

United States Government

Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: May 5, 2016

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: ECT-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Salem-Albany Transmission Line Rebuild Project Final
EA (DOE/EA 1946/SA-1)

TO: Amanda Williams
Project Manager – TEP-TPP-1

Proposed Action: Salem-Albany Transmission Line Rebuild Project tree removal adjustments

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Location: Polk, Benton, Marion and Linn counties, Oregon

Background: In 2015, BPA completed the Salem-Albany Transmission Line Rebuild Project Final Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1946) and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) regarding its proposal to rebuild the Salem-Albany No. 1 and No. 2 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines. Project construction was scheduled to start in 2015, but was delayed a year due to other competing priorities.

During the last year, BPA refined its assessment of the trees requiring removal along the transmission line corridor of the Salem-Albany No. 1 line, resulting in an adjustment in the number and location of trees to be removed. (No adjustments are proposed along the Salem-Albany No. 2 transmission line.) Most of these adjustments better reflect the location of the Salem-Albany No. 1 transmission line as it was proposed to be centered within the existing right-of-way.

The EA identified about 1,075 trees as needing to be removed along the No. 1 line; the refined assessment has identified about 1,720 trees needing to be removed. About 210 trees originally identified no longer need to be removed after taking into consideration the centering of the line within the right-of-way; those trees are far enough away from the new line location to not be considered a hazard and will be left in place. However, trees on the opposite side of the right-of-way not originally identified need to be removed. In addition, because project construction was delayed a year and the original tree survey had been done two years previously, additional trees that were not previously considered to be threat to the line have grown, become diseased or died, or otherwise have changed enough to represent a new threat to the line and will require removal.

Analysis: Even with the additional tree clearing, the Salem-Albany transmission line rebuild project is essentially the same as described in the 2014 Final EA and FONSI. The rebuild activities will be the same—wood pole structures replaced, conductors replaced, roads repaired, etc.. The only difference is the removal of additional trees in somewhat different locations, though still adjacent to the existing transmission line right-of-way. The following more specifically assesses the significance of the additional tree removal identified above, relative to environmental concerns:

Land Use

Some of the additional trees being removed are located in or near residential areas. Some landowners who may have originally had few or no trees planned for removal may have more, and vice versa. All landowners have been informed of any adjustments to tree removal on their property and will still be compensated, as appropriate, consistent with mitigation measures adopted in the 2015 FONSI. The overall impacts to residential and public uses would still be considered *moderate* as described in the 2015 EA.

Within the Minto Brown State Park, an additional 60 trees (for a total of 103) would need to be removed along the edge of large woodland areas. Impacts would continue to be *low-moderate*, as described in the 2015 EA, since large areas of woodland habitat are available immediately adjacent to the tree removal locations and the tree removal would generally not be within view from the remainder of the park.

Vegetation

The adjustment in trees requiring removal is spread throughout the transmission line corridor and is mostly in areas where tree removal was already planned. There would be no changes in the number or location of white oak trees proposed for removal. The majority of trees affected by the adjustments are ornamentals or cottonwoods. The overall impact to vegetation communities within the project area would continue to be *low* as described in the 2015 EA.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats

Tree removal would take place in the late summer early fall to avoid impact to nesting birds. The additional trees removed would represent some additional habitat loss, but they are scattered throughout the project area mostly in areas where trees were previously identified for removal. Numerous trees would remain in adjacent areas. Tree removal would not change in and adjacent to the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge (no new trees are proposed to be removed in this area). Overall, impacts to nesting habitat for songbirds, raptors and other wildlife would continue to be *low-to-moderate*.

Mitigation

To help offset impacts of tree removal required for the rebuild project (including the adjustments described in this SA), BPA is helping fund the Calapooia Watershed Council's efforts to restore a large section of Bower's Rock State Park to native riparian and upland habitat, including large plantings of cottonwoods.

Findings: This Supplement Analysis finds that: 1) the proposed tree removal adjustments do not represent a substantial change to the Salem-Albany Transmission Line Rebuild Project relevant to environmental concerns; and 2) the tree removal adjustments are not new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns regarding the project or its impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Douglas F. Corkran

Douglas F. Corkran
Environmental Protection Specialist

CONCUR:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

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