



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
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ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

May 22, 2015

In reply refer to: KEC-4

To: Interested Parties

Re: Montana-to-Washington Transmission System Upgrade Project—Status of environmental work prior to project cancellation

As described in the letter to the public dated April 21, 2015 (posted at www.bpa.gov/goto/M2W), Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has decided to no longer pursue the proposed Montana-to-Washington Transmission System Upgrade Project (M2W Project). BPA was recently informed that most of the transmission service requested by customers is no longer needed at this time. This change in circumstances eliminated almost all of the demand to increase available transmission capacity on this part of the system and the current need for the M2W Project.

The purpose of this letter is to provide interested parties with a summary of the environmental analysis work performed for the M2W Project and to describe probable steps needed to resume the analysis if BPA and a customer that requests transmission service agree to do so in the future.

Environmental Analysis Process to Date

BPA began developing an environmental impact statement (EIS) in 2012 to address the proposed M2W Project and performed a significant amount of work thereafter. During project scoping, BPA solicited public input on issues or concerns about the proposal. After scoping, BPA identified cooperating agencies for the environmental analysis process, completed environmental and cultural resource field studies for the M2W Project areas for which there was permission to access, documented the human and natural resources in the project area, and evaluated the potential effects of the Proposed Action on those resources. BPA concluded its environmental review for the M2W Project once it learned of the change in need for transmission capacity.

Environmental Analysis Process in the Future

For any new request for transmission service over the same part of the system as the previous requests that needed the M2W Project, BPA would conduct transmission studies and develop a proposed plan of service. BPA would evaluate the proposed plan of service and whether there was new information or changed circumstances relative to the environmental effects originally evaluated for the M2W Project.

If the underlying transmission service request and the proposed plan of service to address it are the same or very similar to the M2W Project, and there is minimal new information or changed

circumstances relative to the environment, BPA would likely be able to use much of the environmental analysis work completed for the M2W Project with minimal further data collection and analysis required. If the new proposed plan of service changes substantially from the M2W Project, or if there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, then BPA would need to determine the type and level of additional environmental analysis that would be needed. For example, if new work areas are proposed, then new field surveys and associated consultations would be needed. Either way, however, the substantial amount of work already performed would be of considerable use for future environmental analysis, particularly if a similar plan of service is proposed within a few years.

Please contact Kimberly St. Hilaire, Environmental Protection Specialist, at 503-230-5361 for further questions on the Montana-to-Washington Project environmental review.