

Supplement Analysis
for the
Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS
(DOE/EA/EIS-0285/SA-915)

Pollution Prevention and Abatement Project Number 5033
Natural Resource Specialist/Project Manager: Cozette DeTray (BPA) – TFBV-BELL-1

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Activities

BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in and adjacent to the right-of-way (ROW) of high-voltage transmission lines and access roads in Benton, Franklin, and Walla Wall counties, Washington and Morrow County Oregon. Vegetation management needs were assessed, and Vegetation Control Cut Sheets were created for the right-of-way corridor and associated access roads along the following transmission line corridors and spans.

Corridor	Work Order	Transmission Line	Spans
PAHQ_ASHE-SLAT-1	VW-2023-00890	Ashe-Slatt No 1	ASHE to 47/1 and 51/3 to 55/1
PAHQ_WNPTT-BE45-1	VW-2023-00876	CGS Backup Bank Tap to Benton-451B No 1	1/1 to WNPT
PAHQ_MIDW-BENT-1	VW-2023-00888	Midway-Benton No 1	4/5 to 19/2
PAHQ_MIDW-BENT-2	VW-2023-00894	Midway-Benton No 1	MIDW to 4/5 and 19/2 to BENT
PAHQ_MIDW-BENT-2	VW-2023-00894	Benton-Saddle Mountain No 1	BENT to 11/7
PAHQ_MIDW-BENT-2	VW-2023-00894	Midway-Benton No 2	MIDW to BENT
PAHQ_RDMT-WHBL-1	VW-2023-00889	Red Mountain-White Bluffs No 1	RDMT to 8/3

The corridors in the proposed project area measure between approximately 130 feet and 400 feet in width, and approximately 69 miles in length. The corridors cross a variety of terrain and land uses, including urban, suburban, rural residential, and land managed by the United States Department of Energy Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL), State of Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Defense (DOD), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-Spokane District.

BPA notified the federal and state land managers, and none responded with any concerns. Letters, on-site meetings, emails, and phone calls would be used to notify private 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.

To comply with Western Electricity Coordinating Council standards, BPA proposes to manage 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 low-growing plant communities along the right-of-way (ROW) to control the development of potentially threatening vegetation.

A combination of selective and nonselective vegetation control methods would be used to perform the work, and may include hand cutting, mowing, herbicidal treatment, or a combination of those methods. To ensure that the roots are killed, prevent re-sprouts, and selectively manage vegetation that interferes with the operation and maintenance of transmission infrastructure, herbicides would be selectively applied using spot treatment (stump treatment) or localized treatments (basal treatment and/or low-volume foliar treatment). For worker safety and fire prevention, broad-spectrum (non-selective) residual herbicide would be applied, and only applied immediately adjacent to switch platforms and selected transmission structures (primarily wood poles). All herbicides and adjuvants would be chosen from a list of approved chemicals in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000) and subsequent supplement analyses to the FEIS.

The proposed activities include the treatment of up to 21 acres using selective hand cutting methods followed immediately by an herbicide spot-treatment of hardwood stems, as well as the treatment of up to 23 acres using localized herbicide applications. The proposed activities also include the treatment of approximately 0.06 miles of access roads, and 436 structure sites using mowing techniques and other approved methods. BPA proposes to remove no trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW in urban areas. The initial treatment period would be from June 2025, through October 2025. A follow-up treatment of re-sprouting target vegetation would be conducted. 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. All debris would be disposed of onsite, along the ROW, using on-site chipping/mulching, or cut, lop, and scatter techniques.

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)).

Analysis

A Vegetation Control Cut Sheet was developed for this corridor that incorporated the requirements identified in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS and Record of Decision (August 23, 2000). The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures outlined in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets.

Water Resources

Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) occurring in the project area are noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets. As conservation and avoidance measures, only spot and localized treatment with Garlon 3A (Triclopyr TEA) would be used within a 100-foot buffer up to the water's edge of any stream containing threatened or endangered species. Shrubs that are less than 10-feet-high would not be cut where ground to conductor clearance allows. No ground-disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented, thus eliminating the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near the streams. Where private water wells/springs or agricultural irrigation sources have been identified along the ROW and noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets, no herbicide application would occur within a 50-foot radius of the wellhead, spring, or irrigation source (164 feet when using herbicides with ground/surface water advisory).

Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Act

Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA made a determination of whether its proposed project would have any effects on any listed species. A species list was obtained for federally-listed, proposed, and candidate species potentially occurring within the project boundaries from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Based on the ESA review conducted, BPA made a determination that the project would have “No Effect” for all ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat under USFWS’ jurisdiction. The attached Tri-Cities Sensitive Species Conservation Measures FY25 are required where the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets note that ESA-listed/sensitive species or their habitat are potentially present.

BPA conducted a review of ESA-listed species, designated critical habitat, 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 conducted a review of ESA-listed 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). The proposed vegetation management activities are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the 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 (SLOPES PBO) (WCR-2014-1600, September 22, 2016). Streams in the project area with documented presence of ESA-listed fish, designated critical habitat for one or more species, and/or identified as EFH have been noted in the Vegetation Control Cut Sheets. It was determined that, by complying with the project design criteria listed within the SLOPES PBO, potential effects to ESA-listed anadromous salmonids and EFH would be consistent with those evaluated and addressed in the SLOPES PBO.

Cultural Resources

All activities were reviewed for their potential to affect historic and/or cultural resources. The proposed vegetation management actions typically do not result in ground disturbance to the physical environment. 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.

Re-Vegetation

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.

Monitoring

The entire project would be inspected during the work period, summer 2025 through fall 2025. A follow-up treatment may occur after the initial treatment. Additional monitoring for follow-up treatment would be conducted as necessary. A vendor scorecard would be used to document formal inspections and would be filed with the contracting officer.

Findings

BPA finds that the types of actions and the potential impacts related to the proposed activities have been examined, reviewed, and consulted upon and are similar to those analyzed in the Transmission

System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD. There are no substantial changes in the EIS' Proposed Action and no substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of the adverse effects that bear on the analysis in the EIS' Proposed Action or its impacts within the meaning of 10 CFR § 1021.314 and 40 CFR § 1502.9¹. Therefore, no further NEPA analysis or documentation is required.

/s/ Kylie Porter
Kylie Porter
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 16, 2025

References:

Vegetation Control Cut Sheets

Tri-Cities FY25 Sensitive Species Conservation Measures and Resource Guide

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 SA BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*