



## Department of Energy

Idaho Operations Office  
1955 Fremont Avenue  
Idaho Falls, ID 83415

October 13, 2010

SUBJECT: Final Environmental Assessment for the Idaho National Laboratory Radiological Response Training Range and Finding of No Significant Impact (PS-NS-10-008)

Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has completed the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Idaho National Laboratory Radiological Response Training Range and determined that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate. The draft EA was made available for 31-day public review and comment period on August 4, 2010. DOE considered all comments made on the draft EA when developing the final EA and selecting the alternative that best meets the purpose and need. A Public Comment and Response section has been included as Appendix A of the final EA.

The FONSI and final EA can be accessed on the DOE website at [www.id.doe.gov](http://www.id.doe.gov). Thank you for your interest in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard B. Provencher".

Richard B. Provencher  
Manager

Enclosures



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE IDAHO NATIONAL  
LABORATORY RADIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TRAINING RANGE  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Agency:** U. S. Department of Energy (DOE)

**Action:** Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**Summary:** DOE prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), DOE/EA-1776, for the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Radiological Response Training Range (RRTR). The objective of the EA was to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of creating and operating the RRTR. The EA evaluated two alternative approaches to achieve the proposed action and a “No Action” alternative. The RRTR would be used to train personnel, test sensors, and develop detection capabilities (both aerial and ground-based) under a variety of scenarios in which radioactive materials (see EA glossary, p. iv) are used to create a radioactive field for training in activities such as contamination control, site characterization, and field sample collection activities. The RRTR will be used to develop and maintain an effective response capability for major radiological incidents. A typical training exercise would include its own prepared plan and schedule, and could involve up to 75 people and 15 vehicles at the RRTR. DOE reviewed several possible on-site and off-site alternatives and determined the range of reasonable alternatives included two on-site locations; no off-site locations met the site-selection criteria.

**Selected Action:** DOE has decided to implement the Alternative 1a action as described in the EA. DOE considered the analysis in the EA and public comments received on the draft EA before making its decision. The analysis in the EA indicates the impacts of implementing either Alternative 1a or 1b are insignificant. While DOE recognizes the impacts from Alternative 1a are slightly greater than 1b, Alternative 1a would provide greater program flexibility for training personnel, conducting exercises, and supporting technology evaluation and demonstrations in support of national technical nuclear forensic and radiological emergency response programs without any significant impacts to the environment.

**Analysis:** Based on the analyses in the EA, the selected action would not have a significant effect on the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The term “significantly” and the significance criteria are defined by Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing NEPA at 40 CFR 1508.27. The significance criteria are addressed below and referenced to the applicable corresponding analysis in the EA.

1) **Beneficial and adverse impacts [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(1)]:** The selected action establishes a capability to prepare and maintain readiness of emergency response personnel in the event of a major radiological incident. It also provides for the evaluation of equipment and methods of use to assist in the response mission. While there will be some impact to cultural, biological and air resources, the analysis (Section 4.0, pp. 15-24) indicates there will be no significant impact from implementing the selected action. The selected action provides these benefits while minimizing the impact to the public, workers, and the environment.

2) **Public health and safety [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(2)]:** The primary public health and safety issue is the release of dispersed radioactive material (glossary, p. iv) into the atmospheric, surface and groundwater pathways. This material is a short-lived radioactive material that decays to background levels in about two weeks. The EA analyzed the impact of the dispersal of

this material to the environment (Section 4.1, pp. 15-23) and concluded that public dose would be insignificant (.01% of the INL Administrative Control Level for the public). In addition, the risk to workers would be managed and mitigated in accordance with the INL Radiation Protection Program. The design and location of the RRTR as well as implementing the specific operational controls (Table 2, pp. 12-13) further reduce the likelihood of any adverse impacts to public health and safety. Other activities are routine industrial type in nature and will be conducted in accordance with INL institutional health and safety programs. These do not represent any unique hazards to public health and safety.

**3) Unique characteristics of the geographical area [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(3)]:** The INL Site has been a federal reservation with restricted public access since the mid-1940s. As a result of this restricted access unique characteristics include a well-preserved cultural resources record within the boundary of the INL Site and the largest remnant of undeveloped, un-grazed sagebrush steppe ecosystem in the Intermountain West (Section 3.0, pp. 13-14). The selected action maximizes the use of previously disturbed areas and implements specific operational controls (Table 2, pp. 12-13) that help DOE preserve and conserve the unique characteristics of the INL Site.

**4) Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to become highly controversial [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(4)]:** The analysis indicates implementing the selected action will not adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Information gained through consultation with various entities with expertise in resource management and public comment indicates the proposed action is not highly controversial. Formal comments were received from six interested parties (Appendix A of the EA). These inputs, as well as feedback from informational briefings and tours, demonstrated, for the most part, a high level of support for proposed activity. One commenter did express concerns about the proposed activity. DOE considered those comments in its decision making. DOE responses to those comments can be found in Appendix A

**5) Uncertain or unknown risks on the human environment [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(5)]:** The analysis indicates no uncertain or unknown risks on the human environment will result from implementing the selected action.

**6) Precedent for future actions [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(6)]:** The selected action does not set a precedent for future action that may have significant effects, or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

**7) Cumulatively significant impacts [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(7)]:** The analysis indicates the selected action, when combined with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, would result in little additional impact on air, water, wildlife, or cultural resources of the INL Site (Section 4.1.2, pp. 20-21; Section 4.3, p. 24). The project has the potential to affect cultural and biological resources by its activities, which includes traveling T-roads, removing vegetation, disturbing soil, flying over the sites, and other disruptive activities. However, from a cumulative impact perspective, the incremental amount is not significant. The North and South Training Ranges are within 1 to 2 miles of INL facilities (Specific Manufacturing Capability, Test Area North, and the Radioactive Waste Management Complex (RWMC)), situated along T-roads (which are traveled by security and other site personnel), and make up a small percentage of the total area of the INL Site. The RRTR (both North and South) would use about 900 acres out of 569,600 acres, or less than 0.2% of INL land. The primary training area in the North Training Range is an operating gravel pit. Considering the widely spread nature of INL facilities and that

most of the site remains pristine, cumulative impacts to cultural artifacts, sage-grouse, pygmy rabbits, and other resources is low.

8) **Effect on cultural or historical resources [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(8)]:** The proposed action would cause minor direct and indirect impacts on the cultural resources and archaeological sites at the North Training Range (near the T-28 gravel pit); impacts at the South Training Range (near RWMC) are unlikely. To minimize potential impacts, project personnel will work with cultural resource personnel to complete required archaeological surveys to help avoid sensitive cultural resources before setting up command posts in accordance with the operational controls (Table 2, pp. 12-13).

9) **Effect on threatened or endangered species or critical habitat [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(9)]:** The analysis indicates no threatened or endangered species or critical habitat will be adversely impacted by the selected action. The selected action would have minimal impact on species of concern and would slightly increase the amount of habitat fragmentation in the area. Operational controls would minimize impacts to these resources (Table 2, pp. 12-13).

10) **Violation of Federal, State, or Local law [40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(10)]:** None of the actions identified in the selected alternative violate federal, state or local laws.

**Determination:** Based on the analysis presented in the attached EA, I have determined that the selected action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.

Issued at Idaho Falls, Idaho on this 13 day of October, 2010.



Richard B. Provencher  
Manager, Idaho Operations Office

Copies of the EA and FONSI are available from: Tim Jackson, Office of Communications, MS-1203, Idaho Operations Office, U. S. Department of Energy, 1955 Fremont Avenue, Idaho Falls, Idaho, 83415-1203, or by calling (208) 526-8484.

For further information on the NEPA process contact: Jack Depperschmidt, NEPA Compliance Officer, MS-1216, U. S. Department of Energy, 1955 Fremont Avenue, Idaho Falls, Idaho, 83415-1216, (208) 526-5053.

