

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: October 28, 2010

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA-437 Tacoma-Raver #1) PP&A Project #1784

TO: Jason Hunt
Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-Covington

Proposed Action: Vegetation management and access road maintenance activities along the entire right-of-way (ROW) corridors and associated access roads of the Tacoma-Raver #1 500-kV transmission line.

Location: The transmission lines are located in King and Pierce counties, Washington, in the Covington District.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation along and adjacent to the transmission line corridor, and access roads of the 500-kV Tacoma – Raver #1 transmission line from Tacoma Substation to Covington Substation (15/6). Other lines that are present within the corridor are the 500-kV Tacoma – Raver #2, 230-kV Tacoma – Covington #2, 230-kV Tacoma – Covington #3, and the 230-kV Tacoma – Covington #4 transmission lines. The ROW corridor in the proposed project area measures 262.5 feet in width and crosses approximately 15 miles of terrain through dense urban and heavy industrial properties.

In order to comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) 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 rights-of-way to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods would be used to perform the work. All methods including selective cutting, mowing, and herbicide treatments are consistent with the methods approved in the Vegetation Management Program EIS. Debris would be disposed of using onsite chip, lop and scatter, or mulching techniques. All onsite debris would be scattered along the ROW.

Analysis: A Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist was developed for this corridor that incorporates the requirements identified in the Bonneville Power Administration Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285). The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures outlined in the Vegetation Control Prescription & Checklist.

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Prescription. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and localized treatment with Garlon 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. Trees in riparian zones would be selectively cut to include only those that will grow into the minimum approach distances of the conductor at maximum sag. 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. Private water wells/springs were identified along the ROW. No herbicide application would be made within a 50 foot radius of the wellhead/spring (164 feet when using herbicides with a ground/surface water advisory). For location information, see the Vegetation Control Prescription.

Threatened and Endangered Species: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project would have any effects on any 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 made a determination that the project would have "No Effect" for all ESA listed species under USFWS jurisdiction. BPA also conducted a review of species under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). A determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA listed species under NOAA Fisheries jurisdiction.

Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the NOAA Fisheries database identified Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) streams occurring in the project area. Measures identified for water resources would be followed for EFH. A determination of "No Effect" was made for EFH waters that occur in the project area.

Cultural Resources: No cultural resources are known for the project area. 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 archeologist would be contacted.

Re-Vegetation: Native grasses are present on the entire ROW and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly disturbed soil predominately located on the ROW roads.

Monitoring: The entire project would be inspected during the work period. Additional monitoring for follow-up treatment would be conducted as necessary. A diary of inspection results would be used to document formal inspections and will be filed with the contracting officer.

Findings:

This Supplement Analysis finds that (1) the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD, and; (2) there are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Philip W. Smith, for:

Oden W. Jahn

Environmental Scientist

CONCUR: /s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: October 28, 2010

References:

Vegetation Management Prescription and Checklist
Effects Determination