



Department of Energy  
National Nuclear Security Administration  
Categorical Exclusion Determination Form



**Categorical Exclusion ID#:** NV-2023-001 REV 1

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**Proposed Action Title:** Ecological and Environmental Field Activities

**Program or Field Office:** Nevada Field Office

**Location(s) (City/County/State):** Nevada National Security Site, Nye County, NV

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**Proposed Action Description**

Surveys, data collection, and monitoring would be conducted at project locations at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), Nellis Air Force Base (Remote Sensing Laboratory-Nellis), and the North Las Vegas Facility (NLVF) to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and directives. Information would be gathered and used to predict, evaluate, and mitigate potential and cumulative impacts of proposed projects on ecosystems, cultural resources, and the public. Surveys, data collection, and monitoring activities would include, but would not be limited to, the following:

- Surface and shallow subsurface soil sampling
- Biological and cultural resource walkover surveys
- Monitoring of air, water, soil, plants, and wildlife
- Geophysical surveys
- Revegetation
- Pesticide/herbicide application
- Translocation of plants and wildlife
- Animal capture, tagging, trapping, tracking, and sampling
- Aerial operations (helicopter, plane, uncrewed aerial vehicle)
- Study plot establishment
- Meteorological station operation
- Photography

Activities would include routine effluent (water and wastewater) monitoring and environmental surveillance for contaminants in air, water (surface and groundwater), vadose zone, soil, plants, and animals to determine if activities at the NNSS are affecting the environment or offsite public. Animal studies would also be conducted to provide knowledge of current activity on and off site, prey demography, and habitat use.

Radio tracking of large animals such as bighorn sheep, mountain lions, mule deer, and antelope



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would include ground-based captures (e.g., air cannon, snare, clover trap), aerial surveys, aerial captures (i.e., net gun), placement or removal of tracking devices on animals, and installation of motion-triggered cameras at various locations. Aerial operations (helicopter, plane, or uncrewed aerial vehicle) would be low-level (below 500 feet above ground level). Flight operations may originate from onsite designated airstrips or landing and launch locations on the NNSA, or in certain instances, flight operations may originate from off-NNSA locations (e.g., Nevada Test and Training Range) in coordination with the NNSA Flight Operations Group. Studies of varied species would include trapping, GPS [global positioning system] collaring, and/or the collection of samples for a variety of analyses (e.g., disease, genetics, radiological). Helicopter landings to process animals may occur in non-designated landing locations. Removal (e.g., relocation, euthanasia) of animals may be required (e.g., disease, nuisance, specimen collection). Removal techniques may include the use of firearms, asphyxiation, or other humane means.

Historic and new ecological study plots would be established and sampled to study a variety of ecosystem processes (e.g., impacts of climate change, disturbance effects, drought, radiation effects). This would entail using a trencher for installing fences around plots, using a rototiller or other equipment to simulate disturbance, and erecting rainout shelters to simulate drought. A variety of sampling techniques and instruments would be used to measure vegetation and soil parameters (e.g., soil moisture and nutrient probes, portable gas exchange system, leaf chemistry machine). A meteorological station powered by a solar panel and small battery would be used for climatic data collection. Photos would be taken to document site conditions over time.

The cultural resources contractor completes cultural resource walkover surveys and inventories in support of NNSA/NFO compliance with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Survey and inventory fieldwork would involve personnel walking project areas, taking photographs, collecting GPS location data using handheld devices, and measuring artifacts, buildings, and structures using handheld tools. Personnel would use flagging tape to mark avoidance areas when necessary. The cultural resource work would not include any off-road driving, ground disturbance, or modifications to land, buildings, or structures. Surface and shallow subsurface soil sampling and geophysical data collection would occur to establish the presence or absence of contamination and presence or absence of foreign materials (artifacts, metal, unexploded ordnance) in and around proposed project locations. Surface sample collection depth would be limited to 1 foot below ground surface and would be handled according to DOE orders/directives and management and operating (M&O) contractor processes and procedures for handling, packaging, and transportation of material off the NNSA. Geophysical walkover surveys would be limited to non-motorized (cart-type) ground penetrating radar systems and handheld meters.



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**Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied**

10 CFR 1021, Appendix B, B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring; B3.2 Aviation Activities; and B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources.

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**Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021**

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of 10 CFR 1021.

**To find that a proposal is categorically excluded, DOE shall determine the following:**

- (1) The proposal fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D;
- (2) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. The 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.

**The classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, include the following conditions as integral elements of the classes of actions. To fit within the classes of actions in Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would 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 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, Subpart D, 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



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operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

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**NEPA Compliance Officer Determination**

Based on my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under NNSA NAP 451.1 and DOE P 451.1), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action and I have reviewed the proposal for integral elements. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances present and that the proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. Therefore, the application of a categorical exclusion is appropriate.

NEPA Compliance Officer: Patricia Gallo

Date Determined: July 18, 2024