

memorandum

DATE: March 22, 2017

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: EPR-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-658)

TO: Bryon Lorenz
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-BELL-1

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Taft-Bell No. 1 Corridor

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 3493

Location: Kootenai and Shoshone counties, Idaho; Mineral County, Montana; and Spokane County, Washington

Description of the Proposal: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to clear unwanted vegetation along and adjacent to the transmission line corridor and access roads along the entire length of the 500-kilovolt (kV) Taft-Bell transmission line corridor from Taft Substation to the Bell Substation. Other lines present within the subject corridor are the 230-kV Lancaster-Noxon No. 1, from Lancaster Substation to Structure 8/4; the 230-kV Bell-Lancaster No.1, from Bell Substation to Lancaster Substation; the 115-kV Bell-Trentwood No. 1, from Bell Substation to Structure 10/1; and the 115-kV Bell-Trentwood No. 2, from Bell Substation to Structure 10/1. The right-of-way (ROW) corridor in the proposed project area measures from 105 to 380 feet in width and crosses approximately 97 miles of terrain through rural residential, agricultural, private timber, Idaho Department of State Lands, United States Forest Service (USFS) Idaho Panhandle National Forest (NF), USFS Lolo NF, and United States Bureau of Land Management Coeur d'Alene District lands.

Letters, on-site meetings, emails, and phone calls would be used to notify landowners and land managers approximately three weeks prior to commencing vegetation management activities. Door hangers would also be used at properties where special treatments are anticipated. Any additional measures proposed by landowners or land managers through ongoing communication would be incorporated into the vegetation management plan during project implementation.

To comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards, BPA proposes to manage vegetation with the goal of removing tall-growing vegetation that is currently or would 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 that may include hand cutting and herbicidal treatment would be used to perform the work. Herbicides would be

selectively applied using spot treatment (stump or stubble treatment, basal treatment, and/or spot foliar) or localized treatments (broadcast application and cut stubble treatments) with chemicals approved in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000), to ensure that the roots are killed preventing new sprouts and selectively eliminating vegetation that interferes with the operation and maintenance of transmission infrastructure. Approximately 1,593 acres of ROW, 98 structure sites, and 4 miles of access road would be initially treated in spring and summer 2017. In addition, BPA proposes to side-limb up to 91 trees and remove up to 19 trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW. A follow-up treatment of re-sprouting target vegetation would be conducted on approximately 198 acres of ROW by summer 2018; however, additional vegetation management may be necessary in subsequent years in discrete areas of noxious weeds, or where BPA personnel discover vegetation that poses a hazard to the transmission line. All debris would be disposed of onsite along the ROW, using on-site chip, lop, and scatter, or mulching techniques.

Analysis: A Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist was developed for this corridor that incorporates the requirements identified in BPA's EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) (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. 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 would 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. Where private water wells/springs have been identified along the ROW and noted in the Vegetation Control Prescription, 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. 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, with the implementation of the conservation measures in the Water Resources section above, 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 (NMFS). No ESA-listed Pacific salmon species are found in the project area; thus, a determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA listed species under NMFS' jurisdiction.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the NMFS database did not identify Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) occurring in the project area; thus, it was determined that the project would not adversely affect EFH.

Cultural Resources: Cultural resources are documented in the project area. No ground-disturbing project activities are proposed for this project; thus, this project is not anticipated to impact known sites. If a site is discovered during the course of vegetation control, work would be stopped in the vicinity and the BPA Environmental Specialist and the BPA archeologist 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 predominantly located on the ROW roads.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period, spring 2017 through summer 2017. A follow-up treatment would occur approximately one year after the initial treatment. Additional monitoring for follow-up treatments would be conducted as necessary. 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.

/s/ Oden Jahn
Oden W. Jahn
Environmental Scientist

CONCUR: /s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: March 22, 2017

References:
Vegetation Management Prescription and Checklist
Effects Determination