

Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-866)

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 4940
Natural Resource Specialist/Project Manager: Cozette DeTray (BPA) - TFBV-BELL-1

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Activities

BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in and adjacent to the rights-of-way of high-voltage transmission lines and access roads in Walla Walla, Benton, and Klickitat counties in Washington, and Umatilla County in Oregon. Vegetation management needs were assessed, and Vegetation Control Cut Sheets were created for the right-of-way (ROW) corridor and associated access roads along the following transmission line corridors and spans. Portions of these rights-of-way analyzed in this Supplement Analysis are identified in the table below.

Corridor	Transmission Line	Spans
PAHQ_MCNY-ROSS-1	McNary-Ross No 1	3/1-48/4
PAHQ_MCNY-ROUN-1	McNary-Roundup No 1	2/10-40/4
PAHQ_WAWA-PEND-1	Walla Walla-Pendleton No 1	0/1-40/5

The corridor in the proposed project area measures approximately 125 miles in length and transverses a variety of land uses, including urban, suburban, rural residential, range land, private timber lands, and agricultural as well as land managed by the Spokane and Vale Bureau of Land Management (BLM) district, and the State of Washington’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

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 75 acres using selective hand-cutting methods followed immediately by an herbicide spot-treatment of hardwood stems, as well as the treatment of up to 81 acres using localized herbicide applications. The proposed activities also include the treatment of approximately four miles of access roads, and 440 structure sites using mowing techniques and other approved methods. In addition, BPA proposes to remove approximately six trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW, and to remove limbs from approximately three 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. 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 determined that the project would have "No Effect" on all ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat under USFWS' jurisdiction. The attached Tri-Cities Sensitive Species Conservation Measures FY24 SA1 are required where the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets note that ESA-listed/sensitive species or their habitat are potentially present.

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). 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 critical habitat for one or more species, and/or identified as EFH have been noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets. 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 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 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

Zoe Wellschlager

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Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

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NEPA Compliance Officer Date: November 3, 2023

References:

Vegetation Control Cut Sheets

Tri-Cities Sensitive Species Conservation Measures FY24 SA1