



**Citizens Advisory Board
Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory**

**Final Environmental Assessment for the Idaho National
Engineering and Environmental Laboratory Sagebrush
Steppe Ecosystem Reserve Management Plan**

The INEEL Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) has been interested in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem Reserve since it was created in 1999. Because it is the largest tract of non-grazed sagebrush steppe ecosystem in the region, this Reserve has considerable significance with regard to sensitive species, research potential, and our national environmental heritage. It is important, therefore, that the Reserve be well managed. With these considerations in mind, the CAB reviewed the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem Reserve on the INEEL and offers these comments.

The INEEL CAB finds the document to be well-written and well-developed.

Establishment of a Reserve Management Committee with broad representation, as described in the Final EA, should be beneficial to both effective management and public support of the reserve.

The INEEL CAB recommends that at least one representative of the general public be invited to serve on the Reserve Management Committee.

The CAB considers Alternative 1 (the Proposed Action) to be the most appropriate approach. The document describes the proposed action as the “best compromise” between development of natural resources and protection of a sensitive ecosystem and the CAB agrees that the compromise is the best that can be expected.

The proposed action includes a strategy for addressing wildfires that is consistent with the Final Wildland Fire Management Environmental Assessment. The proposed restriction on use of roads within the Reserve appears appropriate and justified. Plans for management of noxious and invasive plants as well as the guidance addressing revegetation are also appropriate. Furthermore, actions that will ensue from adoption of Alternative 1 include effective management of lands and minerals, livestock grazing, and wildlife habitat.

We understand that the rationale for removal of the abandoned power poles relates to the fact that most of the nesting sites associated with those power poles are used by ravens, which prey on sage grouse, a sensitive species on the INEEL. **We recommend that this rationale be included.**

The one feature of Alternative 3 that we prefer to Alternative 1 is the provision to allow phasing out of livestock grazing by voluntary retirement of permits from willing sellers. **We recommend that provision be incorporated in Alternative 1.**

After its careful review of the subject environmental assessment, the INEEL CAB recommends adoption of Alternative 1.