Alternative Action

The Alternative Action would include all the components of the Preferred Action except a double-circuit line would be constructed between corridor mile 75/2 (2 miles west of the Spokane River) and Bell Substation, a distance of about 9 miles. The purpose of this alternative would be to anticipate and provide for potential unknown future transmission needs without needing to find a new route out of the Bell Substation for another 500-kV line at a later date if the need should arise. Both sides of the double-circuit towers would be strung with conductors and connected to operate as a single-circuit line; it would be available for a second circuit at some unknown future date. The corridor and towers would be the same as shown on Figure 2-6. Estimated cost of the Alternative Action is $160 million.

No Action Alternative

Description of No Action

The No Action Alternative is traditionally defined as the status quo alternative. In this case, the No Action Alternative assumes the following scenario:

- BPA would not build a new transmission line to solve the problem identified in Chapter 1, nor would another entity.
- The amount of power that needs to be transferred from east to west would not diminish and probably would increase.
- Requirements to protect ESA-listed fish would not change, so dams in Montana would continue to generate power at current levels.

Impacts of the No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, BPA would continue to operate the existing West of Hatwai transmission path as it does now. Because the conditions and problems described in Chapter 1 would substantially increase the risk that this portion of the transmission system would overload, BPA would continue to implement ***remedial action schemes (RAS)*** to protect the existing system, as it has for several years. A RAS is a computer-driven set of actions to prevent an overload. If a major transmission line ***outage*** occurs, the transmission system would automatically take measures to protect itself, such as disconnecting generation or transmission. However, the amount of generation that would be dropped when one line is out of service is exceptionally large (up to 2250 MW), and the potential for dropping this amount is very high during summer. This level of reliance on RAS has the following risks: damage to generator plants when generation is disconnected suddenly, spill conditions at hydro projects that could violate

Endangered Species Act requirements, higher power costs to consumers, and higher potential for blackouts.

In addition, given this scenario, even with all existing transmission lines in the Grand Coulee-Bell corridor transferring power, the congestion is so high that BPA would be unable to continue to meet its present and future obligations in a reliable manner.

If BPA does not take action, it is theoretically possible that another entity might propose to do so. It was suggested during scoping that other entities could take action to solve the problem, and that proposals existed to do so. BPA is not aware, however, of any current proposals by other entities that address the problem as described in Chapter 1. The section entitled "Actions by Other Entities" briefly describes proposals by Avista, a utility with part ownership in the West of Hatwai path and with facilities in the area, and the problems those proposals would solve.

No Action could also result in adverse socioeconomic impacts. Reduced capacity and reliability could lead to higher energy costs for industry and consumers. This would tend to lower productivity and efficiency for industries and areas that are affected, making them less competitive with other industries and areas. The consequences of this would be lower employment and income levels than would otherwise be the case, reduced levels of economic activity, and reduced governmental tax revenues and the services they support.

The quality and reliability of electrical power has been a key to economic growth and improving industrial productivity levels. With structural economic change, particularly with the new digital economy, power quality and reliability requirements have increased markedly. [For instance, the "old industrial economy" used less sophisticated electro-mechanical devises that were sensitive to long outages, but not sensitive to voltage sags. New digital economy equipment and processes are very sensitive to voltage sags.] To the extent that transmission capacity deficiencies reduce power reliability and quality, regional businesses and industries would be affected by costly process disruptions.

Maintenance activities would continue within the corridor under the No Action Alternative. Vegetation clearing, maintenance vehicle traffic, and human presence could adversely affect water quality, vegetation, wildlife, fish, and wetland resources.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

The actions described in the following subsections were not evaluated in detail because, although technically feasible, they do not solve the problem and do not achieve one or more of the purposes. See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the need and purposes and the beginning of this chapter for a brief description of how the alternatives were developed.