

U.S. Department of Energy- Idaho Operations Office
National Environmental Policy Act
Categorical Exclusion Determination

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Categorical Exclusion Posting No.: DOE-ID-INL-26-019 R1

Project Title: WILD GRID - Mitigation for Wildlife Impacts to Grid R1

Project Description and Purpose:

Revision 1:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), through Idaho National Laboratory (INL), proposes to conduct research and assessment activities related to wildlife interactions with the electric grid under the Wildlife and the Grid (WILD GRID) project. The purpose of this project is to better understand and reduce impacts between wildlife and electric grid infrastructure, including wildlife-related power outages, wildfire risks, and impacts to wildlife and habitat. The project will support development of mitigation technologies, testing methods, and guidance documents to improve grid reliability and reduce environmental impacts.

Research activities will address wildlife interactions with electric generation, transmission, and distribution systems. Areas of study include wildlife-related outages, wildfire risks associated with wildlife guards and bird diverters, wildlife mitigation technologies, stakeholder engagement, and development of risk mitigation frameworks and guidance.

All work will be conducted by INL personnel. No off-site activities are included in this project.

Activities include:

- Review existing information and gather stakeholder and industry input through outreach, interviews, workshops, and webinars.
- Prepare reports, roadmaps, technical guidance, utility guidance documents, and digital field tools.
- Study, install, and test wildlife diverters, wildlife guards, wildfire mitigation methods, related grid components, fire testing standards, and material performance on existing INL-managed equipment and power lines near facility treatment ponds. No new power lines or poles would be installed.
- Monitor the power line with deployed cameras before and after diverter installation.
- Install diverters using a contractor-provided drone, with limited INL support, safety observers, and possible filming.
- Vehicle access should be minimal, generally limited to a pickup truck within about 200 feet of the power line and poles unless additional access is needed.
- Conduct burn testing in the UB-3 fire chamber.

Equipment and materials may include:

- Various types of wildlife diverters and guards.
- Grid testing and monitoring equipment.
- Fire testing equipment and chambers.
- Cameras for monitoring existing power lines before and after diverter installation.
- Drone equipment used by the diverter installation contractor.
- Standard vehicles, such as pickup trucks, for limited access and staging near existing powerline infrastructure.

Waste

Type	Materials	Amount	Building
Industrial	Various Plastic Types (potentially melted)	~20 gallons	UB-3



Figure 1. New testing location for WILD GRID near the CFA ponds.

Original:

The Idaho National Laboratory (INL) has the opportunity to collaborate with U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER) to research and assess power outages and damage impacts caused by wildlife on the generation, transmission, and distribution aspects of the electric grid. INL will investigate how wildlife affects the electric grid in the natural world. INL will develop an electric sector roadmap that outlines priorities for research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) of mitigation tools and technologies aimed at reducing the impacts that wildlife has on the electrical grid by coming in contact with power facilities. The research strategy is to install wildlife diverters on power poles along with installing cameras near the power pole to see the interaction and effectiveness of the diverter.

Location:

The project involves the installation of cameras and diverters at specific locations within the INL site:

- Figure 1: Scoville substation CF-681 (mounted inside the fence)
- Figure 2: Air switch at the CFA bus depot on pole 43-13-7
- Figure 3: Air switch on CFA circuit 43 pole 43-14-6



Figure 1: Scoville Substation



Figure 2: Air switch at the CFA bus depot on pole 43-13-7. [43-13-7: 43.531N, 112.944W]



Figure 3: Air switch on CFA circuit 43 pole 43-14-6 [43-97C: 43.512N, 113.007W]

Tasks:
Equipment Purchase and Installation

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- Cameras: Eight cameras will be purchased and installed on power poles or placed on the ground using quadpods, which may be staked to prevent tipping.
- Diverters: Devices designed to divert wildlife will be installed on power poles to assess their effectiveness.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Wildlife Monitoring: Cameras will capture images and videos to monitor wildlife interactions with power infrastructure.
- Effectiveness Assessment: Diverters will be observed to determine if they successfully divert wildlife from power poles.

Waste Details:

The project will generate minimal waste, primarily from the packaging materials of the cameras.

- Industrial: Shipping materials from cameras ~ 1 lb.

INL waste will be managed according by Waste Generator Services in accordance with laboratory procedures.

Environmental Aspects or Potential Sources of Impact:
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Air Emissions

NA

Discharging to Surface-, Storm-, or Ground Water

NA

Disturbing Cultural or Biological Resources

There is the potential for this work to impact vegetation and for project personnel to interact with various wildlife species. A Biological Resource Review will be arranged within two weeks prior to the initiation of any activities that might disturb soil or vegetation and again following completion of project activities. A nesting bird survey is included with the Biological Resource Review for actions occurring between April 1 - October 1 per compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Bat surveys are also included with the Biological Resource Review in accordance with the INL Bat Protection Plan.

CULTURAL: A Section 106 review was completed under CRMO project number (BEA-26-053) and resulted in No Historic Properties Affected. Please refer to Holds Points and Project Specific Instructions.

Generating and Managing Waste

Rev 1: At INL facilities, activities may generate industrial, hazardous, radioactive, and mixed waste. The BEA Waste Management Program's (WMP) Waste Generation Services (WGS) subcontractor assists projects in characterizing and managing waste. WGS brokers handling and shipping of hazardous and radioactive waste.

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

Project activities have the opportunity to reduce the impact on our natural resources by recycling or diverting materials from disposal in the landfill.

Determination:

References: B2.2 "Building and equipment instrumentation", B3.6 "Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects"

Justification: The proposal fits within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021 or Appendix B and C of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures and satisfies the conditions that are integral elements of the classes of actions therein. The proposal does not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders; (2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but

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the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities; (3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; (4) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Appendix B; (5) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Appendix B.

There is no extraordinary circumstance related to the proposal that is likely to cause a reasonably foreseeable significant adverse effect or for which DOE does not know the environmental effect. Extraordinary circumstances are unique situations presented by specific proposals, including, but not limited to, scientific controversy about the environmental effects of the proposal; uncertain effects or effects involving unique or unknown risks; and unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. Segmentation can occur when a proposal is broken down into small parts in order to avoid the appearance of significance of the total action. However, segmentation does not include proposals that are developed and potentially implemented over multiple phases where each phase results in a decision whether to proceed to the subsequent phase.

B2.2 Building and equipment instrumentation. Installation of, or improvements to, building and equipment instrumentation (including, but not limited to, remote control panels, remote monitoring capability, alarm and surveillance systems, control systems to provide automatic shutdown, fire detection and protection systems, water consumption monitors and flow control systems, announcement and emergency warning systems, criticality and radiation monitors and alarms, and safeguards and security equipment).

B3.6 Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects. Siting, construction, modification, operation, and decommissioning of facilities for small-scale research and development projects; conventional laboratory operations (such as preparation of chemical standards and sample analysis); and small-scale pilot projects (generally less than 2 years) frequently conducted to verify a concept before demonstration actions, provided that construction or modification would be within or contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area (where active utilities and currently used roads are readily accessible). Not included in this category are demonstration actions, meaning actions that are undertaken at a scale to show whether a technology would be viable on a larger scale and suitable for commercial deployment.

Approved by Robert Douglas Herzog, DOE-ID NEPA Compliance Officer on: 6/24/2026