

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Redmond District FY26 Vegetation Management

PP&A No.: 6755

Project Manager: Jacob Marti (BPA) - TFBV-THE DALLES

Location: Jefferson, Crook, Deschutes, and Lake counties, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021; USFS NEPA procedures 36 CFR 220.6[e] as adopted July 23, 2024): B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to maintain low growing vegetation communities in specific, localized areas in and adjacent to the Grizzly-Summer Lake No. 1 and Grizzly-Captain Jack No.1 rights-of-way (ROW) in the counties of Jefferson, Crook, Deschutes, and Lake, OR. Vegetation management needs were assessed, and Vegetation Control Cut Sheets were created for the right-of-way corridors and associated access roads along these transmission facilities.

To comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards, BPA proposes to use hand cutting and mowing to manage and maintain vegetation with the goal of removing tall-growing vegetation that is currently or will soon become a hazard to the transmission line (a hazard is defined as one or more branches, tops, and/or whole trees that could fall or grow into the minimum safety zone of the transmission line(s) causing an electrical arc, relay, and/or outage). The overall goal of BPA is to establish and maintain low-growing plant communities along the right-of-way to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation. Work would be done consistent with BPA's long-established vegetation management program.

The corridors in the proposed project area measure approximately 75 feet to 400 feet in width and about 103 miles in length. Localized areas within approximately 2,500 acres of existing transmission line, 27 line structures, and 0.4 miles of access road rights-of-way would be initially treated in the fall of 2026 through summer of 2027. Additional vegetation management may be necessary in subsequent years in discrete areas of noxious weeds or where BPA personnel discover vegetation that poses a hazard to the transmission line.

About 2,000 acres of cut, lop, and scatter to low growing vegetation would be applied in and adjacent to the ROW, and all debris would be disposed of onsite, along the ROW, using on-site cut, lop and scatter, or chipping/mulching techniques.

No new access roads, skid trails, decking or staging areas would be needed for the work.

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 and Appendix C of 10 CFR 1021;
- 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.

/s/ Wyatt Barrs
Wyatt Barrs
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: February 2, 2026

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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: Redmond District FY26 Vegetation Management

Project Site Description

The proposed action would occur in the southern portion of the NW State Plane Zones and span from central to southern Oregon. The project area runs through a mix of private, BLM public lands, and various national forests (Ochoco National Forest, Deschutes National Forest, and Fremont-Winema National Forest), as well as US Forest service ranger districts (Crooked River National Grassland, Bend/Fort Rock, and Silver Lake).

The work areas are existing transmission line rights-of-ways that are primarily in public and federally managed lands, with a small portion being located on privately owned lands as well. Generally, land within the work area is used for agriculture and public recreation. The existing transmission rights-of-way are managed for low-growing vegetation species.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Burns Paiute Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Klamath Tribes, the Bureau of Land Management (Prineville District, Lakeview District), the U.S. Forest Service (Deschutes National Forest, Ochoco National Forest), and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on November 07, 2025. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Burns Paiute Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Klamath Tribes, the Bureau of Land Management (Prineville District, Lakeview District), the U.S. Forest Service (Deschutes National Forest, Ochoco National Forest), and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the APE and the determination of no adverse effect on January 7, 2026. No other responses were received within 30 days.

In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

Notes:

- Standard project design criteria for inadvertent discoveries on federally-managed lands in compliance with Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) should be followed and are the following:

- In the event that previously unknown prehistoric or historic resources are discovered during project activities, the finding(s) would be immediately reported to a Forest Service archaeologist and operations in the area avoided until consultation is completed in accordance with 36CFR 800.13.
- Should human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony be encountered, the NAGPRA, 25 U.S.C. 3001 et seq. [Nov. 16, 1990] and its regulations (43 CFR §10) would apply.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed vegetation management actions do not result in ground disturbance and would not require any heavy machinery.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Site-specific treatment would be applied to maintain existing low-growing plant communities. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted transmission line and access road rights-of-way, and would occur outside of peak pumice moonwort (*Botrychium pumicola*), a USFS sensitive species, emergence and bloom season window where applicable. Existing naturalized grasses and woody shrubs are present on the entire ROW and are expected to naturally seed into the areas that would have lightly-disturbed soil predominantly located on the ROW roads. Federally listed Whitebark Pine is present in the general project vicinity, as well as multiple state listed plant species. There would be no effect to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species. With the implementation of the minimization measures identified in the notes, no impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated because localized treatment using mowing and manual cutting would be applied to specific areas, and equipment would be cleaned when moving between required locations. No heavy equipment would be present for proposed work. If a sensitive plant is encountered while within designated areas, work would cease, and a Forest Service botanist would be notified to ensure state and federally sensitive species are able to be identified and avoided when encountered. Herbicide would not be used, and there is no risk of spray drifting to surrounding plants. Whitebark Pine is present in the region, but not within the work area. The species only occurs at elevations of 5,300ft – 8,000ft with only a few instances of the minimum elevation being reached within the work area of the ROW.

Notes:

- Within the Deschutes National Forest, conduct implementation work outside of the peak *Botrychium pumicola* emergence and bloom season for the area which is from May 15 through August 15. To meet Regional and Forest Plan Standards (USDA 2005), and to ensure new non-native invasive plants are not brought into the project area, clean all vehicles and equipment before entering National Forest System lands so equipment used is free of soil and plant material.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have a small impact to wildlife and habitat, related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated equipment noise (chain saws and mowers) and human presence. Typically, this temporary disturbance would last less than an hour in any particular treatment segment. With the use of cut, lop, and scatter small vegetation and shrub debris disposal, some small animal habitat would be created.

The state listed pygmy rabbit, and federal/state listed grey wolf both occur within the project area. Due to the large habitat distribution of both species, wildlife is anticipated to use adjacent habitat and return to the treatment area soon after the completion of work. There would be no effect to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed or state-listed wildlife species. Little to no impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated because of the short duration and type of work taking place at each location, large habitats available to listed species, and mobility of the affected wildlife. Within the Deschutes National Forest work constraints relating to raptors would be observed in necessary areas, and when applicable, to minimize impacts to sensitive raptor species.

Notes:

Report raptor (northern goshawk) occurrence to USFS district wildlife staff who may be able to refine protection requirements based on current status and location.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work is proposed for this project. BPA conducted a review of ESA-listed anadromous fish species and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) (as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Act), under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). BPA determined there are multiple ESA-listed anadromous fish species in the proposed project area, as well as state listed species of Chinook, lamprey, redband trout, and steelhead populations. The proposed project would have no effect on ESA-listed populations of bull trout, Lost River sucker, and shortnose sucker and designated critical bull trout and Lost River sucker habitats located on the Crooked River within the project area. No herbicide use is planned for the project area, and no ground disturbance would occur and root systems would be left intact to prevent sedimentation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands may be present in the treatment areas. No herbicidal application, ground disturbance, filling, or excavating of wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater or application of herbicide is proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur. No disruption to the use of BLM-managed lands or USFS managed lands (Ochoco National Forest, Deschutes National Forest, and Fremont-Winema National Forest) would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-way. Vegetation management activities and techniques would be similar to what has occurred during prior prescribed management cycles; therefore, there would be a negligible change to the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a limited, temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle and hand tool emissions and dust generated during vehicle movement.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary noise from vehicles and hand equipment that would occur intermittently and last a few hours in each area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would remove potential vegetation hazards to the transmission lines, thus reducing outages and wildfire risk. Shrubs and low growing vegetation would be cleared by contractors who are qualified to work around electrical facilities to minimize the risk of trees falling into the lines and causing injury or wildfire.

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: BPA has coordinated with US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Measures identified from the USFS for treatments on National Forest System lands have been incorporated into the project's cut sheets and summarized above in the evaluation. BLM did not identify any special measures or requirements for BLM-managed lands. Letters, on-site meetings, emails, and phone calls would be used to notify landowners approximately three weeks prior to commencing vegetation management activities. Door hangers would also be used at properties where special treatments are anticipated. Any additional measures proposed by landowners or land managers through ongoing communication would be incorporated into the vegetation management plan during project implementation.

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

Signed: /s/ Wyatt Barrs

Date: February 2, 2026

Wyatt Barrs
Environmental Protection Specialist/
Physical Scientist (Environmental)