

6450-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Bonneville Power Administration

Finding of No Significant Impact and Floodplain Statement of Findings for

Hot Springs-Garrison Fiber Optic Project

AGENCY: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Floodplain Statement of Findings.

SUMMARY: BPA proposes to upgrade its operational telecommunications system between Hot Springs Substation and Garrison Substation using a fiber optic system. This project would primarily involve adding fiber optic cable to existing transmission structures and installing new fiber optic equipment within BPA's substation yards and control houses. BPA has prepared an Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-1002) evaluating the proposed action. Based on the analysis in the EA, BPA has determined that the proposed action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required and BPA is issuing this FONSI. A finding is included that there is no practicable alternative to locating the project within a 100-year floodplain.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND COPIES OF THE EA, CONTACT: Kevin Ward, ECN, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, Oregon 97208-3261, phone number 503-230-5511, fax number 503-230-3984.

For information on DOE NEPA procedures or the status of a NEPA review contact:
Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Oversight, EH-25,

U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20585, phone 202-586-4600 or 1-800-472-2756.

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY: This FONSI will be distributed to all persons and agencies known to be interested in or affected by the proposed action or alternatives.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: BPA's operational telecommunications system currently consists of analog radios and microwave stations. BPA has proposed to upgrade and augment this system with a combination of digital radios and fiber optics equipment. This system-wide upgrade would be accomplished through a series of individual segments or projects over a number of years. One of the first segments proposed for upgrading to fiber optic equipment is from BPA's Hot Springs Substation to Garrison Substation in northwestern Montana. This portion of the system is approximately 190 kilometers (120 miles) in length.

The EA considers the proposed action and no-action alternative. Under the proposed action, fiber optic cable would be installed on existing transmission structures along the Hot Springs-Garrison route. New fiber optic equipment would be placed in BPA's existing substation yards and control houses. The proposed action would help meet BPA's future telecommunications needs by improving reliability, reducing weather or electromagnetic interference, providing additional capacity to meet future needs, while also being cost effective. The no-action alternative would continue to use the existing telecommunications system with its current reliability problems. This existing system is subject to weather outages and does not meet BPA's reliability criteria which requires two telecommunication paths between every major substation.

The proposed action would not have significant environmental effects. The project would be consistent with area zoning, and would not adversely affect floodplains, wetlands,

threatened and endangered species, or historical and cultural resources. Most project activities would be confined to existing rights-of-way and the use of existing access roads. Construction activities could temporarily disturb some vegetation and wildlife within the rights-of-way.

However, any impacts are expected to be low and of short duration.

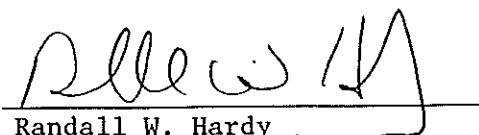
The fiber optic cable would span floodplains and wetlands located in Granite, Lake, Missoula, Powell and Sanders counties in Montana. No impacts to wetlands or floodplains are expected because the cable would be attached to existing structures and would span these areas. There would be some minor, short-term impacts related to construction activities; a slight increase in noise, dust, and exhaust emissions. Because the cable would be attached to existing structures, visual impacts would be low and non-significant. This is because the initial impact of the structure has already been imposed on the landscape, and the incremental increase of visual elements would not be noticeable to the casual observer.

Other Federal regulations protecting the environment would not apply to this project. Interested persons should refer to the EA for further details on the need for the project, the proposed action, scope of analysis, and alternatives.

Floodplain Statement of Findings: This is a Floodplain Statement of Findings prepared in accordance with 10 CFR Part 1022. A Notice of Floodplain and Wetlands Involvement was published in the FEDERAL REGISTER on September 23, 1994 and a floodplain and wetlands assessment was incorporated in the Environmental Assessment. There are 26 transmission structures along the project route that are currently located within areas identified as 100-year floodplains. The fiber optic cable would be attached to these existing structures and would span all floodplain areas. No new structures or access roads would be constructed within floodplains. The proposed action conforms to applicable State or local floodplain protection standards.

DETERMINATION: Based on the information in the EA, as summarized here, DOE determines that BPA's proposed action is not a major Federal Action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq. Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared and BPA is issuing this FONSI.

Issued in Portland, Oregon, on November 15, 1994.



Randall W. Hardy
Administrator and Chief Executive Officer