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United States Government **Department of Energy**

Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: May 24, 2016

REPLY TO ATTN OF: EP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-622)

TO: Craig Fackrell
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-Tri Cities RMHQ

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Lower Monumental-Ashe No. 1 Transmission Line Corridor (including the Lower Monumental-Hanford 1/1 to 4/1).

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 3415

Location: Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties in Washington

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 500-kilovolt (kV) Lower Monumental-Ashe No. 1 transmission line, from Lower Monumental Substation to Ashe Substation. Also included in this corridor is the Lower Monumental-Hanford 1/1 to 4/1. The right-of-way (ROW) corridor in the project area measures 115 feet in most areas with an exception of a 3-mile section that measure 250 feet. The ROW corridor traverses approximately 40 miles of privately-owned residential property; rural-residential property; agricultural land; and Bureau of Land Management, Washington Department of Natural Resource, and Department of Energy-Hanford lands.

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. 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: There are two water bodies (Columbia and Snake rivers) that the ROW crosses in the project area. 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. In addition, equipment would be power-washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period in summer 2016. 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 needed. A diary of inspection results would be used to document formal inspections and would 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.

Shawn L. Barndt
Environmental Scientist, Tri-Cities District

CONCUR: Sarah T. Biegel DATE: May 24, 2016

Sarah Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

References:
Vegetation Management Prescription
Effects Determination