

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chief Joseph – Monroe No. 1 68/1 Transmission Line Vegetation Management

PP&A No.: 6874

Project Manager: Jake Grinolds – TFBV-Snohomish

Location: Chelan County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (10 C.F.R. Part 1021; USFS NEPA procedures 36 CFR 220.6[e] as adopted July 23, 2024): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; 3.(e)(13) Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres...

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation (cutting of approximately 100 post fire danger trees) in and adjacent to the high-voltage transmission line corridor near structure 68/1 on the Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1 transmission line corridor in Chelan County, WA.

All work would be conducted in and adjacent to the existing two ROWs in the corridor. The corridor ranges from 250 to 300 feet in width and total approximately 0.25 linear miles. Trees would be cut using hand equipment and fallen trees would be cut, loped, and scattered on the ROWs. No access road improvements or ground disturbance is proposed. The approximate total area of the proposed treatment area is about 4 acres. This corridor lies within forested public lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto. (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA's customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.102 of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996; 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021 or USFS NEPA procedures 36 CFR 220.6[e] as adopted July 23, 2024);

- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review. ¹

/s/ Justin Carr

Justin Carr

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 22, 2025

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: Chief Joseph – Monroe No. 1 68/1 Transmission Line Vegetation Management

Project Site Description

The proposed action is located in Chelan County, WA. The proposed action would occur within and adjacent to BPA's right-of-way (ROW) near structure 68/1 on the Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1 transmission line corridor. The ROW in the project area measures approximately 250 feet wide. Elevation at the site is approximately 2,400 feet above sea level. The ROW lies on US Forest Service managed land and is mixed conifer forests consisting of mainly Douglas fir and western hemlock. This area was recently burned and snags and compromised trees now present a falling hazard to crews and equipment on the transmission line as well as posing as a danger tree fire hazard.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed vegetation management actions do not result in ground disturbance to the physical environment, so the action is not one that typically has the potential to affect historic and/or cultural resources. If a site is discovered during the course of vegetation control, work would be stopped in the vicinity and the BPA Environmental Specialist and the BPA Archaeologist would be contacted. Immediate rescue and salvage operations conducted to preserve life or property are exempt from the provisions of section 106.36 CFR Part 800.12 (d).

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation proposed.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed action is limited to fire damaged trees in a small area within and adjacent to transmission line corridor. Some limited vegetation may be crushed under fallen trees, but vegetation removal beyond the subject trees is not proposed.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the proposed project activities would have minimal and very temporary disturbance to wildlife associated with elevated noise and human presence. Gray wolf and Northern spotted owl are potentially present in the project area. Project activities would be minimally invasive and extremely temporary. Further, the wildfire deteriorated any large canopy tree habitat needed by northern spotted owl; therefore, BPA has determined that the proposed project would have no effect on gray wolf, northern spotted owl, or the proposed threatened species monarch butterfly and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee. Yellow-billed cuckoo has not been sighted in Washington state since 1996 and there is no suitable habitat for this species within the proposed action area, therefore BPA has determined the proposed project activities would have no effect on yellow-billed cuckoo.

Non-sensitive wildlife species may be temporarily disturbed by elevated noise and human presence in the area. There is abundant adjacent habitat for any disturbed animals during project activities.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no work proposed in or near any water bodies or floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no work proposed in or near wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance proposed that would affect groundwater sources.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing ROW and adjacent forested land uses.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The proposed project activities would remove approximately 100 fire damaged trees and has the potential to minimally affect the current aesthetic. Overall, the visual character of the work area would be similar and consistent with the existing transmission corridor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would utilize conventional equipment powered by petroleum fuels. Exhaust would temporarily impact air quality in the immediate vicinity while the equipment is in operation. Additionally, dust may be created by vehicle operations. Dust creation would be isolated to small areas and in short duration. Baseline air quality conditions are expected to return shortly after project activities cease.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would have noise associated with use of vehicles and chainsaws. During project activities, work would take place during daylight hours, for approximately eight hours per day. The project would be relatively short in duration – no more than one week. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project area occurs away from any major population centers and the work would be temporary and minimally invasive.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation: N/A

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A

Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation: N/A

Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would

be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The U.S. Forest Service, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Wenatchee River Ranger District was notified and concurred with the proposed action on July 16, 2025.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: /s/ Justin Carr

Justin Carr

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

July 22, 2025