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[PSE.com](http://PSE.com)

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Cathy Beam, AICP  
Principal Planner  
City of Redmond  
[cbeam@redmond.gov](mailto:cbeam@redmond.gov)

RE: PSE Sammamish-Juanita Tree Removal Exception Request

Dear Cathy:

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is proposing to construct a new approximately 5 mile 115 kV transmission line between Sammamish Substation in the City of Redmond and Juanita Substation in the City of Kirkland. Within the City of Redmond, the transmission line will extend from the Sammamish Substation west of Willows Road NE to the City limits north of Sammamish Valley Park east of Willows Road NE. East of Willows Road NE, the transmission line will be constructed within a generally 50-foot wide easement on a series of parcels that vary between 75 to 100 feet wide owned by the City of Redmond that contains a former rail ballast from the BNSF railway. The existing ballast is generally 10 feet wide (wider in flatter areas) and intersects with regulated stormwater channels in culverts, some of which are classified as regulated streams. Adjacent to the ballast, wetlands have formed in some areas, generally in association with the stormwater features or regulated streams. PSE is proposing to construct the transmission line near the eastern edge of the parcels to allow for the multiple uses within the narrow parcels, while ensuring the transmission line does not require overhang easements or vegetation management on the neighboring parcels that contain Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) restrictive easements. PSE will be expanding the ballast to 17 feet in width in order to construct a gravel construction and maintenance access road since the existing ballast will not provide for safe access and staging of construction equipment due to the steep banks of the ballast and surrounding wetlands. The widening of the ballast will also include replacing culverts. Within the City of Redmond, three of the culverts will be replaced to allow for fish passage on regulated streams and two culverts will be replaced to support stormwater drainage features.

PSE must meet federal clearance standards to ensure safe operation of the transmission line. This includes PSE's adopted standard of not allowing vegetation that will reach a mature height over 25 feet within the transmission line corridor. Due to the linear nature of the project, impacts to trees within critical area buffers cannot be avoided. Additionally,

in order to replace one of the existing culverts with a fish passage culvert, one landmark tree will be impacted and need to be removed.

The City of Redmond Zoning Code (RZC) regulates tree removal associated with development. The code is written for parcel-based development and does not contemplate linear facilities, except in the context of utilities that serve a development project. PSE's project site is primarily made up of linear easements. Therefore, the trees within PSE's project site are the trees located within the transmission line corridor, which in and of itself is the development area of the project. This does not leave notable area that can be set aside void of impacts. PSE is requesting approval of an Exception from the RZC Tree Protection standards for removal of 17 significant trees in critical area buffers, one of which is a landmark tree. All of these trees are located within Parcel 2726059140 owned by the City of Redmond.

### Exception Request Trees

<b>Tree ID</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Location</b>
444	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	24"	stream buffer
445	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	10"	stream buffer
446	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	18"	stream buffer
447	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	12"	stream buffer
448	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	13"	stream buffer
449	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	12"	stream buffer
450	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	13"	stream buffer
451	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	7"	stream buffer
452	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	12"	stream buffer
453	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	6"	stream buffer
454	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	11"	stream buffer
455	betula papyrifera	paper birch	7"	stream buffer
456	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	9"	stream buffer
457	populus trichocarpa	black cottonwood	12"	stream buffer

458	populous trichocarpa	black cottonwood	6''	stream buffer
537	alnus rubra	red alder	12''	stream buffer
*538	populous trichocarpa	black cottonwood	32''	stream buffer

\*Landmark Tree

RZC 21.72.060 Tree Protection Standards

A. Tree Protection, In General

1. In all developments, a minimum of 35 percent of all significant trees shall be retained. Trees that are located within Native Growth Protection Areas, critical areas and their associated buffers as provided in RZC 21.64, *Critical Areas*, or that have otherwise been designated for protection shall not be removed. Exceptions to this standard shall be requested and reviewed in accordance with RZC 21.72.090, *Exceptions*.

**Response:** For a linear utility project, the standard to retain 35 percent of all significant trees does not apply. RZC 21.70.030 *Exemptions*, subsection (3) provides an exemption from obtaining a permit for removal of trees within easements or rights-of-way for the purposes of constructing public streets and utilities. Although the removal is exempt from the permit requirement, mitigation for tree removal will be provided in compliance with RZC 21.72.080, *Tree Replacement*. Additionally, PSE is requesting Exception approval to remove 17 trees within a critical area buffer.

2. Landmark Trees. Landmark trees shall not be removed unless an exception has been applied for and granted.

**Response:** PSE is requesting approval to remove one landmark tree that is also located within a stream buffer. The tree will be impacted by grading for replacement of an existing culvert under the former rail ballast with a fish passage culvert that is WDFW guidance compliant.

3. Hazardous Trees. Hazardous trees or dead trees posing a hazard, outside of NGPAs, critical areas and buffers, should be removed and are not considered significant trees.

**Response:** PSE has identified approximately 25 trees within the project corridor that are not located within NGPAs, critical areas or buffers, and will be hazardous to the safe operation of the transmission line and, therefore, are proposed to be removed. For trees on City property, PSE will pay into the tree fund so that the

City can replace the trees with trees in a location that does not conflict with the transmission line per RZC 21.72.080(2).

#### RZC 21.72.090 Exceptions

A. When exceptional conditions exist that prevent the full compliance with RZC 21.72.060, *Tree Protection Standards*, the applicant may request an exception. A request for any exception shall be submitted in writing by the property owner for consideration by the Administrator, and shall accompany the application for a permit reviewed under this section. The written request shall fully state all substantiating evidence pertinent to the exception request, and include supporting maps or plans. The Administrator may also require the recommendation of a certified arborist in reviewing the exception request.

B. Exception Criteria. An exception shall not be granted unless criteria B.1, B.2, and B.3, and B.4 of this subsection are satisfied:

1. The exception is necessary because:

a. There are special circumstances related to the size, shape, topography, location, or surroundings of the subject property; or

**Response:** There are special circumstances related to the size, shape, and topography, and location of the subject property. The transmission line corridor is located within a 75 -100 foot wide parcel owned by the City of Redmond. PSE worked with the City to site the transmission line near the eastern edge of the parcel to avoid the need for overhang easements on neighboring properties containing TDR easements, as well as allow for other future uses within the parcel. Wetland and stream critical areas are generally at the edge of the existing rail ballast where trees are located, including parcel 2726059140. Black cottonwood and other similar deciduous species are incompatible with transmission lines due to their height at maturity, broad canopy, and weak branch strength. In order to grade the site and replace an existing culvert that contains the flow of York Creek under the existing rail ballast with a fish passable culvert that complies with WDFW guidance under the construction access road, a 32-inch black cottonwood tree (landmark tree) will be impacted and must be removed. This tree is outside of the transmission line corridor.

b. Strict compliance with the provisions of this code may jeopardize the reasonable use of the property; or

**Response:** Strict compliance with the provisions of this code would prohibit construction of the transmission line, as PSE cannot construct a transmission line without meeting federal clearance standards for vegetation. The PSE easement centers the transmission line along the

eastern side of the parcel to allow for other future uses within the parcel and, at the same time prevent overhang onto adjoining properties with restrictive easements. Siting the transmission line further east on the parcel would cause more impact to critical areas and critical area buffers.

- c. Proposed vegetation removal, replacement, and mitigating measures proposed are consistent with the purpose and intent of the regulations; or

**Response:** The proposed vegetation removal, replacement and mitigating measures are consistent with the purpose and intent of the regulations. The trees to be removed under this Exception request are located within a critical area buffer. PSE proposes to mitigate for the impact to the critical area buffer through providing functional lift within the Willows Creek Stream Relocation Project site south of Sammamish Substation. Additionally, notable habitat lift will be provided by replacement of the existing York Creek culvert with a fish passable culvert and the placement of large woody debris. The purpose and intent of the tree regulations within RZC 21.72 includes mitigating for environmental consequences of tree removal on or off-site to achieve no net loss of trees and their habitat value.

- d. The granting of this exception or standard reduction will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property in the vicinity; or

**Response:** The granting of this exception will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property in the vicinity. The trees are hazardous to the transmission line and their removal is necessary to provide a safe clearance from the line. Cottonwoods are fast growing riparian species and their habitat value can be replaced through mitigation at the Willows Creek site south of Sammamish Substation where the Sammamish – Juanita transmission line project begins.

- e. The strict compliance with the provisions of this code would be in conflict with the increased density of urban centers or the Marymoor Design District and result in development that would be inconsistent with the adopted vision for the neighborhood.

**Response:** This criterion is not applicable to the Sammamish-Juanita project location.

2. If an exception is granted below the required minimum retention standard of 35 percent, tree replacement shall be a minimum of three trees for each significant tree removed. Tree replacement ratios may be modified for master plans within urban centers and local centers to allow for 1:1 replacement when accompanied by a three-tier vegetation replacement plan. In the Marymoor Design District, rather than increase the tree replacement ratio, the canopy coverage requirement in RZC 21.72.080.H.3 shall be increased to 20 percent of the site area. When

the total number of replacement trees required to meet the canopy requirement is less than otherwise would be required by this paragraph, the applicant shall plant the trees that would otherwise be required on site or contribute the different to the tree replacement fund, or a combination of the two.

**Response:** The minimum retention standard is not applicable to the Sammamish-Juanita Transmission Line Project. RZC 21.70.030 *Exemptions*, subsection (3) provides an exemption from obtaining a permit to remove trees for removal of trees within easements or rights-of-way for the purposes of constructing public streets and utilities.

3. Native Growth Protection Area (NGPA). Trees within an established Native Growth Protection Area shall not be removed, except when removal has its specified purpose.

**Response:** PSE is not proposing to remove trees from within a Native Growth Protection Area.

4. Proposed tree removal, replacement, and any mitigation proposed are consistent with the purpose and intent of this section.

**Response:** The proposed tree removal, replacement and mitigation are consistent with the purpose and intent of this section. Exceptional conditions exist that prevent PSE from fulfilling the requirements of the tree protection standards, including the need to remove trees within a critical area buffer due to the linear nature of the project and the need to remove a landmark tree in order to replace an existing culvert conveying York Creek with a fish passable culvert providing substantial habitat lift. Mitigation for the critical area buffer impacts from removing these trees will be provided within the Willows Creek Relocation Project south of Sammamish Substation where the Sammamish-Juanita transmission line project corridor begins. Providing consolidated mitigation at one site in lieu of spot mitigation along the corridor will result in more habitat lift and potential for mitigation success.

Thank you for your consideration of this Exception request. If you have questions regarding this letter, feel free to contact me at 425-462-3821 or [kerry.kriner@pse.com](mailto:kerry.kriner@pse.com).

Sincerely,



Kerry Kriner, AICP  
Senior Land Planner