



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 61409
Vancouver, WA 98666-1409

TRANSMISSION SERVICES

November 14, 2011

In reply refer to: TEP-TPP-3

To: Parties Interested in the Midway-Benton No. 1 Transmission Line Rebuild Project

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) will be preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the Midway-Benton No. 1 Transmission Line Rebuild Project. We will follow procedures of the National Environmental Policy Act. On the basis of the analysis in the final EA, BPA will either prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and may proceed with the project, or will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) if the EA reveals potential for significant environmental impacts.

Proposal: BPA's 115-kilovolt (kV) Midway-Benton No. 1 transmission line extends from BPA's existing Midway Substation to BPA's Benton Substation both of which are located in Benton County, Washington. Also, the existing Midway-Benton No. 1 transmission line is collocated with BPA's 230-kV Midway-Benton No. 2 transmission line. The entire project would be located on lands owned by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Due to age, BPA proposes to rebuild the existing 28.8-mile-long, H-frame wood pole Midway-Benton No. 1 transmission line with new wood poles, new conductor, and associated hardware. Access roads would be constructed where no access exists and improved where access is currently provided. The proposed activities would also include establishing temporary staging areas for storage of materials. Temporary disturbance areas would be revegetated upon completion of construction activities and after the rebuild, the transmission line would continue to operate at 115-kV.

BPA is investigating a potential reroute for a portion of the Midway-Benton No. 1 transmission line that currently crosses Gable Mountain and Gable Butte. As part of the proposal, BPA may reroute about 14 miles of the Midway-Benton No. 1 transmission line south of the existing right-of-way to avoid crossing these features. Under this reroute option, an approximately 0.7-mile-long tap (called the Scootenev Tap) would be constructed to connect the rerouted Midway-Benton No. 1 transmission line with other existing BPA transmission infrastructure. While new roads may be required for the rerouted portion of the Midway-Benton No. 1, no new roads would be needed for the remainder of the project. Existing roads that are used to access the 230-kV Midway-Benton No. 2 transmission line would remain on Gable Mountain and Gable Butte and would be upgraded as part of this project.

As previously mentioned, to understand the potential environmental impacts of this proposal, BPA will prepare an EA. Two alternatives will be studied in the EA (1) to rebuild the line or (2) to take no action (not rebuilding and continuation of current operation and maintenance practices). Under the rebuild alternative, BPA will evaluate the two routing options: rebuilding the line in place or rerouting the line to avoid Gable Mountain and Gable Butte. The EA will describe anticipated impacts to the natural and social environment and include mitigation measures that would enable

BPA to avoid or minimize impacts. During this process, BPA will be working with federal, state and local agencies, interest groups, and tribes.

How to be Involved: You may submit comments to BPA online at: www.bpa.gov/comment, return the enclosed comment form or other written correspondence in the postage-paid envelope provided, or fax your comments to (503) 230-4019. You also may call us with your comments toll free at (800) 622-4519. Please submit comments to us by **December 14, 2011** and reference “Midway-Benton No. 1 Transmission Line Rebuild Project” on your comments. We will post all comments we receive on our Web site at www.bpa.gov/comment.

Process and Schedule: Starting this winter and spring you may see BPA staff or contractors in the area as they conduct engineering and environmental surveys. BPA will produce a preliminary EA that will be available for review and comment in the spring or summer 2012. If you would like to receive a copy of the preliminary EA, please indicate on the postcard whether you would like to receive it by regular or electronic mail. If you would like to be taken off the project mailing list, please mark the box on the reply card. If you do not return the reply card, you will receive notice when the preliminary EA is available.

BPA will produce a final EA in fall 2012. Based on the analysis in the final EA, BPA will either prepare a FONSI and decide whether to proceed with the project, or will prepare an EIS if there is the potential for significant environmental impacts.

For More Information: To find out more about the project and to see a map, please go to BPA’s project Web site at: www.bpa.gov/go/midwaybentonrebuild.

If you have questions regarding the environmental process, please contact the environmental project lead, Katey Grange, toll-free at (800) 282-3713, directly at (503) 230-4047 or e-mail kcgrange@bpa.gov. If you have other questions or would like more project information, please call me, Erich Orth, at the toll-free number, directly at (360) 619-6559 or e-mail etorth@bpa.gov.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

/s/ Erich T. Orth

Erich T. Orth
Project Manager

Enclosures:
Project Map
Comment Form
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