

factsheet

October 2007

Libby-Troy Rebuild Project Update

This fact sheet provides an update on the Bonneville Power Administration's environmental review of the proposed Libby-to-Troy Rebuild Project, BPA activities in the area and possible plans for construction if BPA decides to proceed with the project.

The proposal

BPA has proposed rebuilding a 17-mile-long section of BPA's Libby-to-Bonnets Ferry 115-kilovolt transmission line. If a decision is ultimately made to rebuild the transmission line, BPA would replace an existing 115-kV wood-pole transmission line that runs west from the Flathead Electric Cooperative's Libby Substation near the town of Libby to BPA's Troy Substation east of Troy, Mont.

The rebuild is proposed because BPA is deeply concerned about the reliability of the Libby-to-Troy transmission line. Field reconnaissance surveys of the line during the summer 2004 showed that many of the line's wood poles have passed their ability to withstand required structural loads, including the stresses caused by snow and ice build-up during the winter. The number of outages occurring on this line are well above the average for a line of this size. Between July 2003 and November 2005, the line experienced four outages that averaged approximately 6.5 hours. Between December 2006 and August 2007, the line experienced four outages averaging approximately 27.5 hours. The longest outage lasted almost 2.5 days. The increased frequency and duration of these outages makes it clear that the line is in desperate need of maintenance.

Environmental review

The agency is currently working to complete the final environmental impact statement on the project. The final EIS will take into account the public and tribal comments submitted during the recent comment period and, to the extent that the schedule permits, those received after its close. The final EIS also will reflect any changes to the environmental analysis contained in the draft EIS that these comments make necessary. After the final EIS is completed, BPA will prepare a record of decision that determines if the rebuild will take place and, if so, which of the proposed alternative routes the agency will choose.

The final EIS is scheduled to be released in February 2008 with the ROD on the project to be released in March 2008.

Recent BPA activities

If BPA decides to rebuild the line, because of the short construction season in the area and the urgent reliability issue, the agency needs to be adequately prepared to begin construction quickly after the ROD is issued. For this reason, BPA has been doing preliminary surveying work on the right-of-way and has had discussions with adjacent property owners concerning various aspects of the proposed rebuild project.

Landowners in the areas of the Pipe Creek and Quartz Creek realignment options have expressed concern that the preliminary field work indicates BPA has already decided to rebuild the line and chosen the route for the rebuild.



The preliminary field work does not mean that BPA has decided to rebuild the line. The agency will complete the National Environmental Policy Act process for the proposed project, which includes completing the final EIS, before deciding whether to rebuild the line and, if so, the specific route for the project. However, in light of landowner concerns, BPA has suspended field activities in the vicinity of the Pipe Creek and Quartz Creek realignment options until the ROD is issued.

Potential Construction Schedule

Depending on the outcome of the final EIS and ROD, BPA may proceed with a rebuild of the line on a selected route. If that is the decision, the tentative construction plan is to initiate work on the most critical areas of the line in 2008 because of the need to address potential outages while completing the remaining line rebuild work in 2009. The critical areas, those that pose the greatest risk to system reliability, are located on public land along old Highway 2 and on the north side of the Kootenai River past the gate at the end of Kootenai River Road. Because these areas are also landscapes to which area tribes have a heightened sensitivity, tribal monitors will be contracted as early as possible if BPA decides to proceed with a rebuild of the line. Much of these areas is in remote country that is not accessible in the winter. If the decision is made to rebuild over a two year time-span, the agency is unlikely to begin line construction on any privately owned land until 2009, although construction or maintenance of some roads on private land could occur in 2008.

For more information

BPA will continue to place a high priority on being available to local landowners and any other interested parties to answer their questions and discuss their concerns.

Information about the project and the draft EIS can be viewed at the project Web site: www.transmission.bpa.gov/PlanProj/Transmission_Projects/. If you have questions or would like more information about the project, please call us toll free at (800) 622-4519 or contact the project staff members listed below.

Environmental Review Process Contact: Tish Eaton, BPA Environmental Lead, Bonneville Power Administration - KEC-4, P.O. Box 3621, Portland OR 97208-3621; toll-free telephone (800) 282-3713; direct telephone number (503) 230-3469; fax number (503) 230-5699; e-mail tkeaton@bpa.gov.

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