2022 Routine Powerline Vegetation Maintenance Report

Overview:

- This report highlights Forest Service responses to requests for vegetation management work by powerline owners/operators under approved operating plans and operating agreements for the calendar year 2022. This report is provided in accordance with section 512 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and is part of the Agency’s commitment to working with powerline owners and operators to provide safe and reliable delivery of electricity across National Forest System lands to rural and urban communities throughout the United States.

- 183 requests were made by powerline operators to perform routine vegetation maintenance on lands managed by the Forest Service in 2022.

- Routine (non-emergency) vegetation management is planned action, as outlined in an approved operating plan or agreement, periodically taken to reduce or eliminate threats to powerline facilities from vegetation within or adjacent powerline facilities rights-of-way on NFS lands.

- As shown in Figure 1, most requests were in the Pacific Southwest Region, which is the state of California.

- Figure 2 shows that the most commonly made request was to clear vegetation that had previously been approved for clearing in an operating plan, operating agreement, or schedule of work followed closely by requests to do non-emergency hazard tree pruning, topping, or felling and then by requests to perform touch up vegetation clearing without the use of pesticides or herbicides.

- Figure 3 shows that the Forest Service largely responded to requests within the timeframe specified in the operating plan, when the operating plan included target response requirements e.g., within 3 business days of the request having been made.

- As shown in Figure 4, 55% of the requests were approved as received with the company being notified that they did not need additional approval as approval was already granted in an operating plan or schedule of work. Another 29% of requests, which did require prior approval, were approved as received. Other requests were approved with mitigations or were delayed due to concerns that other cultural and natural resources may be negatively impacted.

- Of the 183 requests 47 were to perform vegetation management in priority landscapes as identified in the agency’s Wildfire Crisis Landscape Investments and the additional 11 landscapes that were added to that effort in 2023. Of those 47 requests, 34 were in the Southern California Fireshed Risk Reduction Strategy area, with fewer requests being made in other priority landscapes as shown in Figure 5.

- For reference, here is a map of the Forest Service regional boundaries.
Figure 1. Number of Requests by Region

(R1) Northern Region
(R2) Rocky Mountain Region
(R3) Southwestern Region
(R4) Intermountain Region
(R5) Pacific Southwest Region
(R6) Pacific Northwest Region
(R8) Southern Region
(R9) Eastern Region
(R10) Alaska Region

183 total requests

Figure 2. Type of Routine Vegetation Management Requested

(A) Vegetation inspection
(B) Vegetation clearing previously approved in an operating plan, agreement, or schedule of work
(C) Touch up vegetation clearing between approved cycles without the use of herbicides
(D) Non-emergency hazard tree pruning, topping, or felling
(E) Slash management
(F) Other

Total 256. This exceeds the total number of requests, 183, because a single request may contain multiple types of vegetation management.
Figure 3. Did the Forest Service respond per the timeframe specified in an approved operating plan or agreement?

Yes 118
No 19
No Time Specified 40

Total 177. This is less than the total number of requests, 183, due to data entry errors.

Figure 4. Nature of the Forest Service Response

(A) Approved as received. Response informed powerline owner or operator that the activity was previously approved and did not require further approval.
(B) Approved as received for an activity that was not previously approved.
(C) Approved with mitigations.
(D) Not approved.
(E) Response not yet made.
(F) Other.

Total 183
Figure 5. Number of requests by priority landscape

(A) 4FRI
(B) Colorado Front Range
(C) Southwest Idaho
(D) Southern California Fireshed Risk Reduction Strategy
(E) Mount Hood Forest Health
(F) Colville Northeast Washington Vision
(G) Non-priority landscape

Total 158. This is less than the total number of requests made, 183, due to data entry omissions and/or lack of geographic specificity in the request.