



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

July 30, 2001

In reply refer to: KEC-4

To: People Interested in the Schultz - Hanford Area Transmission Line Project

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has selected a preferred alternative from the project alternatives being considered for this project. The preferred alternative is highlighted on the enclosed map. This letter explains that choice and tells our next steps.

Background

BPA is proposing to construct a transmission line through central Washington. The new 500-kilovolt (kV) line would relieve constraints on several transmission lines across the state. It would also provide more operational flexibility so that BPA can meet its obligations to endangered salmon and maintain transmission capacity to import and export energy.

Last winter BPA hired a team of consultants to study the impacts of the proposed project on the environment. We are using this information to write an environmental impact statement (EIS). The information collected by the consultants contributed to our selection of the preferred alternative. All project alternatives will be analyzed in the EIS. The EIS will also identify impacts of the no action alternative.

Preferred Alternative

For the draft EIS, the preferred alternative (formerly referred to as Alternative 2) has been selected because it would:

- Increase BPA transmission system capacity
- Maintain BPA transmission system reliability
- Minimize impacts to environmental resources such as irrigated agricultural lands, cultural resources, military land uses, and plants and animals
- Provide fastest energization date
- Minimize costs while meeting BPA's long-term transmission needs

The preferred alternative would parallel the existing Schultz-Vantage 500-kV line at a distance of up to 1200 feet. Closer to Vantage, the new line would head south for a short distance and then east to meet up with the Schultz-Hanford line closer to Vantage (see enclosed map). From Vantage, the new line would turn south and parallel the existing 230-kV line to Midway Substation, then follow another 230-kV line to a new substation (several names are being considered). We are looking at the possibility of tearing down the existing 230-kV line in places and rebuilding it with a double-circuit line that would hold both the 230-kV line and the new 500-kV line.

This selection of a preferred alternative is not a final agency decision. We will make a final decision on an alternative after we issue the final EIS. We welcome your comments on the preferred and other alternatives.

Current Work

We continue to conduct location surveys. The surveys will provide engineering design data and help us identify wetland boundaries, stream crossings, and other needed environmental field information. The surveys will locate property monuments and set control points for aerial photography. Between now and March 2002, the surveys will also help us stake tower locations on the ground. Tower locations need to meet the needs of landowners and BPA. If you have concerns regarding staked tower locations, contact BPA at any time.

This month, BPA will contract with appraisers to analyze market data on property values along the preferred alternative route. Landowners along this route will be contacted to request an interview regarding this process. Interviews will be done between now and January 2002.

What You May See

You may see survey crews driving on or parking alongside local roads. The survey team may use tripods and bright yellow Global Positioning System equipment. The survey crews will be locating and surveying property and section corner monuments. If you see a white plastic X about 20 feet across on the ground, it is being used for aerial photography, and the X will be removed after the photography is done. The survey crew will mark survey and tower locations with flags and survey stakes.

Next Steps

We will have a draft EIS available for public and agency review later this year. We will notify everyone on our mail list when the draft EIS is available and invite them to comment at a public meeting, by mail, phone or e-mail. More information about commenting will be available when the draft EIS is released. All comments received will be addressed in the final EIS and will help us make a decision on the project next year.

For More Information

If you have any questions, please call me toll-free at 1-800-282-3713; at my direct number, (503) 230-5525; or send an e-mail to lcdriessen@bpa.gov. Information on the project will be posted on BPA's web site at www.efw.bpa.gov under *environmental planning/analysis*.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,



Lou Driessen,
Project Manager

Enclosure: Map

