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United States Government **Department of Energy**

Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: August 7, 2001

REPLY TO ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-21)

TO: Joe Johnson - TFS/Kalispell - Natural Resource Specialist

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Noxon-Hot Springs/Taft-Hot Springs 56/3 to 66/7+600 Transmission Line ROW. The line is a 230kV and 500KV Double Circuit Transmission Line having an easement width of 250 feet. The proposed work will be accomplished in the indicated sections of the transmission line corridor.

Location: The ROW is located in Sanders County, MT, being in the Spokane Region.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in the rights-of-ways and around tower structures that may impede the operation and maintenance of the subject transmission line. All work will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. BPA plans to conduct vegetation control with the goal of removing tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon be a hazard to the transmission line. BPA's overall goal is to have low-growing plant communities along the rights-of-way to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

Analysis: This project meets the standards and guidelines for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Planning Steps

1. Identify facility and the vegetation management need.

The work involved will be to clear tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon pose a hazard to the lines and selectively eliminating tall growing vegetation *before* it reaches a height or density to begin competing with low-growing vegetation. All work will take place in existing rights-of-ways.

Also, all off right-of-way trees that are potentially unstable and will fall within a minimum distance or into the zone where the conductors swing will be removed. All work will be accomplished by selective vegetation control methods to assure that there is little potential harm

to non-target vegetation and to low-growing plants. Desirable low-growing plants will not be disturbed. The work will provide system reliability.

The vegetation control is designed to provide a 10-year maintenance free interval. The overall vegetation management scheme will be to initially clear and remove all tall growing brush utilizing machine and hand cutting methods as outlined in the attached checklist.

Future cycles - As tall growing species are controlled, a 10-year entry treatment will be needed. Also a review of Danger trees and other hazards will take place at that time.

2. Identify surrounding land use and landowners/managers.

The subject corridor traverses residential, rural, grazing lands, USFS lands and Tribal lands. During routine patrols, tall, encroaching trees and vegetation issues are identified and marked. If a danger or reclaim tree is identified as a potential threat to the integrity of the transmission line, appropriate action to remove the tree is taken. Landowners were notified of the upcoming work by either telephone and/or letters. All issues seem to be resolved at this time. Also, there are some landowner and tree agreements in effect along the work corridor.

3. Identify natural resources.

Some small lakes and ponds have been identified in the areas of the proposed work. These areas have been tentatively identified during patrols and by using existing data sources. The Project Manager as work progresses along the corridors will positively identify them. No other T&E/wildlife issues, visually sensitive areas, cultural resources or other natural resource issues have been identified along the other work corridor.

Prior to the beginning of the work, the contractor will be provided with a set of the project maps, as well as with a list of management prescriptions from the Vegetation Management Program FEIS.

4. Determine vegetation control and debris disposal methods.

A licensed contractor would undertake the proposed work. The unwanted vegetation would be removed by employing machine and hand cutting methods along selected spans of the right-of-way.

Debris will be disposed by:
Mulch - (Mulching is a debris treatment that falls between chipping and lop-and-scatter. The debris is cut into 1-to-2-ft. lengths, scattered on the right-of-way and left to decompose. This method is used when terrain and conditions do not allow the use of mechanical chipping equipment.)

5. Determine revegetation methods, if necessary.

No revegetation will be conducted at this time due to very low ground disturbance, equipment to be power washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

6. Determine monitoring needs.

An inspection will be performed at completion of work.

7. Prepare appropriate environmental documentation.

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/ Michael A. Rosales
Michael A. Rosales
Environmental Protection Specialist - KEPR

CONCUR: */s/ James Kehoe for* DATE: 8/10/01
Thomas C. McKinney
NEPA Compliance Officer