

Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-864)

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 4948
Natural Resource Specialist/Project Manager: Craig Fackrell - TFBV-BELL-1

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Activities

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, Pend Oreille, and Spokane counties, in Washington; Bonner, Boundary, and Kootenai counties, in Idaho; and Sanders and Lincoln counties, in Montana. 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.

Corridor	Transmission Line	Span
BMHQ_ADDY-CUSI-1	Addy-Cusick No 1	3/10-26/12
BMHQ_BELL-BOUN-3	Bell-Boundary No 3	1/1-96/2
BMHQ_BELL-BOUN-3	Bell-Trentwood No 1	1/2-2/5
BMHQ_LANC-NOXN-1	Lancaster-Noxon No 1	8/4-63/4
BMHQ_LIBY-BOFE-1	Libby-Bonnors Ferry No 1	45/2-62/13
BMHQ_SDCK-BOFE-1	Sand Creek-Bonnors Ferry 1&2 No 1	0/1-27/7
BMHQ_BELL-BOUN-3	Spirit Tap to Colville-Boundary No 1	1/1-6/6

The corridor in the proposed project area measures approximately 100 – 550 ft. wide and covers approximately 260 miles of terrain through a variety of land uses, including urban, suburban, rural residential, range land, private forest land, and agricultural as well as land managed by the State of Washington, the State of Idaho, the Coeur d'Alene Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Colville National Forest, and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest of the United States Forest Service (USFS).

BPA coordinated with the Colville National Forest and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and no concerns were identified that would affect the proposed work. Letters, on-site meetings, emails, and phone calls would be used to notify landowners 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 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 right-of-way (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, 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). 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.

The proposed activities include the treatment of up to 1,805 acres using selective hand cutting methods followed immediately by an herbicide spot-treatment of hardwood stems, as well as the treatment of up to 935 acres using localized herbicide applications. The proposed activities also include the treatment of approximately 20 miles of access roads, and ten structure sites using mowing techniques and other approved methods. In addition, BPA proposes to remove approximately 80 trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW, and to remove limbs from approximately 200 trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW. The initial treatment period would be from October 2023 through September 2024. A follow-up treatment of re-sprouting target vegetation would be conducted. Additional vegetation management may be necessary in subsequent years of the vegetation management cycle 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 chipping/mulching, or cut, lop, and scatter 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. The buffer distances described in Table III-3 and III-4 of the FEIS apply to these water resources, unless more stringent buffer zones are required for compliance with Endangered Species Act (ESA), land manager, or local requirements noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets. Where private water wells/springs or agricultural irrigation sources have been identified along the ROW and noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets, the buffer distances described in Table III-2 of the FEIS apply. 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 ESA-listed species. Based on the ESA review conducted, BPA determined that the project would have "No Effect" on whitebark pine, and the project "May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect" bull trout, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, white sturgeon, yellow-billed cuckoo, and bull trout designated critical habitat. Monarch butterfly and North American wolverine are candidate and proposed species, respectively. BPA determined that the project would be "Not Likely to Result in Jeopardy" to monarch butterfly and North American wolverine. No other ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat are present in the action area, including ESA-listed fish

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 work along the Lancaster-Noxon No 1 transmission line from span 8/4 to 55/4, the Libby-Bonnors Ferry No 1 transmission line from 62/13 to 49/6, and the Sand Creek-Bonnors Ferry 1&2 No 1 transmission line are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) letter of concurrence (LOC) regarding: Northern Idaho Inspection and Vegetation Management FY21, consultation number 2021-I-1822, sent to BPA in September 2021, with a LOC modification sent to BPA in November 2021.

Lancaster-Noxon No 1 transmission line from span 55/4 to 63/4, and the Libby-Bonnors Ferry No 1 transmission line from span 49/6 to 45/2 are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) letter of concurrence (LOC) regarding: Kalispell Inspection and Vegetation Management FY21, consultation number 2021-I-0365, sent to BPA in April 2021.

Addy-Cusick No 1, Bell-Boundary No 3, Bell-Trentwood No 1, and Spirit Tap to Colville-Boundary No 1 are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) letter of concurrence (LOC) regarding: Spokane District Rights-of-Way Inspection and Vegetation Management FY21, consultation number 2021-I-0878, sent to BPA in March 2021.

The attached Spokane Sensitive Species and Cultural Resources Conservation Measures FY24 outlines environmental requirements to be followed on this project as a result of these consultations and where the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets note that ESA-listed/sensitive species or their habitat are potentially present.

Cultural Resources

All activities were reviewed for their potential to affect historic and/or cultural resources. The proposed vegetation management action is not one that typically results in ground disturbance to the physical environment; however, it was determined that select activities in select spans along the following transmission lines would require the presence of a cultural monitor to ensure no historic and/or cultural resources are impacted: Addy-Cusick No 1, Bell-Boundary No 3, Lancaster-Noxon No 1, and Libby-Bonnors Ferry No 1. These locations are noted in the attached Spokane Sensitive Species and Cultural Resources Conservation Measures FY24 document. 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, Fall 2023 through Fall 2024. A 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 FEIS's Proposed Action and no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns bearing on the FEIS'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

Zoe Wellschlager
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Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: November 2, 2023

References:

Vegetation Control Cut Sheets
Spokane Sensitive Species and Cultural Resources Conservation Measures FY24