

DOE-ID NEPA CX DETERMINATION

SECTION A. Project Title: Sagebrush Seedling Planting – ESER

SECTION B. Project Description

The purpose and need for the project is to restore habitat for Greater sage-grouse as a conservation measure in the Candidate Conservation Agreement. We propose to plant 5000 seedlings of big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) on approximately 50 acres in the Sage Grouse Conservation Area on the INL Site. Specifically, the proposed planting site for 2014 will be in the area burned by the Tin Cup Fire west of the Big Lost River and south of road T-2. Planting will be done by hand using a hoedad to open a hole in the soil. Once the seedling has been placed in the hole, the hole will be closed by releasing the hoedad and pressing the soil firmly into place by stepping on the loosened soil. Approximately 100 seedlings will be planted per acre using this method. Access to the planting area will be by existing roads and by foot. Planting is expected to occur in late October of 2015.

SECTION C. Environmental Aspects / Potential Sources of Impact

Soil Disturbance – Soil disturbance will result from the use of the hoedad to plant the seedlings as described above in the project description.

Cultural Resources – The project has the potential to impact cultural resources through the planting process. Work will be coordinated with INL Cultural Resources group to mitigate the potential for impact by avoiding impacts through: 1) training the field crews, 2) briefings on known sensitive site, and surveillance by archeologists during the planting process.

Interaction with Wildlife/Habitat – The purpose of the project is habitat improvement. Positive impacts to habitat are expected and no negative impacts are anticipated.

SECTION D. Determine the Level of Environmental Review (or Documentation) and Reference(s): Identify the applicable categorical exclusion from 10 CFR 1021, Appendix B; give the appropriate justification, and the approval date.

Note: 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, including requirements of DOE orders; 2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities; 3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; 4) adversely affect environmentally sensitive resources. In addition, no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal exist which would affect the significance of the action, and the action is not “connected” nor “related” (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1) and (2), respectively) to other actions with potentially or cumulatively significant impacts.

References: B1.20 Small-scale activities undertaken to protect cultural resources (such as fencing, labeling, and flagging) or to protect, restore, or improve fish and wildlife habitat, fish passage facilities (such as fish ladders and minor diversion channels), or fisheries. Such activities would be conducted in accordance with an existing natural or cultural resource plan, if any.

Justification: The activity consists of habitat restoration activities to benefit Greater sage-grouse.

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

Approved by Jack Depperschmidt, DOE-ID NEPA Compliance Officer on 09/21/2015