

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Troy Substation; City of Troy Public Utility District Distribution Corridor Danger Tree Removal

**PP&A No.:** 7022

**Project Manager:** Kyle Goeke Dee, Natural Resource Specialist – TFBV-Kalispell

**Location:** Lincoln County, Montana

**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; 2.(e)(12) Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to cut trees adjacent to the Troy Substation in Lincoln County, Montana. Planned tree cut consists of cutting trees in and near a City of Troy public utility district distribution corridor which is located on BPA property, near the substation. Historically, the corridor has not been managed consistently, resulting in recurring outages to the City of Troy due to trees falling into or encroaching on clearance distances of the distribution line. In total, approximately 50 trees with diameter at breast height (DBH) of 6” or more would be cut, and 90 trees with less than 6” DBH would be cut, for a total of approximately 140 trees.

For trees over 6” DBH, tree crews would climb and cut trees down in segments or directionally fell the trees away from critical infrastructure. Smaller trees would be cut, lopped, and scattered, with chips blown on-site. Work would involve a crew of 4 to 6 individuals, chain saws, and a truck-mounted chipper.

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 the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, 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/ Aaron Siemers*  
Aaron Siemers, EPR-4  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Sarah T. Biegel*  
Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer                      Date: May 12, 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:** Troy Substation; City of Troy Public Utility District Distribution Corridor Danger Tree Removal

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located adjacent to Troy Substation in Lincoln County, Montana, near the town of Troy, MT. The project site is located near US Highway 2. The landscape has been extensively altered by the Troy Substation, an adjacent parking lot, and an active gravel quarry nearby. No waterways or wetlands are present at the project site. The tree cut areas in question, totaling approximately one acre, were logged at some time in the past, resulting in a stands of relatively small, dense native firs and pines.

## **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 Montana State Historic Preservation Office on March 20, 2026, and made a determination that the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected. No comments or responses were received within 30 days from the consulting parties.

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.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed vegetation management actions do not result in ground disturbance.

### **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 not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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. There would be “No effect” to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species, as none are listed in the project area. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated because of lack of suitable habitat.

#### **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 tree debris disposal, some small animal habitat would be created. Wildlife is anticipated to use adjacent habitat and return to the treatment area soon after the completion of work.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, BPA requested and obtained an official species list on May 11, 2026. Canada lynx, grizzly bear, North American wolverine, yellow-billed cuckoo, and the candidate species monarch butterfly and Suckley’s cuckoo bumble bee are all listed under the ESA in the greater region. The project would occur at lower elevations and would occur in habitat conditions; i.e., adjacent to a highway, a Substation, and the town of Troy, MT that are not suitable for large ESA-listed mammals and yellow-billed cuckoo. BPA has determined that there would be “No effect” to ESA-listed wildlife species. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated because no suitable habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water resources are present in or near the project area.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater is proposed and project activities would not impact groundwater.

#### **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on BPA fee-owned land. No change in land use would occur. No specially-designated areas are present in the work areas.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed tree cut would alter the existing visual profile of the area, which consists of mature and immature native firs and pines. However, in general the location is adjacent to a high-voltage substation, a State Highway, and a gravel quarry. The proposed project would not significantly impact the existing background 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. Trees 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: The project is located on BPA fee-owned land. BPA has coordinated with City of Troy public works managers and other stakeholders, who are proponents of the planned work.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers

Date: May 12, 2026

Aaron Siemers

Physical Scientist (Environmental)