

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Drummond-Macks Inn No. 1 Vegetation Management Project

PP&A No.: 6761

Project Manager: Cozette DeTray- TFBV-BELL-1

Location: Fremont County, Idaho

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 acre

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to maintain low growing vegetation communities in specific, localized areas in and adjacent to the Drummond-Macks Inn No. 1 and Greentimber Tap to Drummond-Macks Inn No. 1 rights-of-way (ROW) in Fremont County, Idaho. 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, mowing, herbicidal treatment, or a combination of those 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 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 Drummond-Macks Inn No. 1 corridor in the proposed project area measures approximately 150 feet in width and 38 miles in length. Localized areas within the corridor include approximately 156 acres of herbicide use and 249 acres of manual cut, lop, and scatter. This work would occur at about 3.2 miles of access road and 352 structure sites of existing transmission line that would be initially treated in the spring of 2026 to the fall of 2026. 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 spring of 2026 and fall of 2026. 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 1 corridor tree (CT) in, or adjacent to, the ROW and to remove limbs from 5 trees in, or adjacent to, the ROW. Tree clearing would not be concentrated and occur in multiple, discrete locations within the 39 miles of rights-of-way. 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 *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 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.¹

/s/ Julianna Martin

Julianna Martin

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

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 CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: November 26, 2025

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.

Proposed Action: Drummond-Macks Inn No. 1 Vegetation Management Project

Project Site Description

The Project area occurs in the Middle Rockies and Snake River Plain ecoregions. The Middle Rockies are characterized by a coniferous-shrubland mosaic dominated by Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and aspen while the Snake River Plains are primarily dominated by rangeland and cropland, native vegetation being sagebrush steppe. The work areas are existing transmission line rights-of-ways that are primarily in rangeland, agricultural, state lands, timberland, and recreational land uses on USFS and BLM managed land. The existing transmission rights-of-way are managed for low-growing vegetation species.

<u>Township Range Section(s)</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Sections</u>
08N	43E	01,02, 11-14, 23-26
09N	43E	13, 23, 24, 26, 35, 36
	44E	05-07, 18
10N	44E	05, 08, 17, 20, 29, 32
11N	44E	06, 07, 18, 19, 29, 30, 32
12N	43E	01
	44E	06, 07, 18, 19, 30, 31
13N	43E	01, 12, 13, 24, 25, 36
	44E	06
14N	44E	31

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed actions were found to have either no potential to cause effect (manual cut lop and scatter or herbicide application) or no adverse effect to historic properties based on the implementation of monitoring and/or pre-work surveys. Pursuant to its

responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800, on October 7, 2025, BPA initiated consultation with: one tribal government (Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation); the Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS); and the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service (Caribou-Targhee National Forest). The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer responded on October 20, 2025, and provided written concurrence with the BPA No Adverse Effects finding. No additional responses were received from the consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- 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 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 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 a determination of “may affect and is likely to adversely affect” Ute Ladies’-tresses and whitebark pine Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species. The proposed vegetation management activities are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) regarding: Southern Idaho Inspection and Vegetation Management Project, consultation number 2024-0115212, sent to BPA in July 2025.

Notes:

Impact avoidance and minimization measures would be required for parts of the project area where threatened and endangered species occur:

- BPA would record individual whitebark pine trees removed within the action area as part of the activities described in this consultation and report these to USFWS yearly by December 31st.
- No spraying, spot or otherwise when wind is ≥ 10 mph in whitebark pine habitat (implemented when possible).
- When possible, no soil residual herbicides will be applied 14 days prior to forecasted rain.

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. Based on the ESA review conducted, BPA made the determination that the project “may affect but is not likely to adversely affect” Canada lynx, North American wolverine, and grizzly bear. The proposed vegetation management activities are within the scope of activities and action area evaluated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Biological Opinion (BiOp) regarding: Southern Idaho Inspection and Vegetation Management Project, consultation number 2024-0115212, sent to BPA in July 2025, and conservation measures would be implemented in the Drummond-Macks Inn ROW. Additionally, the following spans would have additional conservation measures for grizzly bear.

<u>Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone</u>	<u>Drummond-Macks Inn Transmission Line Spans</u>
Greater Yellowstone Recovery Zone	10/8-12/1
Greater Yellowstone Recovery Zone	23/4-23/7
Greater Yellowstone Recovery Zone	24/10-25/6
Greater Yellowstone Recovery Zone	31/2-38/9

Notes:

- Implement terms and conditions and conservation measures for Canada lynx and North American wolverine as identified in the July 2025 consultation.
- In spans identified as potential grizzly bear habitat:
 - BPA personnel and contractors would follow applicable food storage requirements while on federal- and state-managed land.
 - BPA will report grizzly bear sightings to USFWS within 24 hours, or as quickly as practicable, and include date, time, location, photos, direction of travel, presence of a radio collar, and any other descriptive information that might be useful in identifying the bear
 - To avoid disturbance to grizzly bears during the fall and denning season, scheduled vegetation management activities would be conducted between March 16 and October 15 in the areas of the Action Area which overlaps grizzly bear recovery zones.
 - If needed, modification, suspension, or temporary cessation of inspection or vegetation management activities to resolve grizzly bear-human conflict situations.
 - Overnight camping would not take place during the course of activities described in this BA.
 - BPA personnel and contractors performing activities in the ROW and away from their vehicles would be instructed to carry bear spray and know how to properly use it to deter attacking wildlife.
 - When possible, all shrubs and all herbaceous materials less than 10 foot in height, excluding noxious weeds, would be left untouched to preserve food sources for grizzly.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Appropriate herbicides would be used within proximity to waterbody locations according to label instructions, including buffer distances. 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. 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

Explanation: No change in land use would occur. No specially-designated areas are present in the work areas. No disruption to the use of USFS and BLM-managed lands 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. 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 the USFS and BLM. No special measures or requirements were identified for treatments on USFS and 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/ Julianna Martin

Julianna Martin

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: November 26, 2025