US Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region,
Powerline Operating Plan/Agreement Sample Template V.2023.8 (changes from previous versions are related to BMP language on page 4)

USFS Powerline and Related Facilities Operating Plan (or Agreement)

			_(company	y name)
For Powerlin	ne Authorization #_			
Located on th	ie		Nationa	al Forest
Company logo or image	can be inserted.			
Signatures:				
Submitted:				
Company title and name	e of signatory	Date		
Approved:				
Insert Name,	Forest Supervisor	Date		

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Attachments:

- 1. Definitions from USFS FSH 2709.11, Chapter 80
- 2. Activity Chart
- 3. Best Management Practices (combination of national, regional focused on ESA and local)
- 4. Section 106 direction
- 5. Contacts updated annually

I. PURPOSE

A. SCOPE

This operating [plan/agreement] governs vegetation management, inspection, and operation and maintenance of the powerline facilities and the [holder's/grantee's] roads and trails authorized by the Forest Service under a powerline facility [permit/easement], Authorization Identification Number [XXX] (the [permit/easement]).

The (permit/easement) authorizes the specific acres, location, and improvements. This document specifies the methods that the (holder/grantee) plans to take to operate and maintain the powerlines, roads, and vegetation maintenance. The map and list of authorized improvements are found in the permit.

B. DEFINITIONS

Definitions in Attachment 1 apply to this operating [plan/agreement] and are taken from USFS Handbook 2709.11, Chapter 80, Operating Plans and Agreements for Powerline Facilities signed February 10, 2022.

II. COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL LAW AND APPLICABLE RELIABILITYAND SAFETY STANDARDS

A. FEDERAL LAW

This operating [plan/agreement] is executed under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), 43 U.S.C. 1761-1772. The Forest Service must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to the extent applicable in connection with the [permit/easement] and this operating [plan/agreement]. Pursuant to section 6 the National Forest Management Act of 1976, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1704(i), all authorized activities and projects conducted by the [holder/grantee] within the [permit/easement] area shall be consistent with the applicable national forest land management plan and any other applicable land management plans.

B. APPLICABLE RELIABILITY AND SAFETY STANDARDS

The [holder/grantee] is subject to utility reliability standards issued by the Federal EnergyRegulatory Commission (FERC), the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC), and, as applicable, the regional entity designated by NERC (e.g., the Western Electricity Coordination Council (WECC) and other standards, including the National

Electrical Safety Code (NESC) and standards issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

III. LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS, ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE and RESOURCE PROTECTION

A. Forest Land Management Plans

The Forest Service shall be responsible for determining whether activities conducted under the [permit/easement] and this operating [plan/agreement] are consistent with applicable land management plans.

The [holder/grantee] shall coordinate with the Forest Service in the preliminary design stage for the [holder's/grantee's] proposed non-routine powerline facility maintenance, road construction and reconstruction, and fiber optic cable installation projects in the [permit/easement] area regarding whether these projects are consistent with applicable land management plans.

B. Environmental Compliance

See Attachment 2, Activity Chart, for guidance on environmental compliance associated with various activity levels conducted by the [holder/grantee] under this operating plan.

C. Best Management Practices (BMP's)

General BMP's

The [holder's/grantee's] powerline facility maintenance activities and projects in the [permit/easement] area shall follow applicable Forest Service National Core BMPs, which are incorporated in the Forest Service's BMP Technical Guide. The Forest Service's BMP Technical Guide is posted at https://www.fs.usda.gov/naturalresources/watershed/pubs/FS National Core BMPs April2012.pdf. Not all BMPs apply to every activity. BMPs should be applied consistent with local conditions, resource values, and designated uses of water.

2. Regional & Local BMP's

Attachment 3, Best Management Practices, details BMP's that are specific to Pacific Northwest Forests (R6) and (insert forest name) National Forest. The R6 BMP's are focused on threatened and endangered species at a regional level. Local BMPs are developed and provided by the local Forest Service office at permit renewal or at review of operating plan, whichever is sooner. These local BMPs would address typically local invasive species prevention, any additional endangered species protection, location of selected operation restriction dates.

3. (insert company name) BMP's

Reference and attached company BMPs for common industry practices related to resource protection such as hazardous material handling, spill protection and wood treatment application.

4. Employee and contractor education
Briefly outline how company employees and contractors will be educated on BMP's.

D. Invasive Species

In planning activities in the [permit/easement] area and in conducting supporting environmental analysis, the [holder/grantee] and the Forest Service shall strive to address the need to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive species as outlined in the specific Best Management Practices, Attachment 3.

E. Pesticide Application

The [holder/grantee] shall comply with the pesticide application provision in the [permit/easement].

IV. COORDINATION

A. Responsible Parties

The authorized officer for the Forest Service and the [holder's/grantee's] designated principal contact or the programmatic contacts listed in Attachment 5 are responsible for implementation of this operating [plan/agreement].

B. Types of Activities and Projects

The [holder/grantee] shall coordinate with the Forest Service regarding activities and projects planned or proposed by the [holder/grantee] under this operating [plan/agreement] as set forth in the [permit/easement] and this operating [plan/agreement] and using **Attachment 2**, **Activity Chart** of this operating [plan/agreement], [Holder/Grantee] Activities, as a guide.

- C. Meeting Regarding Activities and Projects
 - 1. The [holder/grantee] and the Forest Service shall plan to meet annually regarding activities and projects planned or proposed by the [holder/grantee] or the Forest Service within the [permit/easement] area. The [holder/grantee] and the Forest Service may agree to shorter intervals based upon resources and planned or proposed activities or projects. Either party may request, organize, and schedule additional meetings. Discussion topics may include but are not limited to [holder/grantee] issues such as:
 - Clarify what activity level an activity fit for USFS notification and approval.
 - Annual vegetation, road and powerline maintenance planned
 - Use of National Forest System roads and trails
 - Operations during fire season
 - Unauthorized use

- Long term planning for powerline expansion
- 2. At least 30 days prior to a scheduled meeting, the [holder/grantee] and the Forest Service shall provide each other with a description of and schedule for planned activities and proposed projects to be addressed at the meeting.

D. Notice of Forest Service Activities

The Forest Service shall give advance notice to and coordinate with the [holder/grantee] regarding activities and projects planned or proposed by the Forest Service within the [permit/easement] area that may impact operation or maintenance of or access to the powerline facilities, such as but not limited to:

- Timber sales
- Access restrictions and Closure Orders
- Land sales or exchanges
- Prescribed fire
- Forest Plan amendments

E. Notice of (holder/grantee) Activities

The [holder/grantee] shall provide prior notice to the authorized officer of the [holder's/grantee's] activities in accordance with applicable law and applicable prior notification, coordination, and acknowledgment or approval requirements in 36 CFR 251.61(a), the [permit/easement], and this operating [plan/agreement], using Attachment 2, Activity Chart as a guide.

- D. Project Managers and USFS Point of Contact
 - The [holder/grantee] shall ensure that contractors and vendors projects have a copy of the [permit/easement] and this operating [plan/agreement], including attachments, before commencement of project work.
 - 2. The [holder/grantee] shall designate a project manager for each project to represent the [holder/grantee] in all matters pertaining to that project.
 - 3. The Forest Service shall designate a POC for each project to represent the Forest Service in all matters pertaining to that project.
 - 4. The Forest Service may conduct onsite monitoring and inspection of projects to ensure compliance with the [permit/easement], this operating [plan/agreement], and Forest Service requirements such as environmental mitigation.
 - 5. The [holder/grantee] or its contractor and the Forest Service may participate in the final walk-through for projects when they are complete. The

[holder/grantee] shall give the Forest Service prior notice of completion of projects to facilitate Forest Service participation in final walk-throughs. The [holder/grantee] and the Forest Service shall agree on how much notice is required for each project.

6. The [holder/grantee] is responsible for contractors' and vendors' compliance with the terms and conditions of the [permit/easement] and this operating [plan/agreement] in performing work on projects. The [holder/grantee] shall notify the Forest Service immediately of any damage to NFS lands or resources in connection with project work performed by contractors and vendors.

E.Timelines:

The Activity Chart – Attachment #2 outlines the response time for the Forest Service for the different class of activities. Class B activities, which are generally described as routine activities, have a response time that is negotiated between the Forest Service and the powerline operator. Be sure to negotiate that timeline and include it in this document.

V. POWERLINE AND RELATED FACILITIES

- A. Objectives and Standards
 - 1. The [holder's/grantee's] maintenance objectives for the powerline facilities are to provide for cost-effective, safe, and reliable operation while minimizing impacts on the environment.
 - 2. All powerline facility maintenance activities and projects shall meet all applicable safety and industrial standards, including FERC, NERC, NESC, OSHA, and WECC standards.
- B. Inspections

Provide details on inspection method, typical transportation mode and cycle for inspection of powerline facilities. Any format can be used such as a table, chart, or narrative.

C. Routine maintenance operations

Provide details on the typical transportation mode, equipment, and primary utility infrastructure supplies (type of poles for example) to provide routine maintenance of powerline and related power facilities.

Any format can be used such as a table, chart, or narrative. Do not include new construction operations or emergency work in this. The Activity Chart, Attachment 2, outlines the list of activities. This chart provides how that work will be done. Example:

Activity	Transport	Equipment	Supplies	Other
Single Pole replacement	Ground based, 1 medium	Truck based auger	Replace in kind with treated	
·	truck and 10 yard dump		wood pole and 3-4 yard of	
	truck		crushed rock.	
Ball Mt pole and tower repairs	Helicopter for supplies and tools. Line crew hikes in from paved road.	Hand tools,		This area has no access, so our crews need supplies flown in
Maintaining transformers or tower cross members	Bucket truck in 95% of cases	Hand tools and bucket truck lift.	Replacement transformers or tower cross members and hardware	

D. Best Management Practices related to Powerline Facility Work See Attachment 3, Best Management Practices

VI. ROADS, TRAILS AND WINTER ACCESS

- A. Use and Maintenance of National Forest System (NFS) Roads and Trails
 - 1. Road Use Permits. Work with the local forest to determine when a Road Use Permit is required and insert guidance here. Typically, incidental use such as pickups using NFS roads on an infrequent basis does not require a road use permit if driving a road open to the public. If, for example, a few contract arborist medium weight trucks are accessing the powerline via NFS roads for multiple days, a Road Use Permit would likely be required. Recommended language: Any road maintenance work, other than cutting out trees fallen across the NFS roads, requires a Road Use Permit.
 - 2. Clearing roads and trails Recommended language: When cutting out trees that have fallen across NFS roads or trails, the trees should be cut out to the full clearing width of the road or trail. Cut logs should be placed in a stable position and not in any drainage feature such as a ditch or culvert intake. If emergency response does not afford time to meet this standard at the time of initial clearing, crews should follow up within 7 days to meet the standard.

- 3. Gated NFS roads or trails. Coordinate with the local forest to list out gated NFS roads or trails that you need access to and how locks will be managed. Insert a list of gate locations that you have coordinated access with your local forest on and how locks will be managed.
- B. Maintenance of (Holder/Grantee) Developed Roads and Trails
 - 1. Inventory: Provide map with table listing holder/grantee roads if not clearly provided in the permit.
 - 2. Standards and Inspections. Provide Holder/Grantee road and trail standards and inspection cycle.
 - 3. Gates. Provide Holder owned gate locations and how access by USFS is coordinated.
 - 4. Bridges. Provide inventory and map location of holder/grantee owned bridges.
- C. Winter Access Procedures: Outline access procedures when access routes are snow covered. Describe routes where access is by snocat if different than summer routes When snow plowing of Forest Service roads is needed, a snowplow permit is required but can be incorporated into this operating plan by working with the local forest. List out National Forest System roads that would be plowed and the BMP's that are required to follow.
- D. Traffic Control: Outline traffic control procedures. Work with local forest to determine how long traffic on trails or roads can be stopped.
- E. Roads and Trails Best Management Practices: See Attachment 3, Best Management Practices.

VII. Vegetation Management:

A. Permit/easement Requirements:

Vegetation management requirements outlined in the permit take precedent over language in the operating plan.

- B. Vegetation Management Objectives:
 - 1. List out your company's objectives. Typically, it includes items such as
 - a) Maintain reliability, address public safety, and eliminate the risk of vegetation-caused outages
 - b) Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plant species
 - c) Encourage low growing, native vegetation
 - d) Maintain and enhance vegetation conditions to improve habitat for fish, wildlife, and plant species and water and soil resource

C. Types of Vegetation Management and Activities

This section should list out the activities in the Activity Chart and provide details regarding the methods and BMPs used to address those activities. What follows are examples but develop content specific to your operation.

1. Inspection:

Location	Timing	Method & access
No vehicle access lines	Bi-annually	Visual - hiking
No vehicle access lines	Bi-annually	Drone
in ABC canyon		
Vehicle access	Bi-annually	Visual – by pickup or
		ATV
All overhead lines	Annually	Flight – manned
		helicopter
Buried lines	Every 3 years	Visual – by pickup or
		ATV

Attached is map detailing the above chart locations.

2. Vegetation Maintenance Standards:

Provide details on vegetation clearing standards for each line. A map outlining the kV and what is overhead or buried if this is not already provided in the permit/easement. A chart is likely the best way to provide this.

3. Canopy Pruning:

Provide details on methods used to manage canopy. For example, discuss where work is done by climbing arborists, bucket truck, helicopter pruning or other method.

Activity/location	Transportation	Tools/method	Other
Canopy pruning	Arborist bucket	Hydraulic saw and	
with road access	truck	bucket on truck	
Canopy pruning	Arborists climb	Top handle power	
without road	trees	saw and hand	
access		tools	
Canopy pruning on	Helicopter	Helisaw	Ground crews
the West Bird			will follow –
transmission line			hiking in.

4. Ground Vegetation:

Provide details on methods used to manage ground vegetation. For example, discuss where work is done by specific machinery, ground crews with power saws or other method. Also provide detail on how low growing, native

vegetation growth is promoted.

Activity/location	Transportation	Tools/method	Other
Cut & treat ground vegetation on west side of the crest	Primarily hike in with a few roads access points	Hand crew with power saws. Will use stump treatment on alder as outlined in pesticide use below	Primarily vine maple and alder. Will leave all growth under 6' except alder.
Mow West Bird line	Lowboy stages mower at Rd 42 jct.	Mower on rubber tracked skid steer	Wet areas will be done with hand crew.

5. Pesticide Use Related to Controlling Ground Vegetation:

Provide details on what pesticides use will be requested for a pesticide use permit. Product name, application method, timing and location should be included. If none – state as such.

6. Slash Management:

Work with local forest to determine methods of treatment for slash. Provide details on methods to be used and at what locations. Recommend chipping or removing slash when within a specific distance of buildings.

7. Invasive Species Prevention and Treatment

- a) Prevention: Detail practices to prevent spread of invasive species. Reference BMP's. Include language that your contractors are provided to ensure they know fluent with requirements.
- b) Inspection: Provide schedule and method for inspecting for invasive species in permit area and where hazard trees outside the permit area have been cut.
- c) Treatment: Detail practices used to treat invasive by species, method, timing, and location. If pesticide use will be requested for a pesticide use permit, provide product name, application method and locations. If none state as such.
- d) Best Management Practices Related to Invasive Species: see BMP Attachment.

8. Hazard Trees

This section addresses the management of hazard trees. The definition of hazard tree is found in Attachment 1 and matches Forest Service policy FSH 2709.11, Chapter 80.

- a) Inspection and Inventory: Provide schedule for inspecting for hazards trees both inside and outside of the right-of-way. Detail how the inventory will be shared with the Forest Service. A common inventory tool that the USFS uses is ArcGIS Online (AGOL). Inventory needs to show individual tree data as show:
 - (1) How tree is marked as hazard tree
 - (2) DBH, (diameter at breast height)
 - (3) what makes it a hazard tree,
 - (4) estimate of merchantable timber (see attachment 6)
 - (5) if it was imminent and was already removed
 - (6) if not imminent, when removal is planned
 - (7) will it be topped or removed at the stump
 - (8) location mapped
 - (9) Other
- b) Treatment of Hazard Trees: Provide detail as to when trees are topped or removed at the stump.
- c) Payment for Timber: See XI Misc. Provisions, B Payment for Timber.
- 9. Integrated Vegetation Management: The goal for IVM powerline facility vegetation management is to convert vegetation in the linear right-of-way for the powerline facilities to low-growing plant communities that are non-invasive and that keep tall- growing vegetation out. Provide summary as to how the methods your company utilizes meets the IVM goal.
- 10. Best Management Practices: see Attachment 3

VIII. EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE

A. IN GENERAL

Emergency powerline facility maintenance and emergency vegetation management involve unexpected work or activities conducted in response to situations created by events such as windstorms, snowstorms, fires, floods, vandalism, or other events that interrupt or pose an imminent threat to the transmission of electricity in the [permit/easement] area or road conditions that block access needed to respond to emergency events in the [permit/easement] area. These situations represent potential threats to life, public safety, or property. Emergency powerline facility maintenance and emergency vegetation management shall be accomplished in an expedient manner to restore or maintain service to the

communities served by the powerline facilities in the [permit/easement] area, including homes, hospitals, and emergency services.

B. Types of Emergency Powerline Facility Maintenance, emergency Vegetation Management and Emergency Road or Trail Maintenance.

Emergency powerline facility maintenance may include clearing blocked culverts, repairing roads, replacement of downed poles or transmission towers, or repairing segments of a powerline facility. Emergency vegetation management shall be conducted in accordance with the [permit/easement].

C. Notice of Emergency Powerline Facility Maintenance. Emergency Vegetation Management and Emergency Road or Trail Maintenance.

The [holder/grantee] shall notify the Forest Service by telephone or email of the location and the type and scope of any emergency powerline facility maintenance or the quantity of emergency vegetation management as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours after initiating the response. The [holder/grantee] shall submit a written report within 30 days of completion of the response.

D. RESOURCE PROTECTION

The [holder/grantee] shall take all measures necessary to protect natural resources during emergency powerline facility maintenance and emergency vegetation management to the extent feasible. If emergency powerline facility maintenance or emergency vegetation management jeopardizes threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat, cultural resources, or human remains or objects of cultural patrimony as defined by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the [holder/grantee] shall:

- 1. Comply with the [permit/easement].
- 2. Comply with applicable environmental laws and regulations that apply in the event of an emergency in the [permit/easement] area

IX. FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Most power utilities are required to have fire prevention and control plan as per state regulation. Your company may be able to insert that plan as an attachment to this operating plan if the appropriate elements listed below are addressed in the plan.

A. Industrial Fire Precaution Levels

- 1. Daily fire season IFPL: Detail where your company finds the daily IFPL level for IFPL zones on the National Forest.
- 2. Fire Season Equipment: Detail how your company complies or exceeds the requirements for each of 4 IFPL levels.

Level	Equipment	Action
1		
П		
III		
IV		

- B. Communication: Detail how field personnel can communicate with your dispatcher or emergency services in the event of a fire. Include travel time, if needed, to reach site where communication devices can be effective.
- C. Field Crew Preparedness: Detail how field personnel are prepared to respond to a fire started from field work or from powerline. Outline what training is provided. List what employees/roles are hired, if any, that are dedicated or focused on fire prevention. Outline how your company ensures that contractors and vendors working National Forest System lands are meeting fire standards.

The fire plan should set forth the number and types of firefighting tools provided, their locations, and the person designated as responsible for ensuring their presence and operating condition. Personnel should be trained in their use.

While the IFPL levels dictate the minimum required, many of the tasks that power companies perform are not listed. It is prudent to take additional preventative steps or have more tools and water on hand when the equipment and/or task has an increased risk.

- D. Additional Fire Preparedness: Detail actions that your company is taking to provide additional fire preparedness, if any, such as fire detection cameras on towers, change in actions on red flag days or installation of weather station.
- E. Fire Prevention Related to Powerline Infrastructure
 Provide detail regarding what has been done and what is planned to prevent fire starts
 from your company's powerlines such as changing out wooded poles to metal, burying
 lines, or replacing lines with covered ones.
- F. Public Safety Power Shut Offs

Provide a summary regarding your company's policies regarding PSPS's.

X. Miscellaneous Provisions

A. Payment for Merchantable Timber

When trees need to be felled, they must be evaluated for their merchantable value and appropriate payment made to the Forest Service. This is the case even when a hazard tree that has been deemed an imminent threat and has already been taken down or topped. It is also the case when the tree is simply left on the ground. The local Forest Service permit administrator will coordinate with the timber specialists in their office.

It is advised to discuss this at the annual meeting, to determine the appropriate process based on the powerline company's plan of work for the year.

B. Hazardous Material Handling & Spill Response

Insert in the attachments your company's hazmat spill plan or simply the components that address how this is handled on NFS lands.

C. Closures

Have local forest provide details on trails, roads or areas that have closures that restrict public access. Then have local forest provide which of those sites can be accessed by your company and under what conditions.

D. Operating Agreement Qualifications

When a power company qualifies for having an operating agreement instead of an operating plan the following section should be included how the permittee/grantee qualifies for that by addressing that they meet the following standard:

- a. Are not subject to NERC reliability standards (less than 200 kilovolts);
 and/or
- b. Sold 1,000,000 megawatt hours or less of electricity for purposes other than resale duringeach of the 3 calendar years during the period of March 23, 2015, to March 23, 2018.
- E. Aircraft Operation manned and unmanned Insert your company's planned use of aviation resources.

- 1. Manned aircraft Generally, airspace is controlled by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) not the Forest Service. However, flight operations that are connected to activities on the ground such as infrastructure (pole/tower sets), sling loads or vegetation work (helisaw/helicopter logging) do require advanced notice and approval from Authorized Officer. Landing sites also need additional authorization unless identified in the permit/easement.
- 2. UAS (drones) The following are required for drone use during utility operations:
- a. Advance notification and approval from Authorized Officer (see Activity Chart).
- b. All missions will be conducted in accordance with FAA Regulations Part 107 https://www.faa.gov/uas/commercial_operators/
- c. Adhere to guidance found in the Forest Service Standards for UAS Operations on page 16. https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/Forest%20Service%20Standards%20for%20UAS%20Operations%2007012 020.pdf
- Forest Service Response to Prior Notice for Routine Vegetation Management.
 The negotiated time for Forest Service response to prior notice on Routine Vegetation Management listed in Class B Activities in the Attached Activity Chart is _______. (Region 6 Office recommends no more than 30 days.)
 Modifications to this plan
 - a. At any time, the [holder/grantee] may submit a proposed modification to this operating [plan/agreement] for review and approval by the authorized officer.
 - b. The authorized officer shall consider and respond to the proposed modification, to the maximum extent practicable, within 120 days from the date it was received by the authorized officer, with the understanding that such factors as the number of proposed operating plans and agreements and proposed modifications to approved operating plans and agreements under review by the authorized officer and the number of powerline facilities covered under a single operating plan or agreement may affect the practicability of approving a proposed modification within 120 days from the date of receipt.
 - c. Modifications to this operating [plan/agreement] proposed by the [holder/grantee] must be submitted in writing and, if approved by the

authorized officer, must be signed and dated by the authorized officer and the [holder/grantee].

XI. Best Management Practices

A. General Best Management Practices (BMPs):
The [holder's/grantee's] powerline facility maintenance activities and projects in the [permit/easement] area shall follow applicable Forest Service National Core BMPs, which are incorporated in the Forest Service's BMP Technical Guide. The Forest Service's BMP Technical Guide is posted at https://www.fs.usda.gov/naturalresources/watershed/pubs/FS National Core BMPs

April2012.pdf. Sections Fac-2 and Fac- 9 are the most applicable sections. Not all BMPs apply to every activity and local BMP's will build off these general ones.

- B. Local Best Management Practices

 Attachment 3 outlines BMP's that are specific to the ______ National Forest.
- C. Company Best Management Practices
 Reference company policy related to additional BMP's.

Note: Avian BMP recommendations can be found at: https://www.aplic.org/ Avian Power Line Interaction Committee. Your local forest will likely provide some guidance also.