

memorandum

DATE: August 28, 2019

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: EP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-720)

TO: Jake Grinolds
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-SNOHOMISH

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management around Covington Facility Perimeter and along the Schultz-Raver No. 1 Right-of-Way Corridor between Structures 50/5 to 65/3.

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 4235

Location: King County, Washington

Proposed by: BPA

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in and adjacent to the Covington Maintenance Facility to improve security. All vegetation clearing around the Covington Facility would be on 25 acres of BPA fee-owned land. Additionally, BPA proposes to treat approximately 500 acres of scotch broom along the Schultz-Raver No.1 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line between structures 50/5 to 65/3. The right-of-way (ROW) corridor in the proposed project area measures approximately 650 feet in width and crosses approximately 15 miles of terrain on City of Tacoma Watershed land.

Coordination with the only affected landowner, City of Tacoma Watershed, is complete. The proposed project would not occur on any other property other than City of Tacoma or BPA fee-owned land.

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 will soon become a hazard to transmission infrastructure (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). Along the Covington perimeter, vegetation maintenance would increase security and reliability by improving sight lines and discouraging break-ins, theft, and unauthorized encampments. The overall goal of BPA is to establish low-growing plant communities along transmission infrastructure 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 525 acres of ROW and areas adjacent to transmission infrastructure would be initially treated in late fall of 2019. In addition, BPA proposes to side-limb up to 325 trees in, or adjacent to, transmission infrastructure. A follow-up treatment of re-sprouting target vegetation would be conducted on approximately 525 acres of ROW by fall of 2020; 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 on-site, 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 Final 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 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.

Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Act: 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 conducted a review of ESA-listed species and Essential Fish Habitat (as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Act), under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The proposed vegetation management activities are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the *Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Conference and Biological Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species to Administer Maintenance or Rebuild Projects for Transmission Line and Road Access Actions Authorized or*

Carried Out by the Bonneville Power Administration in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho (SLOPES PBO) (WCR-2014-1600, September 22, 2016). Streams in the project area with documented presence of ESA-listed fish, designated as critical habitat for one or more species, and/or identified as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), have been noted in the vegetation control prescription. It was determined that, by complying with the project design criteria listed within the SLOPES PBO, potential effects to ESA-listed anadromous salmonids and EFH would be consistent with those evaluated and addressed in the SLOPES PBO.

Cultural Resources: The proposed vegetation management actions do not result in ground disturbance to the physical environment, so the action is not one that typically has the potential to affect historic and/or cultural resources. 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: Existing naturalized grasses and woody shrubs are present on the entire ROW and are expected to naturally seed into disturbed areas and areas that have been treated for scotch broom and other invasive species. In addition, equipment would be power-washed to prevent the spread of invasive weeds.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period, late fall 2019. A follow-up treatment would occur approximately one year after the initial treatment. Additional monitoring and follow-up treatments would be conducted as necessary. A vendor scorecard 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/ Philip Smith

Philip Smith

Mgr., Technical & Regional Services

CONCUR:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: August 28, 2019

References:

Vegetation Management Prescription and Checklist

Effects Determination