

EXHIBIT H

Post-Construction Vegetation Maintenance Plan

Prepared by:

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Introduction

This Post-Construction Vegetation Maintenance Plan (VMP) describes the restrictive maintenance requirements for protected natural resources within Central Maine Power Company's (CMP) transmission line corridors. The requirements described in this VMP apply to routine maintenance and are not intended to apply to emergency maintenance and/or repair actions.

The goal of the VMP is to provide maintenance personnel and contractors with a cohesive set of vegetation maintenance specifications for transmission line corridors. The VMP is intended to be used in conjunction with project As-Built Plan & Profile drawings to locate the areas where maintenance restrictions apply.

The protected natural resources subject to restrictive maintenance requirements include:

- Wetlands and streams;
- Perennial streams within designated Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) habitat;
- Significant Vernal Pools (SVP);
- Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat (IWWH);
- Deer Wintering Areas (DWA);
- Rare plant locations; and
- Locations over mapped significant sand and gravel aquifers.

In locations where individual restrictions or procedures overlap or multiple restrictions apply, the more stringent restrictions and all applicable procedures will be followed by maintenance personnel and contractors.

Right-of-Way Vegetation Maintenance Procedures

Typical Maintenance Procedures

Routine vegetation maintenance for transmission line corridors is intended to meet the following goals:

1. Maintain the integrity and functionality of the line
2. Maintain access in case of emergency repairs
3. Facilitate safety inspections.

Therefore, the objective of this VMP will be to control the growth of woody vegetation capable of encroaching into the Minimum Vegetation Clearance Distance (MVCD) of the transmission line to ensure the integrity and safe operation of the transmission line consistent with the

standards of North American Electric Reliability Corporation's (NERC) Transmission Vegetation Management¹. This will be accomplished by practicing an integrated vegetation management strategy using a combination of hand-cutting and selective herbicide applications. Mechanical mowing may be used in unusual circumstances to regain control of vegetation, should the typical procedures not suffice.

Throughout clearing and construction, shrub and herbaceous vegetation will remain in place to the extent possible. Removing large trees will be done during initial transmission line corridor clearing prior to construction of the new transmission line. Follow-up maintenance activities during operation of the line require the removal of "capable species," dead trees, and "hazard trees." Capable trees are those plant species and individual specimens that are capable of growing tall enough to violate the required clearance between the conductors and vegetation established by NERC. Due to the sag of the electric transmission lines between the poles, which varies with the distance between poles, tension on the wire, electrical load, air temperature and other variables, the required clearance is typically achieved by removing all capable species during each maintenance cycle. Removing capable species vegetation allows for the maintenance of 25 feet of separation between vegetation and the lines, thereby adhering to NERC standards. Hazard trees are those trees typically on the edge of the transmission line corridor that pose an imminent threat to violating the minimum separation standard or are at risk of contacting the lines themselves. Hazard trees are typically removed immediately upon identification.

More frequent vegetation management may be required within the first 3 to 4 years following construction in order to bring the vegetation under control. After this initial management period, maintenance practices are typically carried out on a 4-year cycle depending on growth, weather, geographic location, and corridor width. Maintenance may be required less frequently in the long-term as vegetation within the corridor becomes dominated by shrub and herbaceous species. Large branches that overhang the transmission line corridor and any hazard trees on the edge of, or outside of, the transmission line corridor that could contact the electrical lines or come within 15 feet of a conductor may be removed as soon as they are identified.

The following procedures will be implemented during vegetation maintenance activities to protect sensitive natural resources:

- Protected resources and their associated buffers will be flagged or located with a Global Positioning System (GPS) prior to all maintenance operations;
- Hand-cutting will be the preferred method of vegetation maintenance within buffers and sensitive areas, where reasonable and practicable;
- Equipment access through wetlands or over streams will be avoided as much as practicable by utilizing existing public or private access roads, with landowner approval where required;

¹ North American Electric Reliability Corporation Transmission Vegetation Management, Standard FAC 003 – 3 Technical Reference, July 1, 2014.

- Equipment access in upland areas with saturated soils will be minimized to the extent practicable to avoid rutting or other ground disturbance;
- Significant damage to wetland or stream bank vegetation, if any, will be repaired following completion of maintenance activities in the area; and
- Areas of significant soil disturbance will be stabilized and reseeded following completion of maintenance activity in the area.

Vegetation Maintenance Methods – All Transmission Line Corridor Areas

Mechanical Methods

During routine vegetation maintenance after construction, mechanical methods of maintaining the height of vegetation on the transmission line corridor will consist primarily of cutting with hand tools, with occasional use of chainsaws and limited use of motorized equipment in areas directly accessible from public or private access roads.

Maintenance procedures will be to cut all capable species and any dead or hazard trees at ground level except in designated buffer zones, as described below. Large vegetation cut during routine maintenance will be handled in accordance with the Maine Slash Law².

Herbicide Application

Herbicide application will be used in conjunction with the mechanical methods of vegetation maintenance. The herbicide application program is consistent with most New England utilities and consists of direct application to targeted species and specimens along the transmission line corridor with a low-volume foliar herbicide or application of herbicides to cut stumps and surfaces of larger trees. Direct application to individual plant species, as opposed to a broadcast spray, will control only the targeted woody vegetation allowing low-growing plant communities (the desired shrub and herbaceous species) to thrive. Selective herbicides will also be used to minimize the impacts to non-target species. Aerial application will not be used. Only herbicides which are registered with and approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA-approved) and registered with the Maine Board of Pesticides Control (BPC) will be used.

Herbicide applications will likely begin the first year after construction is completed to gain control of vegetation growth. When control is achieved, treatment will typically occur on a 4-year cycle or as needed. By using selective herbicides and a variety of application methods, vegetation along the transmission line corridor will eventually consist of a dense, low-growing plant community that will discourage the establishment of tree species. Therefore, fewer woody species will require treatment in future applications.

2 12 MRSA §9331 et. Seq.

The following procedures will be implemented during herbicide applications:

- Herbicides will be used in strict accordance with the manufacturer's EPA-approved labeling and will not be applied directly to waterbodies or areas where surface water is present;
- Herbicides will not be applied within 25 feet of rivers, streams, brooks, lakes, ponds, or wetlands that have water present at the surface at the time of the application;
- Herbicides will not be mixed, transferred or stored within 100 feet of any wetland or surface water, unless done so on a public access road;
- Herbicides will not be mixed, transferred or stored within 100 feet of Significant Vernal Pool depressions;
- Herbicides will not be mixed, transferred or stored over mapped significant sand and gravel aquifers;
- Herbicides will not be applied, mixed, transferred or stored within 100 feet of any known private well or spring or within 200 feet of any known public water supply well;
- When herbicide applications are performed in wetlands without standing water, only herbicides approved for use in wetland environments will be used;
- Herbicides will not be applied to any area when it is raining or when wind speed exceeds 15 miles per hour as measured on-site at the time of application. When wind speeds are below 3 miles per hour, applicators should be aware whether a temperature inversion is present, and should consult the herbicide label to determine whether application should proceed under these conditions;
- The foreman or licensed applicator on each herbicide application crew will be licensed by the Maine BPC and will remain in eye contact and within earshot of all persons on his/her crew applying herbicides. At least one individual from any company applying herbicides must also hold a Commercial Master Applicator License issued by the BPC. This Master Applicator must have the ability to be on-site to assist persons applying herbicides within six hours driving time. If an out-of-state company is conducting the herbicide application, the company must have a Master Applicator in Maine during any application. Application of herbicides will be in accordance with applicable regulations promulgated under the Maine Pesticides Control Act, including those regulations to minimize drift, to maintain setbacks from sensitive areas during application, and to maintain setbacks from surface waters during the storing/mixing/loading of herbicides; and
- Herbicides will typically be mixed in a truck-mounted tank that remains on public access roads. Herbicide application is done by personnel with low-volume, hand-pressurized (manual) backpacks with appropriate nozzles, to minimize drift, who travel along the transmission line corridor by foot or by all-terrain vehicle and spot-treat target species and specimens.

The location of all streams, wetlands, significant vernal pools, rare plant locations, known wells, and mapped significant sand and gravel aquifers crossed by the transmission line corridor will be shown on the As-Built Plan & Profile drawings. GIS shapefiles will also be maintained with the location of these resources and will be provided to maintenance personnel. The presence of surface water will be determined prior to herbicide use in any wetland or waterbody. Crew leaders will assure that resources and buffers are clearly marked in the field, or that locations of resources and buffers are provided as GIS/GPS data prior to initiation of an herbicide application for clear identification by the applicators.

Vegetation Maintenance within Freshwater Wetlands

Transmission line corridor wetlands range in type from small, emergent wetlands formed in ruts from logging equipment to large forested wetland systems. No specific buffers are proposed for the wetlands identified within the transmission line corridor.

Additional Vegetation Maintenance Restrictions within and Adjacent to Freshwater Wetlands

Vegetation maintenance within, and within 25 feet of, freshwater wetlands with standing water will be conducted only by hand cutting with hand tools or chainsaws. Herbicide use is permitted in wetlands only when no standing water is present in the wetland at the time of the application. Herbicides will not be stored, mixed, transferred between containers, and no refueling of chain saws or other equipment will be allowed, within 100 feet of freshwater wetlands, unless done so on a public access road.

Vegetation Maintenance within Stream Buffers

A 25-foot buffer, as measured from the top of each bank, will be established for vegetation maintenance along streams within the transmission line corridor. Additional restrictions will be applied within 100 feet of streams. Special restrictions will apply within these stream buffers during vegetation maintenance.

This section describes the restrictions related to vegetation cutting and maintenance that will apply within these stream buffers. All vegetation maintenance procedures and restrictions that apply to typical transmission line corridor maintenance also apply within the stream buffers.

Additional Vegetation Maintenance Restrictions within Stream Buffers

The following additional restrictions apply to vegetation maintenance within stream buffers:

- Within that portion of the 25-foot stream buffer that is within the wire zone (i.e., within 15 feet, horizontally, of any conductor; (see Figure 1), all woody vegetation over 10 feet in height, whether capable or non-capable, will be cut back to ground level and resulting slash will be managed in accordance with

Maine Slash Law. No other vegetation, other than dead or hazard trees, will be removed;

- Removal of capable species, dead or hazard trees within the 25-foot buffer will be accomplished by hand-cutting only. Use of mechanized harvesting equipment is prohibited;
- Herbicides will not be applied within the 25-foot stream buffer;
- Herbicides will not be stored, mixed or transferred between containers within 100 feet of streams, unless done so on a public access road;
- No refueling or maintenance of equipment, including chain saws, will occur within 100 feet of streams, unless done so on a public access road; and
- No accumulation of slash will be left within 25 feet of the edge of any stream.

These additional restrictions will allow for taller vegetation within the 25-foot stream buffer to provide additional shading and reduce the warming effect of direct sunlight (insolation). Low ground cover vegetation will also remain to filter any sediment in surface runoff. The restrictions are also intended to minimize ground disturbance and prevent or minimize the surface transport of herbicides and petroleum products to streams. These restrictions will allow the stream buffers to provide functions and values similar to those provided prior to transmission line construction.

Vegetation Maintenance within Significant Vernal Pool Buffers

Vegetated buffers of 100 feet, as measured from the edge of the pool depression, will be established for SVPs crossed by the transmission line corridor. Vegetation maintenance within the SVP buffers will be subject to the same procedures and prohibitions, as applicable, which are required in the typical transmission line corridor, as well as to the additional measures below.

Additional Vegetation Maintenance Restrictions within Significant Vernal Pool Buffer

The following additional restrictions apply to vegetation maintenance within SVP buffers:

- Mechanized equipment will not be allowed within the vernal pool depression, unless the depression encompasses the entire width of the transmission line corridor. Mechanized equipment will only be allowed to cross the vernal pool depressions during frozen or dry conditions or with the use of mats;
- Between April 1 and June 30, no vegetation maintenance using tracked or wheeled equipment will be performed within the 100-foot buffer. Maintenance will be performed using only hand tools during this period;
- Between April 1 and June 30, no vegetation maintenance will occur within 25 feet of the SVP pool depression;
- No refueling or maintenance of equipment, including chain saws, will occur within 100 feet of SVP pool depression, unless done so on a public access road; and

- No herbicide use is permitted within 25 feet of the SVP pool depression.

Vegetation Maintenance within Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat

Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitats (IWWH) are habitats mapped by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) that contain an inland wetland complex used by waterfowl and wading birds, plus a 250-foot nesting habitat area surrounding the wetland. The nesting habitat is considered to be part of the mapped IWWH. No additional buffers are proposed for IWWHs beyond this mapped habitat, and as such the vegetation maintenance restrictions apply to the mapped habitat only.

Vegetation maintenance within the IWWH will be subject to the same procedures and prohibitions, as applicable, which are required in the typical transmission line corridor and for stream buffers.

Additional Vegetation Maintenance Restrictions within Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat

The following additional restrictions would apply to vegetation maintenance within mapped IWWH:

- Between April 15 and July 15, use of motorized vehicles (e.g., all-terrain vehicles) and mechanized equipment (e.g., chain saws or brush cutters) within IWWH is prohibited. Use of non-mechanized hand tools is allowed during this time period;
- No refueling or maintenance of equipment, including chain saws, will occur within the IWWH, unless done so on a public access road; and
- No herbicide use is permitted within 25 feet of any wetland within the mapped IWWH.

Vegetation Maintenance within Mapped Deer Wintering Areas

Deer Wintering Areas (DWA) provide important refuge for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) during the winter months in northern climates and are typically characterized by an extensive stand of mature softwood species with a dense forest canopy.

No additional vegetation maintenance restrictions are proposed within mapped DWAs, as all capable species must be removed from these and other areas within the transmission line corridor in order to comply with NERC Transmission Vegetation Management standards.

Vegetation Maintenance within Rare Plant Locations

Vegetation maintenance of the transmission line corridor has the potential to impact rare plants and/or alter their habitat. The following additional vegetative maintenance restrictions will

minimize impacts to rare plants. The additional restrictions will apply only to the demarcated locations of the identified rare plants. No additional buffers will be established surrounding rare plant locations. These restrictions are intended to maintain existing hydrology and limit soil disturbance within rare plant locations.

Additional Vegetation Maintenance Restrictions within Rare Plant Locations

The following additional restrictions will apply to vegetation maintenance for the species listed above in the identified location:

- All capable tree species will be cut by hand (chainsaws, hand saws or axes). No other mechanized cutting equipment shall be used within these habitats;
- Unless rare plant locations encompasses the entire width of the transmission line corridor, mechanized equipment will only be allowed to cross rare plant locations during frozen conditions or with the use of mats;
- No refueling or maintenance of equipment, including chain saws, will occur within demarcated rare plant locations, unless done on a public access road; and
- No foliar herbicide use is permitted within the demarcated rare plant locations, however cut surface herbicides may be used on capable species and specimens.
- Crossing of rare plant locations with mechanized equipment:

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

- Due to small footprint, relatively light weight, and infrequency of use, ATV impact is minimal, therefore crane mats will not be used.
- If rare plants do not encompass entire ROW width, ATVs will avoid/travel around rare plants.
- If rare plants encompass entire ROW width:
 - ATVs will utilize existing rare plant travel path/crossing if one exists.
 - If no rare plant crossing exists, ATVs will cross at narrowest point of the rare plants, and will restrict this crossing to a single travel lane.

Heavy Equipment/Vehicles

- During emergency repair & maintenance work, crane mats will not be used. Heavy equipment/vehicles will utilize existing rare plant crossings if available.
- During planned repair & maintenance work:
 - If rare plants do not encompass entire ROW width, heavy equipment/vehicles will avoid/travel around rare plants. Crane mats will not be used.
 - If rare plants encompass entire ROW width, and there is an established travel path/crossing through the rare plants, heavy equipment/vehicles will utilize this crossing, and crane mats will not be used.

- If rare plants encompass entire ROW width, but there is no established travel path through the rare plants, heavy equipment/vehicles will cross rare plants using crane mats.

Maintenance Procedures for Mapped Significant Sand and Gravel Aquifers

Transmission lines located over mapped significant sand and gravel aquifers are subject to the typical transmission line corridor maintenance procedures, except that no refueling or maintenance of equipment, and no herbicides may be mixed, transferred or stored, over the mapped significant sand and gravel aquifers, unless done so on a public access road.

Locating and Marking Buffers and Habitats

A database will be maintained, including maps and GIS shapefiles, of the buffers, restricted habitats, and sensitive areas and their locations relative to the nearest structure (pole) or road location. The distance and direction from the nearest structure to the sensitive area will be included with the name of the area and the structure number. All structures along the transmission line corridor will be numbered at the time of construction.

To aid in identifying restricted areas, buffers and restricted habitats may be located and demarcated in the field using brightly colored flagging or signage prior to the initiation of maintenance activities along the transmission line corridor. Alternatively, use of GIS data and GPS equipment may be used to provide accurate location of resources and associated buffers during maintenance activities. If desired, maintenance personnel may permanently demarcate restricted habitats to aid in long-term maintenance activities. Maintenance contractors working on the transmission line corridor will be provided a copy of this VMP. Use of the VMP in conjunction with the As-Built Plan & Profile drawings will enable maintenance contractors to locate and mark restricted areas in the field.

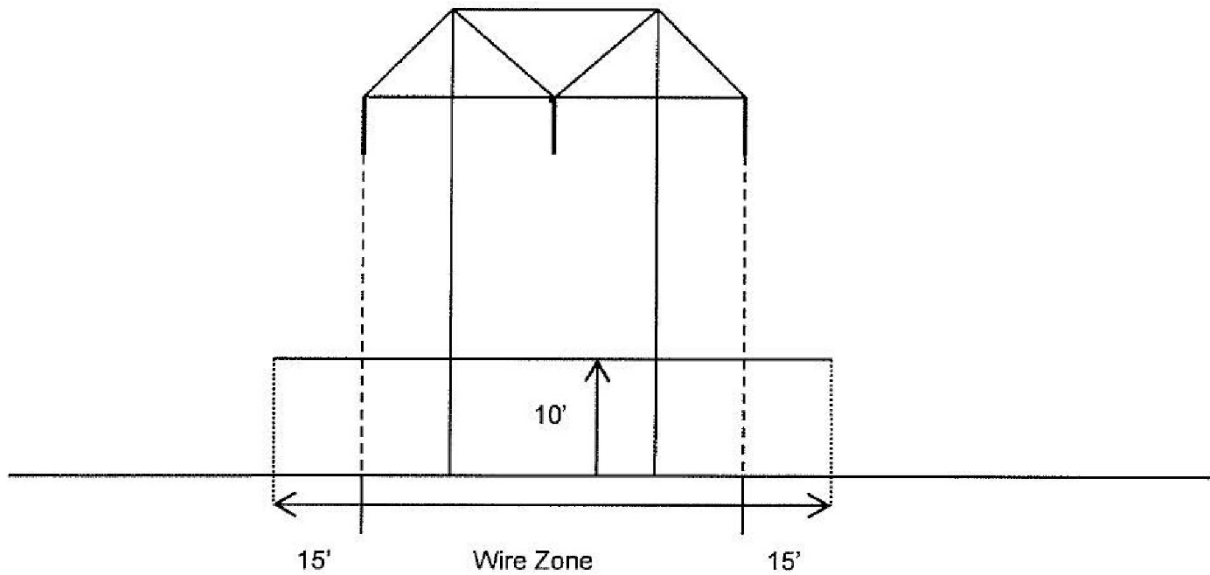
Maintenance Personnel Training

Personnel who will conduct vegetation maintenance activities on the transmission line corridor will receive appropriate environmental training before being allowed access to the transmission line corridor. Maintenance personnel will be required to review this VMP prior to the training and before conducting any maintenance activities. The level of training will be dependent on the duties of the personnel. The training will be given prior to the start of maintenance activities. Replacement or new maintenance personnel that did not receive the initial training will receive similar training prior to performing any maintenance activities on the transmission line corridor.

The training session will consist of a review of the buffers and restricted habitats, the respective maintenance requirements and restrictions for each, and a review of how these areas and resources can be located in the field. Training will include familiarization with and use of GIS information and sensitive natural resource identification in conjunction with the contents of this VMP, as well as basic causes, preventive and remedial measures for contamination, and erosion

and sedimentation of water resources. Training will also include a review of safety and the proper use of appropriate maintenance tools.

Figure 1



1. Capable species, regardless of height, are cut back to ground level or treated with herbicides within the entire length and width of the transmission line corridor during scheduled vegetation maintenance (every 4 years). However, within 25-foot wide stream buffers, only woody specimens over 10 feet tall may be cut or treated (specimens at or above this height are likely to grow into the conductor safety zone prior to the next scheduled vegetation maintenance cycle).
2. All woody vegetation over 10 feet in height and inside the wire zone, whether capable or non-capable, is cut back to ground level during scheduled vegetation maintenance.