

# Chapter V

## Affected Environment

In this chapter:

- **Setting**
- **Existing Environmental Resources**
- **Existing Land Use, Ownership & Management**
- **Existing Human Environment**

This chapter describes the existing environment that might be affected by Bonneville's use of various vegetation management methods.

### **Setting**

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Bonneville's service territory, the area crossed by our transmission-line system, covers 777,000 square km (300,000 square mi.) of the Pacific Northwest. This area includes the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Western Montana, as well as small portions of Northwest Wyoming, Northern California and Utah. (See Figure I-1, Bonneville's Service Territory, page 2.)

The landscape of the Pacific Northwest varies tremendously. Dominant features include mountain ranges; fertile valleys; broad flat plains; the vast Columbia River basin and numerous rivers, streams and wetlands; vast rangelands; many thousands of acres of farmlands; large cities; sprawling suburbs; national forest; and Tribal lands.

Figure V-1, following, illustrates the Pacific Northwest geography.

The electric facilities that compose our electric transmission system fall into three basic categories:

- 1) rights-of-way (including access roads),
- 2) electric yards (including substations), and
- 3) non-electric facilities (maintenance yards, parking lots, landscaping).

(See **Chapter I** for more detailed description of these facilities.) Our facilities are found in many different landscapes, but have this in common: the environment immediately in and around them has been managed through the years either to keep the vegetation cut close to the ground or to eliminate it, so that it does not interfere with operation or maintenance of the transmission system.

Because this EIS addresses vegetation management around facilities throughout the entire Bonneville service area (*not* at specific sites), the affected environment is discussed in general terms.

## **Vegetation**

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Vegetation within the Bonneville service territory is a diverse mix of varying species found in varying topography, climate, and soils. Most of the vegetation around Bonneville's facilities and on rights-of-way was cleared for construction and is managed to protect electric reliability or to maintain landscaping. The result is a highly complex pattern of natural and introduced vegetation in Bonneville's rights-of-way.

The vegetation within our service area can be broadly classified as grassland, shrubland, and forest. (See Figure V-2, *Vegetative Cover*.) (Please note that where rights-of-way cross residential areas, much of the landscape-type vegetation is usually taken care of by the people who own or manage the land. This practice is similar to that in farming areas, where the farmers manage the agricultural vegetation. See **Land Uses** for further discussion.)

Within each of these major vegetation zones (grasslands, shrubland, and forest) are riparian areas, which have vegetation specially adapted to growing next to streams and rivers. Specific plants designated by Federal, state or local agencies as threatened, endangered, or sensitive (TES) are also found in the service territory, as are noxious weeds (undesirable plants).

### **Grasslands**

**Grasslands** are naturally growing grasses found in the prairie communities of the southern Puget Lowlands and the Oregon Willamette Valley, as well as within the extensive rangelands of eastern Washington, Oregon, Southern Idaho and intermountain valleys of Montana. These grasses include orchard grass, ryegrass, Idaho fescue and wheatgrass, as well as forbs that are flowering plants such as yarrow, plantain, Arrowleaf balsamroot and lupine.

# Pacific Northwest Geography

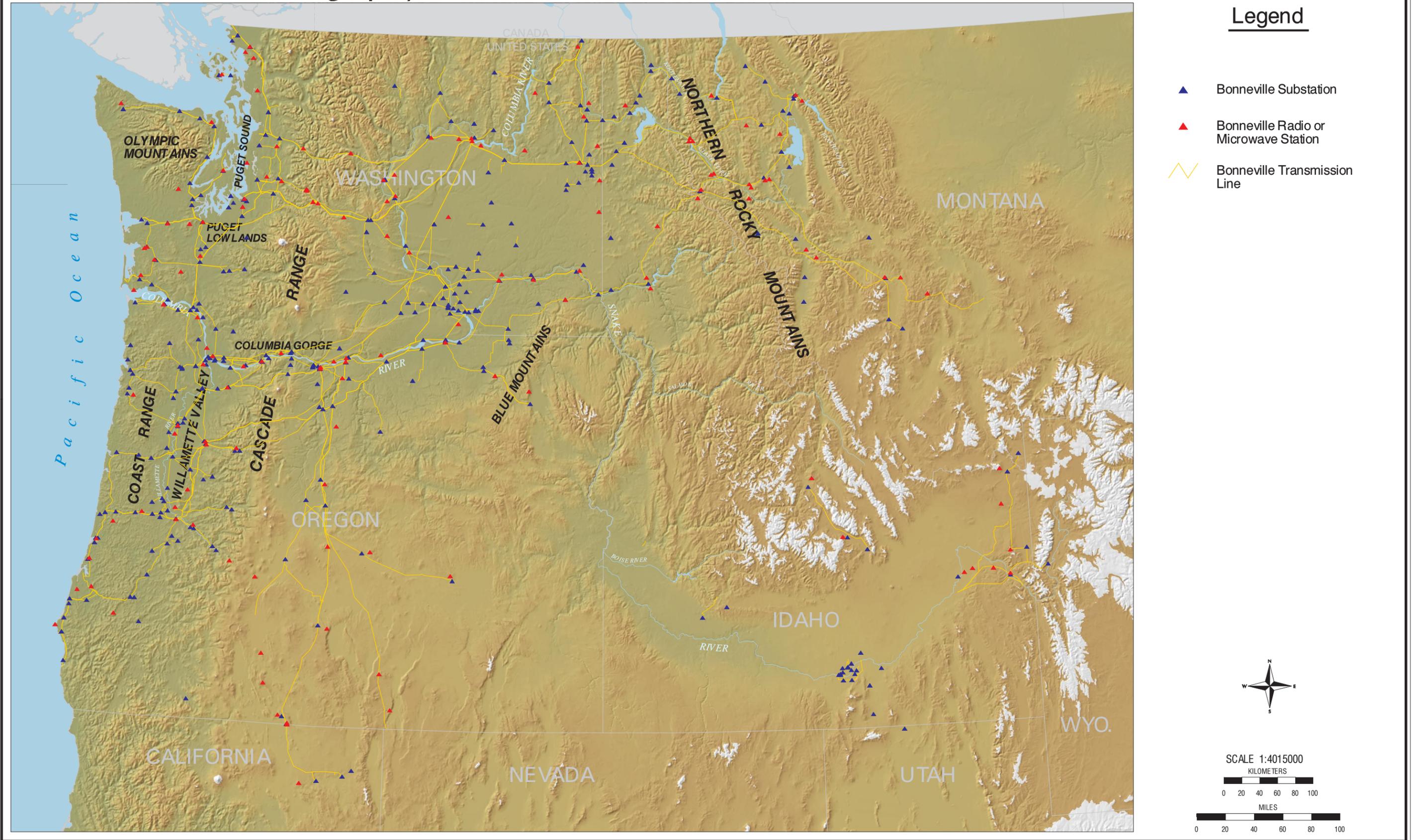


Figure V-1 PNW Geography