

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: May 30, 2006

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA-305- Flathead-Hot Springs Transmission Line Corridor)
Project #: V-S-06/05

TO: Joe Johnson
Natural Resource Specialist – TFS/Kalispell

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Flathead-Hot Springs #1, 230 kV Transmission Line Corridor Right of Way (ROW).

Location: The project is located in Flathead, Lake and Sanders County, Montana in the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) Spokane Region.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove tall growing and noxious vegetation from the right of way and access roads that can potentially interfere with the operation, maintenance, and reliability of the transmission lines. Tall growing and noxious vegetation, danger trees and reclaim trees will be removed and/or controlled inside the ROW using selective and nonselective methods that may include hand cutting, mowing, and herbicidal treatment.

Vegetation management work will occur along entire 56 mile length of the right of way of the subject transmission line. This proposal covers the ROW width of 200 feet totaling about 1357 acres of treated area.

All work will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. The work will provide system reliability.

Analysis: A Vegetation Management Checklist was completed for this project in accordance with the requirements identified in the Bonneville Power Administration Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285).

Land along the project corridor consists of rural, industrial forest managed lands; Forest Service managed lands (Flathead National Forest) and Tribal Lands (Salish and Kootenai Tribes). Primary uses for lands within the project area include timber production, grazing, game hunting and recreational uses. The ROW also crosses several streams which should be considered fish bearing.

Section 3 of the checklist identifies the natural resources present in the area of the proposed work. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures.

Water Resources: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are listed in Section 3.1 of the Vegetation Management Checklist. Trees in riparian zones will be selectively cut to include only those that are within 50 feet of the conductor at maximum sag. Trees will be topped where shrubs are not present to provide shade and a silt buffer. No ground disturbing vegetation management methods will be implemented thus minimizing the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near the streams.

No drinking water, irrigation wells, or water supplies were identified along the rights of way.

T&E Species and Habitats: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act, BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project will have any effects on any listed species. A species list was reviewed from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in February 2006, identifying threatened and endangered species and Critical Habitat Units potentially occurring in the project area. In addition, a review of species under the jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries was conducted.

The following species was identified as occurring within ½ mile of the project area: Bull trout. By implementing the conservation and avoidance measures mentioned in the Effects Determination for this project, a determination of “No Effect” was made for all ESA listed species, designated critical habitat and Essential Fish Habitat waters that occur in the project area.

Cultural Resources: Vegetation management activities are not anticipated to affect cultural resources. Written contact was made to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation seeking comment on planned activities. E-mail response dated April 28, 2006, from the Tribal Compliance Preservation Officer, indicated no concerns other than performing the work when it is hot and dry to keep culturally sensitive areas within the general area, as identified in the Table 1 attachment, from being damaged.

If archaeological material is discovered during the course of vegetation management activities, all work will be halted and the appropriate tribe, the BPA Environmental Representative and the BPA archeologist will be notified.

Monitoring: The right-of-way identified in the checklist will be inspected after completion of the work to determine if all hazard trees have been removed from these areas. Re-seeding using a native seed mix will occur as necessary to stabilize travel surfaces. Follow-up monitoring for vegetation control will occur in the fall of 2006 and the summer of 2007.

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. This Supplement Analysis also finds the proposed actions will not affect threatened or endangered species. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Joseph C. Sharpe for
Michael A. Rosales
Physical Scientist - Environmental

CONCUR: /s/ Katherine S. Pierce
Katherine Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: 6/8/06

Attachment:
Vegetation Management Checklist
Effects Determination