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MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE 117

Wildfire Mitigation Plan

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1.0 Introduction – DNR/WMP Template

Wildfire risk is escalating in the Pacific Northwest, evidenced by the rise in large fires, including those in western conifer forests and a rare event in the Olympic Peninsula's rainforest. With projections of continued increases in major wildfires, Washington State has taken action, forming the Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee (SSB 5305 and RCW 76.04) and directing the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish wildfire mitigation plans (WMP) guidelines for electric utilities.

Prior to this legislative and administrative action, Columbia Rural Electric Association (CREA) already put in place a WMP early in 2023. This revised plan builds upon that foundation, incorporating DNR guidelines and Washington legal requirements to further enhance our wildfire mitigation efforts.

Washington State has taken significant steps to address wildfire risk. The legislature established the Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee (SSB 5305 and RCW 76.04), tasked with developing wildfire prevention protocols encompassing education, communication, vegetation management, and investigation thresholds. Furthermore, HB 1032 (RCW 19.29A et seq.) mandates that consumer-owned utilities, like CREA, review and update their wildfire mitigation plans WMPs every three years, starting October 31, 2024. These plans must be approved by the utility's governing board and local fire protection districts must be given the opportunity to provide input. The approved plan will be submitted to the DNR and be made publicly available on the Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee's website. The law specifies key elements that must be addressed, including:

- vegetation management;
- infrastructure inspection and maintenance;
- cost-effective infrastructure upgrades;
- preventative programs (including new technologies);
- operational procedures; and
- public engagement and communication regarding risk and mitigation.

In April 2024, the DNR published a recommended WMP template. While RCW 19.29A.170(1) directs utilities to "use" the recommended format and elements pursuant to RCW 76.04.185, the statute clarifies in RCW 76.05.185(2) and (3) that both the elements and format are "recommended," not mandatory. CREA has utilized the DNR template as guidance in developing this WMP, addressing all required elements, though not necessarily adhering to the template's exact structure. This approach allows CREA to tailor its WMP to its specific operational needs and circumstances. This WMP is a living document, subject to updates and revisions as needed to reflect evolving circumstances, laws, regulations, best practices, and available technologies. The CREA WMP will

be accessible through the DNR's Utility Advisory Wildland Fire Prevention Advisory Committee website.

1.1 Purpose of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Columbia REA serves an area in southeast Washington and northeast Oregon that experiences seasonal wildfire risk. Although a review of local conditions and historical fires indicates a low risk of ignition from CREA's electrical facilities under normal weather, the utility acknowledges the increased danger during extreme weather events. This document outlines CREA's proactive approach to wildfire mitigation, including preventative measures, close coordination with local safety and emergency officials, and compliance with all relevant design, construction, operation, and maintenance standards.

1.2 Objectives of the WMP

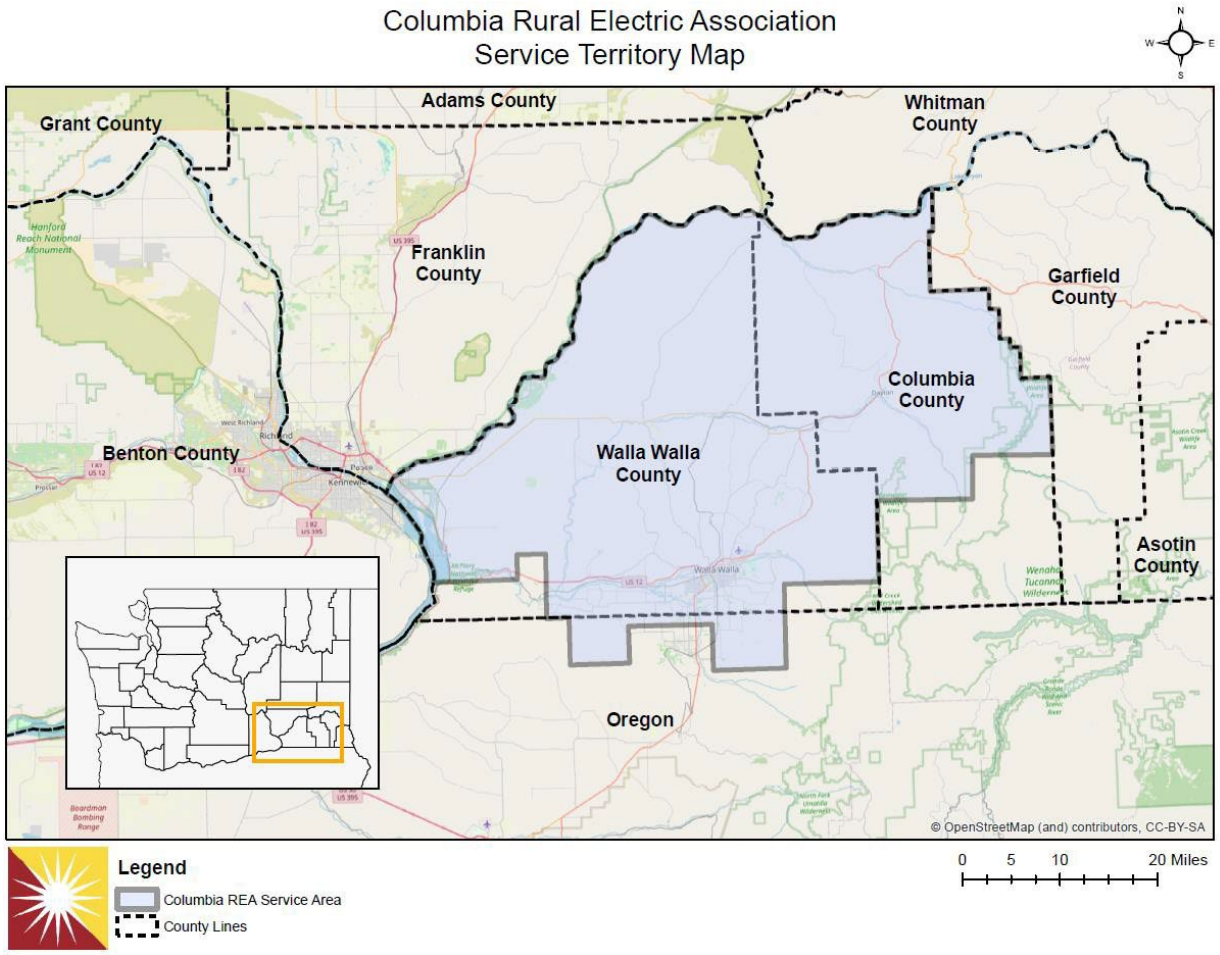
The primary objective of this Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) is to implement a reasonable, actionable, and cost-effective plan to enhance the reliability and safety of CREA's electrical system while minimizing the probability that CREA's assets may be the origin or a contributing factor in the ignition of a wildfire. CREA recognizes that while its facilities pose a low risk under normal conditions, extreme weather events can significantly increase the risk of ignition. This plan aims to mitigate, not entirely prevent, this risk, acknowledging that factors outside of CREA's control, such as extreme weather and human activity, also contribute to wildfires. While CREA regularly evaluates prudent and cost-effective improvements to its physical assets and its operations, maintenance, and training programs to reduce wildfire risk, it also understands that even with best practices in place, utility assets can still be a potential ignition source. Therefore, this WMP focuses on mitigating risk to the greatest extent practicable. This WMP is guided by applicable design, construction, operation, and maintenance codes, regulations, and requirements, and reflects CREA's commitment to protecting its members and communities from the threat of wildfire.

1.3 Columbia Rural Electric Association Profile and History

Founded in 1939, CREA now delivers reliable electricity to homes, cabins, farms, and businesses in Columbia, Walla Walla and parts of Umatilla County. CREA is currently serving over 6,600 meters as of December 31, 2024, and is continuing to grow. CREA is governed by a nine-member board of directors who are elected from each of our three districts. CREA owns and operates its distribution, which is critical to maintaining electric service to its members.

1.4 Service Area

Columbia REA serves a large and diverse service area, distributing electricity within an area covering over 1,900 square miles. Providing service in three counties in Eastern Washington and Northern Oregon, the service territory stretches 46 miles from Lyons Ferry, Washington in the north along the Snake River to the wind farms along the southern edge of the Walla Walla Valley in Oregon. It spans more than 65 miles from the Columbia River to the Tucannon River and Umatilla National Forest. CREA's main office and operations center is located in Walla Walla, Washington. While the service territory primarily covers remote agricultural land, it maintains a system average of just a few customers per mile.



Columbia REA also serves some denser residential neighborhoods in and around the urban-rural interface surrounding Walla Walla County and Columbia County. The majority of CREA's Right-of-Ways (ROWs) are located on privately owned properties, with smaller portions situated on government-held lands and within various road ROWs.

The service area is dominated by open spaces, whether used for farming, grassland, or open range. Some forest land exists, and there are mountains and dramatic canyons and hillsides, especially along the Snake River, but also along smaller streams and creeks. These slopes can be focal points for wildfire, especially when strong winds blow through the canyons. There are significant variations in elevation, ranging from approximately 350 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) at the Columbia River to around 4,100 feet AMSL at Lewis Peak. Most of the distribution system lies at about 1,000 feet AMSL or less.

The local climate in Walla Walla is characterized by hot, dry summers and cold, snowy winters. Average summer temperatures range from 82°F to 93°F, while winter temperatures typically vary from 30°F to 41°F, though extremes can range from subzero to over 100°F. Recently summer temperatures have reached record levels with substation highs over several days in the triple digits. The area experiences moderate rainfall, with wetter months from February to April and drier months from June to August.

1.5 Electric System

Columbia REA owns and operates an electric system that includes transmission and distribution facilities serving over 6,600 meters. The local power network is part of a larger electric grid serving the greater Pacific Northwest region. Approximately 78% of the power for the electrical grid comes from large hydroelectric generation facilities along the Columbia and Snake Rivers. The remaining comes from nuclear, wind, and non-federal market purchases. Electricity is purchased predominantly from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). In 2024, CREA joined PNGC for its future power supply and purchasing needs.
CREA owns and operates 13 substations and maintains approximately 1,395 miles of line. CREA assets consist of approximately 25 miles of 69kV and 115kV transmission conductors, structures and switches; approximately 1,350 miles of overhead and underground conductor, cables, structures, transformers, regulators, capacitors, switches and line protective devices operating at 12.4kV and 24.9kV. BPA and PacifiCorp own and operate transmission and distribution facilities with 12kV, 20.8kV, 69kV, 115kV, 230kV, 500kV lines carrying power into and through our areas of service.

2.0 Overview of CREA Fire Prevention Strategies

2.1 Overview

The outlined wildfire prevention strategies for CREA include:

- **T&D Operational Practices:**
  - *Inspection and Maintenance Strategies:* Diagnostic activities to assess and resolve system equipment deficiencies, along with routine maintenance.
  - *Situational & Conditional Awareness:* Methods to improve system visualization and awareness of environmental conditions.
- **Vegetation Management:** Removal and trimming of vegetation within ROWs, and assessment of risk trees outside ROWs. Property owners must assist CREA by approving the removal of risk trees on their property unless they are causing damage to CREA facilities.
- **Fire Mitigation Construction:** Design and construction practices, including equipment, system, and technical upgrades, that reduce the likelihood of assets becoming ignition sources.
- **Emergency Response & Outage Restoration:** Procedures for wildfire response, de-energization, and other emergencies, ensuring thorough communication and efficient restoration.

3.0 Wildfire Risk and Drivers in Utility Operations

Columbia REA identifies several primary risk drivers for wildfires within its service area. These risk drivers are prioritized based on their potential impact on the utility's infrastructure and the surrounding communities. Some of these risk factors are within CREA's ability to mitigate, while the majority are beyond CREA's ability to influence or change. The key risk drivers include (in no particular order):

3.1 Fire Weather/Extended Drought

Prolonged periods of drought and adverse fire weather conditions, such as high temperatures, dry winds and low humidity, increase the likelihood of wildfires by creating dry conditions that are conducive to ignition and rapid fire spread. CREA is not able to control whether there will be drought conditions.

3.2 Vegetation Type/Fuels

The presence of highly flammable vegetation, such as dry grasses, shrubs, and trees, significantly elevates wildfire risk. Forested areas with dense and dry vegetation are particularly susceptible. CREA prioritizes these areas for vegetation management to mitigate wildfire risks.

3.3 High Winds

High wind events are common in the region and can cause conductors to sway, potentially leading to phase-to-phase contact or cross-phasing, resulting in outages. High winds can also cause trees from outside the ROW to fall into power lines. Downed powerlines are typically caused by trees falling into them rather than growing into them. Therefore, it is crucial for public and private landowners to inspect and remove trees that are dead, uprooting, or at risk of falling into power lines, and to authorize CREA to remove any identified risk trees. Failure to remove these trees can lead to ignition events, which are particularly dangerous on high wind days due to the difficulty in suppressing and containing fires. While CREA cannot control high winds, it works with landowners to mitigate these risks. It is important to know that CREA cannot require tree removal outside the right-of-way, however, we are committed to working with landowners to minimize these risks.

3.4 Climate Change

Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns can increase the frequency and intensity of wildfires. Rising temperatures are likely to increase bark beetle survival, but climate-induced changes to other insects and forest pathogens are more varied and less certain. Increased temperatures will have positive or negative effects on individual trees and forest-wide processes depending on local site and stand conditions but impacts from increased extreme heat will likely be negative overall. CREA is not able to control climate change other than continuing to support clean and affordable hydropower.

3.5 Foreign Contact/Bare Wire Conductor

While CREA's construction design practices aim to minimize contact events, high winds can cause bare conductors to come into contact with each other or with vegetation. Additionally, animal interactions and public activities can also trigger these events. Such contacts can lead to short circuits, causing protective equipment to interrupt the electricity flow. Although these protective devices are designed to reduce or prevent damage from short circuits, there is still potential for ignition events.

3.6 Lightning

The National Interagency Fire Center reported that 6,935 wildfires were started by lightning in 2024. Lightning can ignite wildfires by striking trees or other vegetation, especially when these fuel sources are dry and susceptible to ignition. When lightning strikes a power line, it can cause a surge of electricity, leading to a flashover. A flashover occurs when a lightning strike hits a conductor or insulator, potentially resulting in a pole top fire. While CREA cannot control lightning strikes, it employs industry-standard equipment to protect its assets from lightning-related damage.

3.7 Equipment/Facility Failure

Failures in electrical equipment or facilities, for any reason, can result in ignition events. To mitigate this risk, CREA conducts regular inspections to assess the system and performs necessary maintenance to address any identified issues.

3.8 Tree Failure

Trees falling onto power lines can cause fires. Trees that are dead, diseased, or structurally compromised are particularly prone to falling. CREA conducts regular tree assessments and trims or removes risk trees to mitigate this hazard. CREA encourages property owners to assist in this effort by identifying and allowing the removal of trees on their property. It is important to understand that while CREA can identify and assess trees that pose a risk to power lines, we cannot require the property owners to remove trees located on their private property. However, we are committed to working collaboratively with property owners to explain the risks and facilitate mitigation efforts.

3.9 Limited Accessibility

Columbia REA's service area includes steep hills, cliffs, and river breaks, making access to remote equipment challenging. Many circuits cross difficult terrain with limited vehicle access, impacting outage response and restoration times. While CREA cannot change the natural topography, it works to mitigate these challenges.

3.10 Human Population Growth/Activities

Increased human activities, such as outdoor recreation and construction, can elevate wildfire risks. CREA is not able to control these human activities. Public education and awareness campaigns are part of CREA's strategy to mitigate these risks.

4.0 Wildfire Preventative Strategies and Plans

This section outlines the technologies and methods that CREA currently employs to minimize the risk of wildfires caused by electrical systems. CREA continuously updates its practices based on emerging information and adopts enhanced strategies accordingly. The following sections detail CREA's current efforts to address key wildfire risk factors through T&D Operational Practices, Vegetation Management, and Fire Mitigation Construction.

4.1 T&D Operational Practices

Columbia REA employs a comprehensive wildfire prevention strategy that encompasses several key programs and initiatives designed to mitigate wildfire risks and enhance community safety.

4.1.1 Situational Awareness

Based on available information, CREA appropriately schedules work crews and adjusts equipment settings as needed. CREA uses various resources to monitor evolving weather and climatological conditions that have the potential to lead to fire events such as:

- USFS- Wildland Fire Assessment System
- The National Weather Service
- NOAA Weather and Hazards Data Viewer
- Industrial Fire Level Precaution Levels
- CREA owned weather stations throughout the area of service

4.1.2 Industrial Fire Precaution Levels

Adhering to established fire precaution levels to guide operational activities and reduce the risk of ignition during high-risk periods.

4.1.3 Fire Safety Mode/Recloser Operational Practice

Implementing fire safety modes and adjusting recloser operations to minimize the risk of electrical equipment causing wildfires.

4.1.4 Infrastructure Inspection Overview

Conducting regular inspections of electrical infrastructure to identify and address potential hazards.

- Routine Patrol Inspection: A general visual inspection of applicable utility equipment and structures designed to identify obvious structural problems and hazards. Patrol inspections may occur during other company business.
- Detailed Inspection: Individual pieces of equipment and structures receive a specific visual examination using routine diagnostic testing as appropriate.
- Intrusive Pole Inspection: This involves the movement of soil, boring holes in the wood pole above and below the ground line, checking for decay, and installing a fumigant as needed.

4.1.5 Transmission & Distribution Line Routine Inspections

Routine inspections of transmission and distribution lines are conducted to ensure they are in good condition and free from potential fire hazards. Inspectors look for visible signs of defects, structural damage, broken hardware, unusually sagging lines, vegetation encroachment, and wildlife interactions. The information gathered during these inspections aids in planning and scheduling future maintenance to prevent major faults and reduce the risk of ignition. These inspections focus on identifying any hazards that could compromise the system's integrity or the safety of line workers and the public.

4.1.6 Transmission & Distribution Line Detail & Pole Testing Program

Detailed inspections for transmission and distribution lines are conducted alongside the pole test and treat program. CREA currently is supporting a detail inspection and test and treatment of wood poles on a 15-year cycle, documenting deficiencies and prioritizing repairs based on severity.

The aim is to inspect about 6.5% of the 20,500+ utility poles annually. Inspections, contracted out to specialists, assess whether wood poles meet design strength requirements. This program includes a comprehensive inspection of transmission and distribution lines.

The program provides a thorough assessment of pole conditions, both above and below ground, on a 15-year cycle (10-year cycle for poles located in Oregon). Newer wood poles and thru-bored poles receive visual and sound inspections, while older and non-thru bored poles undergo visual, sound, and intrusive bore inspections. All poles are evaluated for the condition of cross arms, hardware, devices, and wire spans.

Poles that fail inspection are prioritized for replacement or repair. Wood poles that pass are re-tested every 15 years.

4.1.7 Substation Inspections

Columbia REA regularly conducts thorough inspections of all substations to ensure all equipment is functioning properly and safely. Each substation undergoes a detailed inspection by substation and metering technicians at least once a year. These inspections involve checking for structural or mechanical deficiencies, hazards, and vegetation encroachment issues. Additionally, detailed inspections include transformer oil testing, thermal imaging to detect hotspots, and DC system testing.

4.1.8 Recloser Inspections

The circuit recloser inspection program includes a comprehensive visual inspection of the device and verification of the counter read. Inspectors examine the exterior for oil leaks (if oil-filled), physical damage, and record the operations counter read.

Hydraulic reclosers that are found to be deficient are prioritized for service and replaced as part of CREA's efforts to modernize existing hydraulic reclosers with electronic devices. Non-hydraulic reclosers that are found to be deficient are removed from service and replaced.

4.1.9 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping

Columbia REA uses GIS mapping technology to geolocate and manage its assets, integrating it into asset inspection and maintenance programs. This ensures all assets are maintained on schedule. Additionally, GIS supports various utility functions for managing, planning, and operating the CREA Transmission & Distribution system, including mapping and monitoring the electrical grid, identifying high-risk areas, and planning preventive measures.

4.2 Vegetation Management

Effective vegetation management is crucial for minimizing wildfire risk associated with CREA's electrical facilities. This program aims to create and maintain adequate clearance between vegetation and power lines, reducing the likelihood of contact that could lead to ignition. CREA's approach combines industry best practices with a proactive pruning schedule, targeted risk tree removal, and a responsive emergency pruning service, all while considering environmental impact and cost-effectiveness. CREA also recognizes the shared responsibility for wildfire safety and encourages cooperation from public agencies and members of the public. Property owners are responsible for the trees on their land, and CREA encourages them to assist in identifying and removing trees that are dead, uprooting, or otherwise at risk of falling into power lines, even if those trees are outside of CREA's right-of-way. This collaborative effort helps protect CREA's infrastructure, ensures reliable service, and safeguards the communities CREA serves.

4.2.1 Pruning Standards

Columbia REA's tree trimming and removal practices prioritize safety, service reliability, adherence to board policies, and compliance with the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) and RCW 64.12.035. Our crews and contractors follow contemporary arboricultural principles, guided by established industry standards:

- We utilize the ANSI A300 Part 1 standard and employ utility directional pruning methods to maintain tree health while effectively extending the pruning cycle.
- Our work aligns with the International Society of Arboriculture's Tree Pruning Standards (1995).
- We incorporate the International Society of Arboriculture's Utility Pruning of Trees Best Management Practices (2004).

Clearance requirements are based on the growth rate of each tree species. Effective tree trimming encourages growth away from power lines, extends the time between necessary pruning, and reduces future maintenance needs. Appropriate pruning techniques, such as collar cuts, directional pruning, and drop-crotch pruning, are employed as needed.

4.2.2 Vegetation Management Pruning Schedule

Columbia REA prioritizes its vegetation management efforts based on a risk assessment that considers factors such as tree species, proximity to power lines, wildfire risk, and historical outage data. The service area is divided into zones, each with a specific pruning cycle based on these risk factors. This risk-based approach ensures that areas with the highest potential for vegetation-related issues receive the most frequent attention.

The pruning schedule is dynamic and can be adjusted as needed. Factors that may trigger a schedule change include:

- Unusual weather events (e.g., heavy snow, windstorms)
- Increased wildfire risk
- New construction or changes in infrastructure
- Member reports of hazardous trees

CREA conducts regular inspections and patrols to monitor vegetation growth and identify potential hazards between scheduled pruning cycles.

4.2.3 Mid-Cycle Pruning

In areas with exceptionally rapid vegetation growth or following unusual weather events, CREA may implement mid-cycle pruning to address specific concerns or maintain required clearances between scheduled pruning cycles. This targeted approach helps prevent potential hazards that may arise between regular maintenance activities.

4.2.4 Risk Tree Removal

Columbia REA proactively identifies and removes "risk trees" – trees that pose an immediate threat to power lines due to factors such as disease, decay, leaning, or proximity. These trees are often located outside of CREA's right-of-way, but their potential to impact power lines necessitates assessment and possible removal. Qualified arborists assess trees for risk, considering factors like species, size, health, and location relative to CREA's facilities. Removal of these high-risk trees is prioritized to prevent outages and reduce the risk of fire ignition. CREA works with property owners to address these hazardous trees, even when located beyond the right-of-way, to ensure the safety and reliability of the electrical system. It is important to understand that while CREA can identify and assess these trees, we cannot require property owners to remove trees located on their private property. However, we are committed to working collaboratively with property owners to mitigate potential hazards.

4.2.5 Vegetation Service Orders

Columbia REA maintains a system for responding to emergency vegetation issues or concerns. This system allows CREA members or the public to report trees in immediate contact with or posing an imminent danger to power lines. CREA prioritizes these emergency calls and dispatches qualified crews to address the hazardous situation promptly, ensuring public safety and preventing potential outages or ignitions.

4.3 Fire Mitigation Construction

Columbia REA's commitment to wildfire safety extends beyond vegetation management and operational practices to include proactive construction and infrastructure upgrades. This section outlines key initiatives focused on mitigating fire risks associated with CREA's facilities through specific construction standards and replacement plans.

4.3.1 Avian Protection Construction Standards

Columbia REA recognizes the importance of protecting both wildlife and its electrical infrastructure. Our construction standards incorporate avian protection measures to minimize the risk of bird-related outages and risk of ignition. These measures may include:

- Spacing of conductors to prevent bird electrocution.
- Use of insulated or covered conductors in high-risk areas.
- Installation of bird diverters or perch management devices.
- Design of structures to discourage nesting in hazardous locations.

These standards are regularly reviewed and updated to incorporate best practices and new technologies for avian protection.

4.3.2 Underground (UG) Conductor

Underground power lines offer substantial safety and reliability advantages over overhead lines. They significantly decrease the risk of vegetation contact, wind damage, and ignition. Additionally, undergrounding eliminates the impact of ice loading, boosts reliability during high winds, and effectively mitigates wildlife-related outages. While there are many benefits to undergrounding distribution lines, these facilities are significantly more costly and take longer to construct and repair.

4.3.3 Bell, Cut-out, and Lightning Arrestor Replacement

Columbia REA has identified certain porcelain insulators (bells), cut-outs, and lightning arrestors as susceptible to premature failure. These failures are often caused by moisture and freezing temperatures, leading to cracking of the porcelain. CREA is actively working to replace these vulnerable devices throughout its system.

4.3.4 Conductor Replacement

Columbia REA has made proactive efforts in conductor replacement to upgrade older or damaged conductors with newer, more resilient materials. We target conductors that are susceptible to damage from weather, vegetation contact, or age. Replacing these conductors reduces the risk of faults, broken lines, and subsequent fire ignition.

4.3.5 Circuit Recloser Upgrades

A recloser is a resettable high-voltage electric overcurrent protective device. These devices interrupt the flow of electricity when a fault occurs, such as a short circuit. Reclosers are designed to automatically re-close the circuit multiple times in an attempt to restore power. If the fault was temporary, like a tree branch briefly contacting a line, the recloser automatically resets and restores power.

Historically, these devices were electromechanically actuated and oil filled. Modern equipment is electronically controlled and uses a vacuum bottle to interrupt the flow of electricity. Electronically controlled vacuum reclosers are preferred because they offer fast, low-energy interruption and a long contact life.

Columbia REA is engaged in a multi-year recloser modernization and sectionalizing plan. Starting with the highest wildfire risk areas and progressing toward lower-risk zones, CREA is upgrading and replacing its protective equipment. Through this plan, oil-based reclosers and other older equipment are being replaced with modern, electronically controlled vacuum reclosers. These replacements and improvements are being implemented as budget and resource availability permit.

5.0 Emergency Response & Outage Restoration

Columbia REA recognizes that wildfires can disrupt electrical service and pose significant safety risks. This section outlines CREA's comprehensive approach to emergency response and outage restoration during wildfire events, emphasizing clear communication, proactive planning, and a systematic restoration process.

5.1 Wildfire Event Internal Communications and Decisions

A wildfire event can impact CREA in various ways, including: a potential ignition from CREA's infrastructure; an actual ignition caused by CREA's equipment; a wildfire threatening CREA's infrastructure (regardless of origin); a wildfire threatening CREA members within the service area (regardless of origin); and requests for assistance, de-energization, or re-energization from emergency responders. In each of these scenarios, CREA will coordinate and communicate with relevant emergency personnel and agencies. Internal decision-making and response will escalate as needed, moving between the Operations team and the Management team to ensure appropriate action based on the evolving circumstances.

5.2 Preparedness and Response Planning

Columbia REA's primary objective during emergency response situations is to support government and professional emergency personnel and agencies. CREA will comply with all lawful instructions related to emergency response, including, but not limited to, de-energizing and re-energizing power lines (when safe to do so), providing available fire suppression equipment, ensuring CREA personnel do not impede emergency responders, and otherwise providing assistance as needed. Specifically, CREA will not operate any drones in or around active fire areas unless explicitly requested by emergency personnel and, even then, only with documented authorization from the appropriate governmental agencies (such as the FAA).

5.2.1 First Responders

Because of their individual service territories, CREA's assigned servicemen are frequently the initial responders to outages and fire-related emergencies. While their availability can fluctuate, their remote assignments and equipped bucket trucks enable rapid response, which can be particularly important when fires and firefighter safety are involved.

5.2.2 Work Crew Communications

Effective communication with field crews is essential for safe and efficient operations during a wildfire event. CREA utilizes mobile devices and radios, to ensure crews receive timely instructions, updates, and safety alerts. In addition, crews possess hand-held communications devices that can issue a simple text message via satellite along with longitude/latitude coordinates.

5.2.3 Fire Suppression Equipment

Columbia REA maintains fire extinguishers on all trucks. During the summer months some trucks also have additional fire extinguishers containing water. Additionally, CREA currently owns 3 water trucks with 150-gallon tanks and 2 side-by-sides with 85-gallon slip tanks that hold water with fire retardant mixture and ensures that personnel are trained in their proper use. This equipment is strategically located and readily available for deployment as needed.

5.2.4 Department of Emergency Management Communication

Columbia REA establishes and maintains communication channels with the local emergency management teams both at the county and state level to coordinate response efforts, share situational awareness, and request assistance if necessary.

5.2.5 Public/Member Communications

Keeping CREA members and the public informed during a wildfire event is a priority. CREA utilizes various communication channels, including website, social medias, local media, automated phone calls, to provide timely updates on service interruptions, safety information, and restoration progress

5.2.6 Restoration Priorities

Columbia REA's restoration priorities during widespread outages are guided by a commitment to public safety and the rapid restoration of essential services. These priorities include:

- Life Safety: Prioritizing locations where life-threatening situations may exist.
- Critical Facilities: Restoring power to emergency services, water treatment plants, and other critical infrastructure.
- Public Safety: Addressing situations that pose a risk to public safety.
- Size of Outage: Restoring service to the largest number of members as quickly as possible.
- Resources: Optimizing the use of available crews and equipment.

Before re-energizing any de-energized section of the system (whether due to emergency requests, restoration efforts, or wildfire mitigation), CREA staff will patrol the affected area. Any suspect equipment or distribution lines that cannot be immediately patrolled will remain de-energized. Poles and structures damaged in a wildfire must be assessed and rebuilt as needed before re-energization. CREA will provide periodic updates to members and the media regarding restoration progress. Transmission circuits are prioritized over distribution lines during restoration, and within distribution, higher-voltage lines serving substations are prioritized, followed by substations serving large numbers of members, schools, businesses, then larger feeders, smaller outages, and finally, non-essential streetlights.

5.2.7 Service Restoration Process

Columbia REA follows a systematic approach to service restoration after a wildfire event or a de-energization event. These measures are intended to protect the worker, the public, and the reliability of the system.

- Patrol: Safety is paramount before re-energizing any lines. De-energized sections are patrolled to ensure no new hazards have arisen during the outage. Following wildfires or natural disasters, inspections for damage and debris begin once emergency responders give the all-clear. The goal is to identify needed repairs and restoration materials. Remote or hard-to-reach areas may require extended inspection times.
- Isolate: Damaged sections of the line are isolated to prevent further faults and ensure safety.
- Repair: Crews repair or replace damaged equipment, including poles, conductors, and transformers.
- Test: After repairs are completed and the equipment is safe to operate, line segments are energized and tested.
- Restore: Power is gradually restored to affected areas, prioritizing critical services and following a pre-determined restoration plan.

6.0 Plan Evaluation and Updates

Columbia REA is committed to the ongoing development and refinement of its Wildfire Mitigation Plan. This WMP has been informed by a review of the Wildfire Mitigation Plans of other Washington utilities, allowing CREA to leverage existing best practices and adapt them to its specific service territory and operational needs. While Washington law requires a formal review every three years, CREA will conduct annual reviews of the WMP to identify areas for improvement and incorporate new wildfire mitigation strategies and best practices. CREA values the insights of local fire districts and emergency personnel and will ensure they have the opportunity to provide feedback on the WMP well in advance of any statutory deadlines.

6.1 De-energization/Fire Safety Power Shutoff

Columbia REA's current wildfire mitigation strategy centers on the use of reclosers and other protective equipment configured with fire risk settings. CREA recognizes, however, that proactive de-energization of circuits may be necessary in certain high-risk situations to further mitigate the potential for wildfire ignition. CREA can and would proactively de-energize circuits as necessary to protect public safety and property. While CREA does not currently have a formal Fire Safety Power Shutoff (FSPS) program in place, the utility is exploring the possibility of developing one in the future. This exploration includes gathering essential data, designing appropriate processes, and identifying necessary resources. CREA will only implement a FSPS program if it is deemed to be a beneficial and effective approach for its members. In the meantime, CREA will continue to utilize fire safety measures on its existing equipment during times of heightened wildfire risk.