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BPA and Friends of the Columbia Gorge reach agreement on National Scenic Area protection measures

Portland, Ore. - The Bonneville Power Administration and Friends of the Columbia Gorge have reached an agreement on measures to protect and enhance scenic and natural resources in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

These measures will help address concerns about potential effects on National Scenic Area landscapes of BPA's Big Eddy-Knight transmission line project, which is currently under construction. Approximately 7 miles of this new 28-mile 500-kilovolt high-voltage power line will be located in the National Scenic Area.

"We agreed to work with Friends of the Columbia Gorge to support these measures because we understand the value of the National Scenic Area," said BPA Project Manager Emmanuel Jaramillo. "While we haven't taken many steps to minimize the effect of our new line on the National Scenic Area, we understand this project is of significant concern to Friends of the Columbia Gorge. We believe this agreement will help us work together to preserve the area's scenic qualities."

Under the agreement, BPA will work with Friends to support a wide variety of possible measures to maintain or restore scenic qualities within or near the National Scenic Area. Examples include the removal of physical structures; restoration of disturbed areas; undergrounding of low-voltage electric distribution lines, telephone lines, fiber optic lines, or other equipment owned by non-federal utilities; and acquisition of land by a suitable land trust or appropriate state or federal land managing agency for land preservation purposes.

BPA will make about \$1.78 million available to third parties to fund these measures. BPA will review and approve all funding requests that comply with the agreement and will coordinate proposed measures within the National Scenic Area with the Columbia River Gorge Commission and the U.S. Forest Service.

Michael Lang, Conservation Director for Friends of the Columbia Gorge commented, "We appreciate the BPA's willingness to reduce the impacts of the project and to set up a fund to protect and enhance scenic resources and habitat within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Now we can focus on identifying projects that protect and enhance this national scenic treasure for our children and future generations."

BPA started construction of the project in September. At its peak, the line will create approximately 100 construction jobs. BPA expects to complete and energize the line in February 2013. It will help BPA accommodate requests for transmission service, integrate renewable energy to the grid and increase overall system capacity. The increase in capacity will help the system deliver energy into the Portland, Ore., area, which is becoming increasingly challenging.

BPA is a non profit federal agency that markets renewable hydropower from federal Columbia River dams, operates three-quarters of high-voltage transmission lines in the Northwest and funds one of the largest wildlife protection and restoration programs in the world. BPA and its partners have also saved enough electricity through energy efficiency projects to power four large American cities. For more information, contact us at 503-230-5131 or visit our website at www.bpa.gov.

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