

# Grand Coulee – Bell 500-kV Transmission Line Project

## Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0344)

**Responsible Agency:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)

**Cooperating Agencies:** U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation.

**States Involved:** Washington

**Abstract:** BPA is proposing to construct a 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line that would extend approximately 84 miles between the Grand Coulee 500-kV Switchyard, near Grand Coulee Dam, and the Bell Substation, in Mead just north of Spokane. The new line would cross portions of Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Spokane counties. In addition to the transmission line, new equipment would be installed at the substations at each end of the new line and at other facilities. The proposed action would remove an existing 115-kV transmission line and replace it with the new 500-kV line on existing right-of-way for most of its length. Additional right-of-way would be needed in the first 3.5 miles out of the Grand Coulee Switchyard to connect to the existing 115-kV right-of-way. Since the mid-1990s, the transmission path west of Spokane, called the West of Hatwai transmission pathway, has grown increasingly constrained. To date, BPA has been able to manage operation of the path through available operating practices, and customer needs have been met while maintaining the reliability of the path. However, in early 2001, operations showed that the amount of electricity that needs to flow from east to west along this path creates severe transmission congestion. Under these conditions, the system is at risk of overloads and violation of industry safety and reliability standards. The problem is particularly acute in the spring and summer months because of the large amount of power generated by dams east of the path. Large amounts of water cannot be spilled during that time in order for BPA to fulfill its obligation to protect threatened and endangered fish. The amount of power that needs to move through this area during these months at times could exceed the carrying capacity of the existing transmission lines. If additional capacity is not added, BPA will run a significant risk that it will not be able to continue to meet its contractual obligations to deliver power and maintain reliability standards that minimize risks to public safety and to equipment. BPA is considering two construction alternatives, the Agency Proposed Action and the Alternative Action. The Alternative Action would include all the components of the Preferred Action except a double-circuit line would be constructed in the Spokane area between a point about 2 miles west of the Spokane River and Bell Substation, a distance of about 9 miles. BPA is also considering the No Action Alternative.

**Public comments are being accepted through September 23, 2002.**

**For additional information, contact:**

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To receive additional copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Summary, call BPA's document request line at 1-800-622-4520. You may access the Draft EIS on BPA's web site at <http://www.bpa.gov>; look for environmental analysis, Active Projects.

For information on DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) activities, please contact:

Carol Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, EH-42, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington D.C. 20585, 1-800-472-2756; or visit the DOE NEPA web site at [www.eh.doe.gov/nepa](http://www.eh.doe.gov/nepa).