

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY27 Olympia Vegetation Management

PP&A No.: 7024

Project Manager: Jason Hunt – TFBV-COVINGTON

Location: Pacific, Lewis, Thurston, Grays Harbor, Mason, Jefferson, Callam, and Pierce counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021: DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures Appendices B and C): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; USDA-35d-USFS Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres...; USDA-36d-USFS Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres...

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to maintain low-growing vegetation communities in specific, localized areas in and adjacent to the Chehalis-Raymond No 1, Holcomb-Naselle No 1, Raymond-Cosmopolis No 1, Chehalis-Olympia No 1, Chehalis-Centralia Nos 1 & 2, Paul-Olympia No 1, Paul-Satsop No 1, Shelton-Fairmount No 4, Port Angeles - Sappho No 1, Elbe Tap to Alder-LaGrande Nos 1&2, Lynch Creek Tap to Mountain-LaGrande No 1 & Canyon-LaGrande No 2, and Chehalis-Covington No 1 high voltage transmission corridors in Pacific, Lewis, Thurston, Grays Harbor, Mason, Jefferson, Callam, and Pierce counties, Washington. Vegetation management needs were assessed, and Vegetation Control Cut Sheets were created for the right-of-way (ROW) corridors and associated access roads along these transmission facilities.

Corridor	Transmission Line	Spans
CHMH_CHEH-RAYM-1	Chehalis-Raymond No 1	3/11-RAYM
	Holcomb Tap to Chehalis-Raymond No 1	HOLC-1/1
CHMH_HOLC-NASE-1	Holcomb-Naselle No 1	HOLC-NASE
OLMH_RAYM-COSM-1	Raymond-Cosmopolis No 1	RAYM-COSM
CHMH_CHEH-OLYM-1	Chehalis-Olympia No 1	CHEH-18/3
	Chehalis-Centralia No 2	CHEH-10/5
OLMH_CHEH-OLYM	Chehalis-Olympia No 1	18/3-OLYM
CHMH_CHEH-CENT-2	Chehalis-Centralia No 2	10/5-16/16
	Centralia-May Street No 1	CENT-1/3
OLMH_PAUL-OLYM-1	Paul-Satsop No 1	PAUL-OLYM
	Paul-Olympia No 1	PAUL-OLYM
OLMH_PAUL-SATS-1	Paul-Satsop No 1	OLYM-SATS
	Olympia-Satsop No 2	OLYM-SATS
	Olympia-South Elma No 1	OLYM-SELM

	Olympia-Shelton No 1	OLYM-6/2
	Olympia-Shelton No 2 & 5	OLYM-6/3
	Olympia-Shelton No 3 & 4	OLYM-6/1
	Satsop-Shelton No 1	SATS-22/2
	Satsop 500/230kV Tie No 1	0/1-1/3
	South Elma-Satsop Park No 1	SELM-SATP
CHMH_CHEH-CENT-1	Chehalis-Centralia No 1	6/8-11/11
OLMH_SHEL-FAMT-4	Shelton-Fairmount No 1, 2, 3, &4	SHEL- 9/3 &12/5-FAMT
	Potlatch Tap to Shelton-Fairmount No 1	1/1-POTL
	Quilcene Tap to Shelton-Fairmount No 1	1/1-1/2
	t3ba'das Tap to Shelton-Fairmount No 2	1/1-1/2
OLMH_POAN-SAPO-1	Port Angeles-Sapho No 1	POAN-SAPO
	Silverado Tap to Port Angeles-Sappho No 1	SIDO-1/3
CHMH_ELBET-ALLA12	Elbe Tap to Alder-LaGrande No 1&2	1/1-ELBE
CHMH_LYNCT-COLA12	Lynch Creek Tap to Mountain-LaGrande No 1 & Canyon-LaGrande No 2	1/1-LYNC
COHQ_CHEH-COVI-1	Chehalis-Covington No 1	48/2-48/3

Table 1. Corridor spans proposed for treatment.

To comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards, BPA proposes to use hand cutting, mowing, herbicidal treatment, or a combination of those methods 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 ROW to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation. Work would be done consistent with BPA's long-established vegetation management program and all herbicide(s) and adjuvant(s) mixture selections would follow the minimization measures identified in the BPA List of Approved Herbicide Environmental Standards & Procedures (ESP)# E-VGM-004.

The corridors in the proposed project area measure approximately 100-600 feet in width and extending a total length of roughly 590 miles. Localized areas within an approximate 5,230 acres would undergo selective hand-cutting followed immediately by herbicide spot-treatment of hardwood stems, alongside localized herbicide application across up to 5,410 acres, mowing across 500 acres, and vegetation management along 6.86 miles of access roads as well as at 1,950 structure sites of existing transmission line and access road ROWs would be initially treated in the fall of 2026 through fall 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.

Herbicides would be selectively applied in accordance with their label instructions and BPA-listed buffer distances using spot treatment (stump or stubble treatment, basal treatment, and/or spot foliar or localized treatments and cut stubble treatments) with chemicals approved by BPA to ensure that the roots are effectively controlled - preventing new sprouts - and selectively

eliminating vegetation that interferes with the operation and maintenance of transmission infrastructure. A follow-up treatment of re-sprouting target vegetation would be conducted by December 2027. Additional vegetation management may be necessary in subsequent years of the vegetation management cycle in discrete areas of noxious weeds, or where BPA personnel discover vegetation that poses a hazard to the transmission line

In addition, BPA proposes to remove approximately 37 corridor trees and 71 danger trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW and to remove limbs or top approximately 152 trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW. Tree clearing would not be concentrated and occur in multiple, discrete locations within 0.75 miles of ROW. Trees and limbs would be hand cut to maintain the root system and all tree 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 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 and DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures;
- 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/ Brenna Bettis

Brenna Bettis

Biological Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 13, 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.

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Project Site Description

The corridors in the proposed project area span Pacific, Lewis, Thurston, Grays Harbor, Mason, Jefferson, Callam, and Pierce counties, Washington, ranging in width from approximately 100-600 feet and extending a total length of roughly 590 miles. The work areas are existing transmission line ROWs that are primarily in private lands, but some tracts are managed by the State of Washington, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, local city and government, and Olympic National Forest. Land use is varied; with urban, suburban, rural-residential, agricultural, forestry, recreation, commercial, and industrial uses present along the ROW corridors. The existing transmission ROWs are managed for low-growing vegetation species.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA Cultural Resource Staff have determined that, pursuant to the *Nationwide Programmatic Agreement Among the Bonneville Power Administration, the Southwestern Power Administration, the Western Area Power Administration, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Routine Transmission Operations and Maintenance Undertakings Associated with Existing Transmission Facilities and Access Roads Throughout the United States*, BPA's FY27 Vegetation Management Project: Olympia District would result in No historic properties affected as **Appendix G Conditions A.1, A.6, A.7 and A.8** are met.

In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would 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.

Best management practices and conditions for the project have been determined through the use of the Nationwide Programmatic and are noted in applicable areas in the attached Appendix A.

Notes:

- See Appendix A for conditions and best management practices.

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 with Conditions

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 ROWs 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, such as the Kincaid’s lupine. There are no documented occurrences in the project area from any publicly available resources. If Kincaid’s lupine is found in the project area all work would cease and the following best management practices would be implemented.

No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Scatter Creek South Wildlife Area (WLA) may contain Oregon White Oak (Oregon Ash), however no trees are expected to be impacted by the proposed action. WDFW would be provided with the opportunity to monitor the contractor due to the presence of ESA listed species and state sensitive species found in the WLA.

Notes:

- All work that may result in ground crushing or disturbance would be conducted between August 15 and February 28.
- Keep vehicles on access roads.
- Mower deck height must be greater than 6 inches.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

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. There would be “No Effect” to the following Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed wildlife species; gray wolf, marbled murrelet, marbled murrelet designated critical habitat, northern spotted owl, northern spotted owl designated critical habitat, streaked horned lark, and yellow-billed cuckoo. The “No Effect” determination would be in conjunction with the described best management practices in the attached Appendix B.

The proposed vegetation management activities are within the scope of activities and project area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Biological Opinion (BO) and letter of concurrence (LOC) regarding the Chehalis-Olympia and Paul-Satsop Vegetation Management Project (OIEWFW00-2017-1-1023), sent to BPA in May 2018, in conjunction to the listed conservation measures described in the LOC. Based on the proposed action in the Biological Assessment, the USFWS concurs with BPA that the proposed project is “likely to adversely affect” Taylor’s checkerspot and Oregon spotted frog critical habitat and “may affect, and is not likely to adversely affect” Olympia pocket

gopher, Tenino pocket gopher, Yelm pocket gopher, and Oregon spotted frog. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated because no species were documented in the project area.

Notes:

- Follow the conservation measures and terms and conditions identified during the ESA consultation.
- Best Management Practices can be found in Appendix B.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Endangered anadromous salmonids, designated critical habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) are within rivers and streams within the project area. The Puget Sound Chinook Salmon, Puget Sound Steelhead, and the Hood Canal Summer-run Chum are known to inhabit several rivers within the project area, including the Skokomish, Skookumchuck, Chehalis rivers, and others. Appropriate herbicides would be used within these locations according to label instructions and applicable ESA consultation minimization measures, including buffer distances. No ground disturbance would occur and root systems would be left intact to prevent sedimentation. Any effects to ESA-listed fish are covered by BPA's programmatic biological agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Conference and Biological Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species to Administer Maintenance or Rebuild Projects for Transmission Line and Road Access Actions Authorized or Carried Out by the Bonneville Power Administration in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho (WCR-2014-1600, September 22, 2016).

Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA made the determination that the projects activities would have "No Effect" to bull trout or bull trout designated critical habitat. Bull trout are known to inhabit several rivers within the project area including the Willapa, Chehalis, Elwha, and Skokomish rivers, with associated designated critical habitat. By using the measures identified below, this project is not expected to alter or affect existing habitat and/or distribution. No herbicide would be used within 100 feet of identified streams and riparian vegetation shall be left less than 10 feet where possible (except noxious weeds); and to preserve shade conditions, selectively cut only trees that are currently violating or have the ability to violate clearance standards within the next 3 years.

Notes:

- Follow the conservation measures and terms and conditions identified during the ESA consultation.
- All vegetation removal would be restricted to above ground, leaving root systems intact and therefore retaining bank stability.
- When possible, all shrubs and all herbaceous material less than 10 feet in height, excluding noxious weeds such as Scotch broom, would be left untouched.
- Trees in sensitive and/or riparian areas would be left in place or topped, whenever possible to preserve existing shade conditions.
- On slopes greater than 20%, there would be no use of ground-disturbing equipment.
- If it is necessary to manage vegetation within riparian areas and/or near sensitive water resources along the project corridor, buffer zones would be used as follows:
 - For ESA/EFH-containing streams, ponds, wetlands, or other sensitive water resources, only hand cutting and treatment with Triclopyr TEA (Garlon 3A) would be used in spot

and localized applications along the water's edge and 100 feet on either side of the resource. Use of practically non-toxic to slightly toxic herbicides, other than Triclopyr TEA (Garlon 3A), between the water's edge and three feet from the water's edge is not permitted.

- For non-sensitive water resources, only hand cutting and treatment with BPA-approved practically non-toxic to slightly toxic herbicides, such as Triclopyr TEA (Garlon 3A), would be used in spot and localized applications between the water's edge and 35 feet on either side of the resource.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands may be present in the treatment areas. Herbicides would not be applied within wetlands and a buffer up to 100 feet would be established depending on treatment type, potential toxicity, or label advisory for ground or surface water. In those locations with wetlands, appropriate herbicides (mainly Garlon 3A) would be used up to the water's edge, but not over water. No ground disturbance, filling, or excavating of wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater is proposed. Herbicide applications would be applied by licensed applicators and would follow label instructions to minimize the potential for groundwater contamination. Further, herbicides would not be applied within 50 feet of known groundwater wells and water sources.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: No change in land use would occur. The Scatter Creek Wildlife Area is a specially-designated area and is managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Communication has been established with the Wildlife Area Unit and areas that are to be avoided along the Chehalis-Olympia No 1 transmission line are noted in the cut sheets. No disruption to the use of State of Washington, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR), or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife managed lands would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line ROWs. 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. Herbicides would be applied by licensed applicators in accordance with the label instructions and BPA-approved herbicides to limit the potential for public or worker exposure. 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: BPA has coordinated with private landowners, the State of Washington, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Olympic National Forest. No special measures or requirements were identified for treatments on State of Washington, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR)-managed lands, and Olympic National Forest. Avoidance of certain areas of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area have been identified from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. 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/ Brenna Bettis Date: October 13, 2026
Brenna Bettis
Biological Scientist (Environmental)