

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Lyons UHV Test Line Helicopter Tree Cutting Pilot Project

**PP&A No.:** 3,798

**Project Manager:** Steve Duncan-TFBV-1

**Location:** Linn County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.6 Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes a pilot project to use a helicopter mounted saw to top trees along the de-energized Santiam-Lyons UHV Xfmr No. 1 transmission line. Four trees, 2 red alder and 2 Douglas firs, would be topped to determine if this technique would be suitable for use to manage trees that pose a potential hazard to BPA transmission facilities. The four trees are located on BPA owned property, near structure 2/1. After topping, the resulting snags would be felled using manual methods. The trees would be left on the ground and the branches lopped and scattered. A staging area to attach the cutting equipment to the helicopter and support the operation would be located on BPA property in an open field between structures 2/3 and 2/4.

**Findings:** In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) 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, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

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

/s/ Philip Smith

Philip W. Smith, Manager  
Technical & Regional Services - EPR

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 10, 2017

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

## 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.

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### Project Site Description

The project area consists of fee-owned right-of-way (ROW) on the de-energized Lyons UHV Test Line No. 1 located in Linn County, Oregon. The trees to be cut are near structure 2/1. The project area is under lease and is connected to an area of land used for cattle grazing.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> According to the scope of the proposed work, the activity is not a type that would result in changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such historic properties are located in the area of potential effects. In the event of an inadvertent discovery, work will immediately cease and the Oregon SHPO and BPA archaeologist will be notified.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would not expose surface soils or increase erosion potential. Ground cover would be left in place.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No effects to special-status plants would occur. No known special status plants or habitat are present in the project area.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No known special status species or habitat present.		

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



Explanation: The work is on an upland site. The project would not disturb or expose surface soils, no work activities would occur near any water bodies or floodplains. The work would occur over 750-ft from a small drainage that flows to the Santiam River. There would be no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The project is located on an upland site with no wetlands. The nearest wetland is over 750-ft from the work site and would not be affected.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater quality or aquifers. There would be no surface or subsurface disturbance. Spill prevention BMPs would be in place.

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



Explanation: The project area is located on BPA fee-owned property. Cattle are grazed on the property and the lessee will be notified to ensure that the cattle are not put at risk nor will they interfere with the project.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Vegetation clearing associated with the project is minor, and within an existing transmission line ROW. Four trees would be removed from the edge of a previously disturbed cleared area. The project would not significantly impact the visual quality of the area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Minor temporary and localized minor impacts to air quality may occur due to dust and equipment emissions during the project. No long-term impacts would occur.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary localized noise impacts may occur due to helicopter clearing activities. No long-term impacts would occur.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: BPA and BPA's contractor would follow standard health and safety protocols during construction.

### 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, if necessary: NA

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

Explanation, if necessary: NA

- 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, if necessary: NA

- 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, if necessary: NA

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#### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Project is located on BPA fee-owned property. Land lessee will be notified to ensure that cattle will not be at risk or interfere with the project.

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

Signed: /s/ Philip Smith  
Philip W. Smith  
Manager-Technical &Regional Service-EPR

Date: October 10, 2017