

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY27 Idaho Falls Bundle Vegetation Management Scheduled Maintenance

PP&A No.: 7021

Project Manager: Cozette DeTray – TFBV-PASCO

Location: Bonneville, Bingham, Teton, and Fremont counties, 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 acres

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to maintain low-growing vegetation communities in specific, localized areas in and adjacent to the Cattle Creek-Goshen No 1, Palisades-Cattle Creek No 1, Palisades-Swan Valley No 1, Swan Valley-Goshen No 1 and Targhee-Drummond No 1 rights-of-way (ROW) in Bonneville, Bingham, Teton, and Fremont Counties, Idaho. Vegetation management needs were assessed, and Vegetation Control Cut Sheets were created for the ROW 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 methods to manage and maintain vegetation with the goal of removing tall-growing vegetation that is currently or would 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 between approximately 50 and 150 feet in width and approximately 113 miles in length. Localized areas within an approximate 103 acres using localized hand cutting methods followed immediately by an herbicide spot treatment of hardwood stems as well as treatment of up to 117 acres localized herbicide applications. The proposed activities would also include 23 acres mowed, 25 miles of access roads, and 351 structure sites of existing transmission line and access road rights-of-way would be initially treated in the Fall of 2026 – through Spring of 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 Spring of 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 12 danger trees (DT) and 71 corridor trees (CT) in, or adjacent to, the ROW. Tree clearing would not be concentrated and occur in multiple, discrete locations within the 113 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;
- 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/ Eric McOmie

Eric McOmie

Natural Resource Specialist (Environmental Compliance)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 9, 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 work areas are existing transmission line ROWs that are primarily private lands but some tracts are managed by the Bonneville Power Administration Fish & Wildlife Tract Areas, United States Bureau of Reclamation, United States Forest Service Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho State Lands, and Idaho Department of Fish & Game. Land use is varied, with suburban, agricultural, forestry, commercial, industrial, and park/recreational uses present along the ROW corridors. The existing transmission rights-of-way are managed for low-growing vegetation species. Specifically, the following corridor spans are to be treated/maintained:

<u>Corridor</u>	<u>To (Mile/Structure)</u>	<u>From (Mile/Structure)</u>
Cattle Creek-Goshen No 1	0/1	22/6
Palisades-Cattle Creek No 1	0/1	31/8
Palisades-Swan Valley No 1	4/2	13/4
Swan Valley-Goshen No 1	0/1	26/2
Targhee-Drummond No 1	0/1	27/8

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 Idaho State Historical Society, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes-Fort Hall Indian Reservation on April 27, 2026. All parties concurred with the APE and the determination of no adverse effect on June 1, 2026. No other responses were received within 30 days.

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.

One archaeological district, six built environment resources, and four archaeological sites have been reported within the project area on Federal, state, city, and private lands. Reported historic resources include irrigation canals, lithic scatters, precontact rock shelter, and earthen berm. Within the project area and reported resource area, contractors are required to use hand tools to clear vegetation within or adjacent to recorded boundaries of the archaeological resources and no ground disturbance is anticipated with this maintenance action.

BPA Cultural Resource staff denoted avoidance recommendations to the proposed schedule for maintenance action and DT removal at Cattle Creek-Gosh No 1 03/01-03/03 and Targhee-Drummond No 1 04/07-04/08 requesting vehicle restricted use to existing access road only; no offroad vehicle use. Additionally, staff recommended switching from mechanical mowing to hand cutting around structures and access roads in both these corridor spans.

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 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. Local populations of the Ute ladies'-tresses *Spiranthes diluvialis* are known to occur within the region, but occurrences within that distribution are not directly observed or modeled within the ROW and project area. 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:

- Do not spray, spot, or otherwise when wind is 10 mph or more in Ute ladies'-tresses habitat, when possible.

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. There is no overlap of designated critical habitat within the project area for state- or federally-listed species and based on the ESA review conducted and official species list, BPA made the determination that there would be no effect to wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Water bodies (streams, rivers, lakes) occurring in the project area are noted in the vegetation control cut sheets. Herbicide buffers, up to 100 feet, would be established depending on treatment type, potential toxicity, or label advisory for ground or surface water. No aquatic treatments would be conducted. Additional conservation and avoidance measures are not needed as sensitive aquatic species, designated critical or essential fish habitats are not present. Trees in riparian zones would be selectively cut to include only those that would grow into the minimum approach distances of the conductor at maximum sag; other trees

would be left in place or topped to preserve shade. Shrubs that are less than 10 feet high would not be cut where ground to conductor clearance allows. No ground disturbance would occur and root systems would be left intact to prevent sedimentation. 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 State of Idaho, USFS, and BLM-managed lands would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line ROW. 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, BLM, BOR and State of Idaho. No special measures or requirements were identified for treatments on federal or state 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/ Eric McOmie

Date: June 9, 2026

Eric McOmie

Natural Resource Specialist (Environmental Compliance)