

SECTION A. Project Title: National Security Training Range (NSTR) Night Operations

SECTION B. Project Description and Purpose:

Idaho National Laboratory's (INL's) National and Homeland Security (N&HS) directorate proposes to perform night operations at the National Security Test Range (NSTR). The environmental impacts of NSTR operations were evaluated in the "Final Environmental Assessment for the National Security Test Range" and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (DOE/EA-1557) and in the "Final Environmental Assessment for Expanding Capabilities at the National Security Test Range and the Radiological Response Training Range at Idaho National Laboratory" and FONSI (DOE/EA-2063). Night operations would be performed upon customer request. At present, the frequency of night operations is not known. It is reasonable to assume that night operations would occur infrequently and would not substantially increase the frequency of explosives use at NSTR. If the frequency of night operations increases in the future or occurs on a regular frequency, additional review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) may be required.

The "Final Environmental Assessment for the National Security Test Range" (DOE/EA-1557) evaluated the noise and ground velocity impacts associated with the maximum test size of 20,000 lb net explosive weight (NEW) and found that noise and ground motion from 20,000-lb explosives tests have only minor impacts on personnel or facilities on or off the INL Site. However, the "Final Environmental Assessment for Expanding Capabilities at the National Security Test Range and the Radiological Response Training Range at Idaho National Laboratory" and FONSI (DOE/EA-2063) notes the following:

"Incidental evidence, including continued use of the project area, indicates that wildlife at NSTR are not adversely affected by the existing ambient and impulse noise conditions. Impulse noise events occur only during daytime operational hours (i.e., normally 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.). Animals active at night (nocturnal) and at twilight (crepuscular) would be unlikely to be active during this time. Therefore, disruption of nocturnal or crepuscular individuals' normal behaviors, including foraging and breeding would be negligible. Impulse noise would be unlikely to result in direct mortality of wildlife because of the short duration (typically less than 1 second) of each event. Diurnal (i.e., active during the daytime) wildlife in the area would likely have a startle reaction to impulse noise events. This reaction could result in the temporary interruption of individuals' normal behaviors, including foraging and breeding. However, because the impulse noise is of short duration and large and mid-range test events are relatively infrequent, it is unlikely to result in adverse impacts on wildlife populations."

Wildlife species with narrow ecological niches, especially habitat specialists and nocturnal species, are particularly sensitive to light at night and noise pollution. Light at night and noise alter auditory and visual performance and can disrupt environmental cues and ecological processes near their source and can extend far beyond altered land cover, particularly for migrating species. Bats are species most likely to be impacted by night operations at the NSTR. The "Idaho National Laboratory Site Bat Protection Plan" recommends a number of conservation measures to protect sensitive bat resources. This document and its conservation measures were developed in collaboration with Idaho Department of Fish and Game and U.S Fish and Wildlife Service bat biologists. Conservation measure number four recommends avoiding blasting within a 0.75-mile (1.2-km) radius of hibernacula and important summer roosts. The 0.75-mile blasting buffer was arrived at through the review of numerous resource agency documents outlining conservation strategies to protect roosting bats from blasting associated with mining, highway construction, and similar massive earth moving activities. As noted in DOE/EA-2063, the closest bat hibernation cave to the NSTR project area is 6 miles (9.7 km), well outside the recommended blasting buffer distance. Acoustic surveys conducted in closer proximity to the NSTR project area did not indicate the presence of important summer roosts or suitable habitats that would support such roosts within the recommended 0.75-mile buffer.

Noise levels at NSTR have not increased above levels analyzed in DOE/EA-1557, and the proposed action would not increase the maximum test size NEW. Characteristic noise associated with NSTR explosives testing occurs in pulses rather than as continuous noise. Given that the proposed night operations at NSTR would occur infrequently, would not increase the next explosive weight for operations, and the distance from important habitat for bat species, the proposed night activities and associated potential impacts would be similar to those from current operations as evaluated in DOE/EA-1557 and DOE/EA-2063. .

Other project controls, such as those defined in the "Candidate Conservation Agreement for Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) on the Idaho National Laboratory Site" CCA continue to limit explosive operations at NSTR from March 15 to May 15. During this time, detonations greater than 2,700 lbs net explosive weight (NEW) may only be detonated between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. There are no restrictions on detonations less than 2,700 lbs. This weight was based on noise levels calculated at the nearest Lek. These restrictions would continue to be followed.

Impacts from the proposed night operations to other resources would remain unchanged from those analyzed in DOE/EA-1557 and DOE/EA-2063. The proposed action would not result in additional impacts that were not evaluated in the "Final Environmental Assessment for the National Security Test Range" and FONSI (DOE/EA-1557) and in the "Final Environmental Assessment for Expanding Capabilities at the National Security Test Range and the Radiological Response Training Range at Idaho National Laboratory" and FONSI (DOE/EA-2063).

SECTION C. Environmental Aspects or Potential Sources of Impact:

Air Emissions

NA

Discharging to Surface-, Storm-, or Ground Water

NA

Disturbing Cultural or Biological Resources

DOE-ID NEPA CX DETERMINATION
Idaho National Laboratory

Cultural: A Section 106 review was completed under CRMO project number (BEA-16-26) and resulted in a no historic properties affected finding. See EA-2063, Hold Points and/or Project Specific Instructions for more information

Generating and Managing Waste

When wastes are generated, how they are disposed can adversely affect the environment. Managing wastes appropriately and responsibly and implementing recycling or reuse practices, where feasible, during project activities can reduce the potential impact on the environment.

Waste will include:

Industrial – Typical office waste to include food containers.

Target debris to include fencing, security doors, concrete, metal. Anything that can be excessed will be.

Hazardous - None

PPE, wipes – Nitrile gloves.

Radioactive – N/A

Releasing Contaminants

When chemicals are used during the project there is the potential for spills that could impact the environment (air, water, soil).

Using, Reusing, and Conserving Natural Resources

NA

Environmental Justice

According to the CEQ Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, the INL site as well as the Research and Education Campus in Idaho Falls, ID are located in U.S. Census tracts that are identified as disadvantaged communities. Census tracts identified as disadvantaged meet or exceed socioeconomic, environmental, health, or demographic thresholds identified by CEQ. Given that activities analyzed in this document will happen within the boundaries of existing DOE/INL land and/or facilities where there are no permanent residents, any impacts to Environmental Justice in surrounding communities are anticipated to be negligible.

SECTION D. Determine Recommended Level of Environmental Review, Identify Reference(s), and State Justification: Identify the applicable categorical exclusion from 10 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1021, Appendix B, give the appropriate justification, and the approval date.

For Categorical Exclusions (CXs), the proposed action must not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environmental, safety, and health, or similar requirements of Department of Energy (DOE) or Executive Orders; (2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment or facilities; (3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; (4) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources (see 10 CFR 1021). In addition, no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal exist that would affect the significance of the action. In addition, the action is not “connected” to other action actions (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1) and is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1608.27(b)(7)).

References: B1.2 "Training exercises and simulations"

Justification: Based on the purpose and need and description of the proposed action and potential environmental impacts, the proposed action fits within the class of actions that is listed in Appendix B CX B1.2. There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposed action has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)) and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Authorizing the proposed action will not (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, including DOE and/or Executive orders; (2) require siting of new facilities or expansion of existing facilities; (3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants; (4) adversely affect environmentally sensitive resources; or (5) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species.

Is the project funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) Yes No

Approved by Robert Douglas Herzog, DOE-ID NEPA Compliance Officer on: 9/23/2024