bell #1 transmission line. Total length of lines to be managed is approximately 66 miles.

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 ROWs to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods would be used to perform the work. All methods including selective cutting, mowing, and herbicide treatments are consistent with the methods approved in the Vegetation Management Program EIS. Where accessible and economically viable, merchantable timber would be removed from the ROW and transported to a timber processing facility. Debris would be disposed of using onsite chip, lop and scatter, or mulching techniques. All on-site debris would be scattered along the ROW.

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. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures outlined in the Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist and a United States Forest Service (USFS) letter dated July 7, 2009.

Landowners/Managers: The USFS reviewed the proposed project and provided herbicide application guidelines, herbicide handling guidelines, and project-specific mitigation measures in a letter dated July 7, 2009. For this project, BPA would implement the USFS guidelines and mitigation measures that are specific to this proposed project and those that are more stringent than contained within the BPA Vegetation Management Program EIS.

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Prescription. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and basal treatment with Garlon 3A/Tahoe 3A (Triclopyr TEA), Accord/Rodeo (Glyphosate), or other USFS-approved herbicide (except Picloram and Clopyralid) would be used starting 10 feet from the water's edge of any water body. No herbicide would be applied within 10 feet of any water body. In flood plains, only spot and localized treatment would be permitted within 50 feet of water. Trees and brush in riparian zones will be selectively cut to include only those that are within or approaching the minimum safety zone set by WECC standards. Shrubs that are less than 10 feet high would not be cut where ground to conductor clearance allows. Private water wells/springs were identified along the ROW. No herbicide application would be made within a 50 feet radius of the wellhead/spring. For location information, see the Vegetation Control Prescription.

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. A species list was 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, 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 NOAA Fisheries jurisdiction.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the NOAA Fisheries database identified Essential Fish Habitat streams occurring in the project area. Measures identified for water resources would be followed for Essential Fish Habitat. A determination of "No Effect" was made for Essential Fish Habitat waters that occur in the project area.

Cultural Resources: Cultural resources are known to be present in the project area and are identified in the Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist. Project activities near these areas would be avoided, where possible. If activities near a known cultural site cannot be avoided, no ground disturbing vegetation control methods would be used within 300 feet of the site. In addition, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer has requested that a cultural monitor be present for work occurring near two cultural sites. If a previously-unknown cultural site is discovered during the course of vegetation control, work would be stopped in the vicinity, the site would be protected and the BPA Environmental Specialist, BPA archeologist and USFS archaeologist would be contacted.

Re-Vegetation: Native grasses are present on the entire ROW and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly disturbed soil predominately located on the ROW roads.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period. 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/ Oden W. Jahn
Oden W. Jahn
Environmental Scientist

CONCUR: */s/ Katherine S. Pierce* DATE: *July 15,2009*
Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

References:
Vegetation Management Prescription and Checklist
Narrative for Survey of Taft Bell 2008
Effects Determination
Forest Service Letter dated July 6, 2009

cc:
K. Pierce – KEC-4
P. Smith – KEP-4
B. Tilley – KEP-ALVEY
O. Jahn – KEPR-4
J. Sharpe – KEPR-4
M. Rosales – KEPR-BELL-1
H. Adams – LC-7
D. LaBrosse – TFS-BELL-1
L. Benzinger – TFSF-BELL
Official File – KEP (EQ-14)

Ojahn:oj:7501:7/15/2009 (KEP-KEPR-4-W:\EP\2009 FILES\EQ-14-Supplemental Analysis\FEIS-0285-SA-401-Taft-Bell#1.doc)