

memorandum

DATE: December 6, 2019

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: Aaron C. Siemers – EPR-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-731)

TO: John Tyler – Chief Forester – TFBV-3

Proposed Action: Vegetation management including tree removal of dead and/or dying trees along Flume Creek Road; the USFS/BPA access road to Metaline Radio Station.

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project No.: 4315

Location: Pend Oreille County, WA

Description of the Proposal: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to cut, lop and scatter about 33 dead and/or dying trees immediately adjacent to Flume Creek Road, which is a shared US Forest Service (USFS)/BPA road leading from Boundary Road up to Metaline Radio Station in Colville National Forest, northeastern Washington. The tree cutting is intended to limit tree fall across Flume Creek Road during the upcoming winter. Tree fall along the road limits access for planned maintenance activities and emergency response at Metaline Radio Station by BPA personnel.

The Metaline Radio Station is located in the Colville National Forest, in the Northern High Rockies ecoregion of northeastern Washington. The ecoregion is characterized by high elevation, deep snowpack in winter, and dense tree cover. The access road leading to the radio station is a compacted gravel road, with a series of switchbacks to accommodate the grade. The tree cutting would span approximately seven miles of Flume Creek Road from Boundary Road up to the radio station. Tree species proposed for cutting include subalpine fir, western red cedar, western larch, lodgepole pine, and other fir and pine species. Dead or dying trees proposed to be cut and scattered have a general diameter ranging between 12 to 30 inches diameter at breast height (DBH). Trees were identified as dead or dying by lack of healthy crown and/or split or degraded bark, as well as other common indicators.

The USFS has been consulted with on the proposed tree cut and has identified the 33 trees as high risk hazard trees. Specific trees immediately adjacent to the 33 hazard trees may also need to be removed to access the hazard trees for cut and scatter.

In accordance with BPA's agreement with the USFS, BPA vegetation maintenance crews would:

- 1) Cut stumps to 6-inches or less.
- 2) All slash would be lopped and scattered to a depth not to exceed 24 inches from the ground level to the top of the slash, except where material remaining exceeds 24 inches in diameter and cannot be reduced to meet this requirement.

- 3) All material 3 inches in diameter and larger would be cut into lengths not to exceed 3 feet. All over-lapping material 3 inches in diameter or larger and 3 feet in length or longer would be severed at the point of overlap.
- 4) Slash would be scattered in a manner that would not create additional fuel concentrations within 6 feet of the base of residual trees.
- 5) Remove all slash from the road.
- 6) Trees that are not designated for removal with green flagging could be cut if doing so is required to safely cut those trees that are designated in green flagging.

All debris would be disposed of onsite, using on-site lop and scatter as described above.

Analysis: The high risk hazard trees were identified in the field and marked with green flagging tape by USFS and BPA representatives. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures.

Water Resources: Flume Creek, a tributary to the Pend Oreille River, is present in the project area, as well as small unidentified tributaries to Flume Creek. The nearest waterbody, an intermittent tributary, would be approximately 150 feet from one of the tree cutting areas. No tree removal is planned within 350 ft. of Flume Creek, and no riparian zone tree removal is planned. Cut stumps would be left in-place and the project would have a very limited ground disturbance footprint. Water resources would not be impacted by project activities.

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 and designated critical habitat under USFWS’ jurisdiction.

BPA conducted a review of ESA-listed species and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) (as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Act), under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Based on the ESA review conducted, BPA made a determination that the project would have “No Effect” for all ESA-listed species and EFH under NMFS’ jurisdiction.

Cultural Resources: The proposed vegetation management actions would 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 trees, grasses and woody shrubs are present along Flume Creek Road and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly-disturbed soil associated with the tree cut and scatter.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period, fall 2019 through winter 2020.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

CONCUR:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

NEPA Compliance Officers

DATE: December 6, 2019

References:

Vegetation Management Prescription and Checklist

Effects Determination