



National Nuclear Security Administration Categorical Exclusion Determination Form



NEPA ID#: HEDLP 15-001-001

Proposed Action Title: USGS Vegetation, Small Mammal, and Reptile Studies (NV-2017-029)

Program or Field Office: Nevada Field Office

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

Proposed Action Description:

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is the sole science agency for the U.S. Department of the Interior. Its mission is to provide reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life.

At the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) biologists would continue to work with the common garden experiment that is designed to improve restoration methodologies for native desert species on a former equipment yard in Jackass Flats. This project is in collaboration between the USGS, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service, and would be used to identify plants that would perform well in restoration programs, determine if there are deleterious genetic effects from planting species from one area to another, and predict how native species would respond to climate change. This project would also aid in the development of seed transfer zones for native desert species used in restoration.

Ecological research and monitoring would be conducted from permanent study plots established in the 1960s located in various Areas of the NNSS as well as several locations that extend off-site. Ecological data would be collected in order to evaluate changes in vegetation, desert tortoise interactions, rodent species diversity, reptile genetics (including desert tortoises) and dust deposits within the Mojave and Great Basin Desert ecosystems on the NNSS.

This work would not affect natural or cultural resources. There are no surface or below surface disturbances involved. All sites in this project would be accessed on established roads that have been used for over 50 years.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

10 CFR 1021, B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

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. Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410(b): (See full text in regulation)

The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.

There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action and that other-regulatory requirements set forth above are met. Therefore, the application of a categorical exclusion is appropriate.

NEPA Compliance Officer: Carrie Stewart

Date Determined: May 8, 2017