

3.1.2.4 Alternate 230-kV Transmission Interconnection

Impacts would be the same as for the proposed transmission interconnection because the 230-kV and the proposed 500-kV lines have the same physical location.

3.1.2.5 Alternate Benton PUD/BPA Transmission Interconnection

The alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would require rebuilding the existing Benton PUD 115-kV line, which is located along Christy Road and extends to the Columbia River crossing where it interconnects to the BPA McNary Substation. Rebuilding would involve the excavation of a small amount of soil adjacent to the existing towers.

Impacts associated with construction of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection would include wind erosion. This impact would be considered low and therefore less than significant due to the short duration of construction and small amount of excavated soils involved. Impacts would be reduced through the implementation of standard construction erosion control. BMPs would be implemented in accordance with the NPDES and SWPPP.

Following completion of construction of the alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection and implementation of project design features (see Section 3.1.3), impacts on the earth during operation are expected to be low and therefore less than significant.

3.1.2.6 Access Alternative

3.1.2.6.1 Alternate Construction Access Road

In order to construct the alternate construction access road, road improvements would be completed along portions of farm roads to connect the site to Christy Road and SR 14. Currently, 70 percent of the alternate construction access road alignment is paved. Impacts associated with the improvements would include wind and water erosion. Due to the short section that would be improved, these impacts are considered to be low and therefore less than significant. Impacts would be reduced through the implementation of standard construction erosion control measures.

3.1.2.6.2 Alternate Operation Access Road

Construction of the alternate operation access road (i.e., paving of the unpaved portion of the road), revegetation and operation of the road would result in low to moderate and therefore less than significant impacts on the earth.

3.1.3 SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

The impact assessment for earth resources is based on the criteria outlined in Section 3.1.2.1, Methodology. Based on the criteria used for this analysis, high or significant impacts to earth resources are not expected as a result of the proposed project or project alternatives. Generally, construction-related activities would result in higher potential impacts when compared to operation, because the magnitude and extent of area of disturbance would be greater. Impacts

would be reduced through standard design and construction practices common to the industry to a low rating and therefore a less than significant level.

The proposed access road would utilize existing roads as much as possible. Cuts into side slopes would only be necessary for a short stretch and, as such, would disturb only a relatively small amount of soil. Similarly, the proposed transmission interconnection and the alternate 230-kV transmission interconnection would join existing BPA lines, resulting in the construction of just four to six new towers north of the plant site. The alternate Benton PUD/BPA transmission interconnection and alternate access roads would also use existing roads and transmission lines as much as possible. Using existing lines would reduce potential impacts by reducing the area that would be exposed to erosion.

Seismic impacts of the proposed project and alternatives would be reduced through standard design and construction practices common to the industry, and in accordance with applicable building codes. Control measures would be applied to all exposed areas during and after construction. Exposed areas would be protected at the beginning of the rainy season and at the completion of construction. Where feasible, onsite barriers (straw bales or similar devices) would be placed to trap sediments before runoff leaves the construction site. Exposed loess deposits consisting of fine sand and silt would be protected from wind erosion using erosion control blankets, placement of gravel layers, hay mulch and netting or similar devices. Paving the stormwater drainage system and revegetation performed during and after construction would reduce erosion during operation.

The project would require that a SWPPP is prepared and an NPDES is issued by Ecology. The SWPPP and NPDES would require erosion to be minimized by using best management practices (BMPs).

3.1.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

Design features would reduce impacts to a low or moderate and, therefore, less than significant level. No mitigation measures would be required.

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