

Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-845)

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 4877
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BELL-1

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Activities

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in and adjacent to the right-of-way (ROW) of high-voltage transmission lines and access roads in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties, Washington. Specifically, BPA plans to conduct periodic vegetation management along the following lines that are located on US Forest Service-managed property: Boundary-Sacheen No 1, Usk-Boundary No 1, Boundary-Nelway No 1, and Boundary-Waneta No 1 high voltage transmission lines. Work would be conducted along the Boundary – Sacheen ROW between spans 1/1 – 1/3, 1/4 – 2/2, 2/4 – 3/1, 5/2 – 6/2, 9/2 – 10/2, 12/5 – 13/2, 13/4 – 17/3, 18/4 – 19/2, 20/5 – 21/1, 30/2 – 30/5, 31/2 – 32/5, and 33/3 – 38/4. Boundary-Sacheen No 1 and Usk-Boundary No 1 share the same corridor along these sections. Work would also be conducted along the Boundary-Nelway No 1 ROW and the Boundary-Waneta No 1 ROW in these locations.

Vegetation management needs were assessed and Vegetation Control Cut Sheets were created for the right-of-way corridor and associated access roads along these transmission assets. The corridors in the proposed project area range from approximately 100 to 500 feet in width and cover approximately 15 miles of terrain through forested land managed by the US Forest Service. BPA coordinated with the Colville National Forest about the planned work. The Colville National Forest reviewed the planned work and responded with no comments or concerns about the project.

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 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 corridor to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods would be used to perform the work, and may include hand cutting, mowing, herbicidal treatment, or a combination of those methods. To ensure that the roots are killed, prevent re-sprouts, and selectively manage vegetation that interferes with the operation and maintenance of transmission infrastructure, herbicides would be selectively applied using spot treatment (stump treatment) or localized treatments (basal treatment and/or low-volume foliar treatment). Broadcast applications of liquid herbicide would be used if, and where, appropriate. For worker safety and fire prevention, broad-spectrum (non-selective) residual herbicide would be applied, and only applied immediately adjacent to switch platforms and selected transmission structures (primarily wood poles). All herbicides and adjuvants would be chosen from a list of approved chemicals in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000) and subsequent supplement analyses to the FEIS.

Approximately 620 acres of cut, lop and scatter of tall-growing vegetation within the ROW corridor would be initially treated in 2023, along with approximately 300 acres of herbicide treatment. One corridor tree would be cut and approximately 60 locations would have trees side limbed. Approximately one mile of access road maintenance is also planned, which involves clearing vegetation in the roadway and trimming trees to allow for vehicle passage. Work would be conducted by crews of two to four, using standard equipment such as mowers, chainsaws, and sprayers, utilizing light duty trucks and all-terrain vehicles. 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 corridor, using on-site chip, lop and scatter, or mulching techniques.

Analysis

A Vegetation Control Cut Sheet was developed for this corridor that incorporated the requirements identified in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS 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 Cut Sheets.

Water Resources

Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and localized treatment with Gallon 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. 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 or agricultural irrigation sources have been identified along the ROW and noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets, no herbicide application would occur within a 50-foot radius of the wellhead, spring, or irrigation source (164 feet when using herbicides with ground/surface water advisory).

Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Act

Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA made a determination of

whether its proposed project would have any effects on any listed species or their habitat located along the Boundary-Sacheen No 1, Usk-Boundary No 1, Boundary-Nelway No 1, and Boundary-Waneta No 1 high voltage transmission lines. 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, except Yellow-billed cuckoo, Canada lynx, grizzly bear, bull trout, and bull trout critical habitat. BPA determined that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the above listed species. BPA also made a not likely to jeopardize determination for monarch butterfly (candidate for ESA listing). The USFWS concurred with these determinations in a letter dated May 4, 2021 (reference code: 01EWF00-2021-I-0878). Conservation measures, agreed upon between BPA and USFWS during consultation, are noted in the USFWS letter of concurrence, the biological assessment created for this region, Vegetation Control Cut Sheets, and other work management documents. The North American wolverine was relisted as a proposed species after the consultations were completed. As a proposed species, the North American wolverine does not require consultation. BPA made the determined that the project may effect, but is not likely to jeopardize the North American wolverine.

BPA conducted a review of ESA-listed species, designated critical habitat, 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); however, none were found in the project area. BPA made a determination that the project would have “No Effect” for all ESA-listed fish species and designated critical habitat under NMFS’ jurisdiction, and the project would not adversely affect EFH.

Cultural Resources

BPA Archaeologists have reviewed the proposed project and have determined per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that the undertaking is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present. 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 Archaeologist would be contacted.

Re-Vegetation

Existing naturalized grasses and woody shrubs 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 May 2023 through September 2023. Follow-up treatment may occur after the initial treatment. Additional monitoring for

follow-up treatment would be conducted as necessary. A vendor scorecard would be used to document formal inspections and would be filed with the contracting officer.

Findings

BPA finds that the types of actions and the potential impacts related to the proposed activities have been examined, reviewed, and consulted upon and are similar to those analyzed in the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD. There are no substantial changes in the EIS's Proposed Action and no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns bearing on the EIS's Proposed Action or its impacts within the meaning of 10 CFR § 1021.314(c)(1) and 40 CFR §1502.9(d). Therefore, no further NEPA analysis or documentation is required.

/s/ Zoe Wellschlager
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Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange Date: June 30, 2023
NEPA Compliance Officer

References:
Vegetation Control Cut Sheets