



Draft Environmental Assessment

# North Idaho Correctional Institution Multi-Hazard Mitigation Project

Idaho County, Idaho

PDMC-PJ-10-ID-2010-001

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APE	Area of Potential Effects
BHS	(Idaho) Bureau of Homeland Security
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DBH	Diameter at Breast Height
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
GLO	General Land Office
ICDC	Idaho Conservation Data Center
IDL	Idaho Department of Lands
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NICI	North Idaho Correctional Institution
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PDM-C	Pre-Disaster Mitigation–Competitive
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Area of Potential Effects (APE)** – the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if such properties exist. The Area of Potential Effects is influenced by the scale and nature of the undertaking.

**Best Management Practices (BMPs)** – environmental protective measures for conducting projects in an environmentally responsible manner.

**Crown fire** – fire that involves the tops of the canopy trees in the forest; can spread rapidly.

**Defensible space** – clearings between wildland vegetation and structures.

**Endemic** – a species which is found exclusively in a particular area and not naturally found anywhere else.

**Fuels reduction** – removal of excess flammable vegetation through thinning, limbing, or other methods to reduce the potential for severe wildfires.

**Limbing** – removal of large tree limbs to reduce fuel load and the potential for crown fires.

**Slash** – vegetative debris created by property clearing, right-of-way clearing, and forest management activities.

**Thinning** – partial removal of trees, branches, or shrubs from a stand to reduce fuel loads.

**Wildfire** – an unwanted wildland fire.

**Wildland-Urban Interface** – line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meets or intermingles with vegetative fuels in wildlands.

### SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION

The Idaho Department of Correction applied for fiscal year 2010 funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation–Competitive (PDM-C) grant program for a multi-hazard mitigation project in western Idaho. The grant program is administered by FEMA to fund pre-disaster mitigation planning and projects that primarily address natural hazards. The mitigation project involves the North Idaho Correctional Institution (NICI), a critical State prison facility in Idaho County, Idaho (Appendix A, Figure 1).

This draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations to implement NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508), and FEMA’s regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR Part 10). FEMA is required to consider potential environmental impacts before funding or approving actions and projects. The purpose of this draft EA is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the NICI Multi-Hazard Mitigation Project. FEMA will use the findings in this draft EA to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Much of the information about the project in this EA comes from the PDM-C grant application package and a site visit completed in November 2010.

### SECTION TWO PURPOSE AND NEED

The objective of the PDM-C grant program is to fund pre-disaster mitigation planning and projects to eligible States, Territories, and federally recognized Tribal governments. The grant program is administered by FEMA to fund pre-disaster mitigation planning and projects that primarily address natural hazards. Funding these plans and projects reduces overall risks to vulnerable populations and structures, while also reducing reliance on recovery funding from actual disaster declarations.

Built in 1955, NICI is the former Cantonment area of the Cottonwood Air Defense Radar Station approximately 4 miles northwest of the rural community of Cottonwood, Idaho in western Idaho County (Appendix A, Figure 1). Today, the critical State facility is used as a prison that holds up to 414 inmates year-round.

Weather in this part of Idaho is extreme, and snowstorms during the winter are common. According to the Idaho County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan (Idaho County 2004), NICI is in a low to medium fire-prone landscape. Lack of defensible space around the facility perimeter, coupled with decades-old flammable wood siding on many buildings, increases the risk of wildfire. When the power poles or lines are damaged by a wildfire, it takes a minimum of 7 days to restore power to the site.

In addition, the power at NICI goes out several times a year due to snow and windstorms. When the power goes out during a snowstorm, the amount of time it takes to repair the power depends on the ability of the power company to travel to the facility. During the winter of 2008, snowdrifts were over 8 feet high, and plows were unable to clear the roads for 5 days. The Idaho County Commissioners issued a disaster declaration for the entire county in February 2008 due to severe winter storms (Idaho County 2009). During this severe storm, the gym roof at NICI collapsed, resulting in the loss of the exercise facility as well as several offices. The extreme winter weather conditions at the facility in 2008 suspended much of the educational, support, and treatment programs due not only to the roof collapse, but also to drifted roads and dangerous travel conditions for staff.

Due to its rural location, when a power outage occurs, the facility must switch to generators to keep water, power, and sewers operational. However, the existing generator's backup fuel supply becomes exhausted after 3 days. When the power goes out, staff and inmates are without water and sewer, and are unable to travel out of the facility, causing a threat to human life.

The purpose of this project is to reduce risks for structure damage and operation disruptions from wildfires and severe storms at the NICI facility.

## SECTION THREE ALTERNATIVES

This section discusses the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action, to which FEMA funding would contribute, and other alternatives that were considered and dismissed.

### 3.1 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, FEMA would not provide funding to reduce the impacts of wildfires and severe storms at the NICI. Inmates, staff, and nearby structures would continue to be at risk from wildfire and storm-related power outages.

### 3.2 PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action would create defensible space, replace wood siding with fire-resistant siding, bury power lines, and install backup generators. The first activity would create a defensible space around the perimeter of the facility by removing small trees and brush within approximately 75 feet of the perimeter fence (Appendix A, Figure 2). Fuel reduction activities on the remaining 30 acres of the facility (Appendix A, Figures 2 and 3a) would minimize the volume of vegetation beyond the defensible space and focus primarily on tree removal, thinning, and clearing. Trees larger than 12 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) would remain. There would be an approximately 20-foot spacing between the remaining trees after removal of trees smaller than 12 inches DBH. Removal of all of the White fir (*Abies concolor*) in the project area is recommended by the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), as this species produces long-burning, hot fuel for wildfires (IDL 2009). Branches within 20 feet of the ground would be removed from the remaining trees, and the understory would be slashed. Mechanized equipment proposed to be used includes logging trucks/booms. Vegetation removal activities would be done by hand using chainsaws and hand saws. Work would be performed by NICI staff, a trained inmate fire crew from another Idaho Department of Correction institution, and private contractors as needed. Access to vegetation removal areas would be via existing established dirt roads. An herbicide, approved by the IDL, would be applied along the existing dirt roads to promote a grass understory (as opposed to the existing brushy understory). Slash material would likely be chipped and used as fuel for the facility's sweat lodge. All defensible space activities and reduction of fuels would be conducted in conjunction with the IDL and the Idaho County Disaster Mitigation Office.

The second activity would involve replacing approximately 64,000 square feet of wood siding on the at-risk structures with fire-resistant material (Appendix A, Figure 3b). Per the guidance in the FEMA "Exterior Walls" Technical Fact Sheet No. 7, exterior wall coverings that are combustible, susceptible to melting, or that can readily transmit heat should be replaced on existing buildings in wildfire zones (FEMA 2008). Wood siding that is not fire-retardant-treated, like the type found at the facility, is listed in Technical Fact Sheet No. 7 as a material to be replaced. Siding would be replaced on all of the buildings except for Unit 4, which already has fire-resistant siding.

The third activity would protect critical infrastructure from severe winter storms by burying the power lines (about 3,264 linear feet) that run into and through the facility (Appendix A, Figure 4). This would be performed in conjunction with the local power co-op. Trenching, with an excavator, of the power lines would require approximately 725 cubic yards of excavation for trenches 3 feet wide by 2 feet deep.

The fourth activity would be to install three emergency generators: one for Unit 4/command center, one for the main water well, and one for Unit 3/kitchen (Appendix A, Figures 2 and 3b). This would ensure continuation of necessary functions during long-term power outages, especially if travel to and from the facility is impeded due to severe weather. Generator installation would entail pouring a 10-foot by 10-foot concrete slab and erecting a fence. The generators would be approximately 5 to 9 feet tall and 5 to 9 feet wide.

### 3.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND DISMISSED

Relocating the facility function outside of the wildland-urban interface was considered. This alternative was estimated to cost over \$32 million, not including the cost of land, and was dismissed as not being cost-effective. There were no other alternatives identified that would effectively reduce facility vulnerabilities from wildfire and severe storm hazards.

### SECTION FOUR    AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

This section discusses the affected environment, by resource, and the potential effects of the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action.

For each resource category, the impact analysis follows the same general approach. When possible, quantitative information is provided to establish impacts. Qualitatively, these impacts will be measured based on the criteria below.

Impact Scale	Criteria
None/Negligible	The resource area would not be affected, or changes would be either non-detectable or if detected, would have effects that would be slight and local. Impacts would be well below regulatory standards, as applicable.
Minor	Changes to the resource would be measurable, although the changes would be small and localized. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, as applicable. Mitigation measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.
Moderate	Changes to the resource would be measurable and have both localized and regional scale impacts. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, but historical conditions are being altered on a short-term basis. Mitigation measures would be necessary and the measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.
Major	Changes would be readily measurable and would have substantial consequences on a local and regional level. Impacts would exceed regulatory standards. Mitigation measures to offset the adverse effects would be required to reduce impacts, though long-term changes to the resource would be expected.

Impacts are predicted based on the degree of change or loss of the resource from the baseline conditions. Impacts may be direct or indirect. Direct impacts are caused by an action and occur at the same time and place as the action. Indirect impacts are caused by the action and occur later in time or are farther removed from the area, but are still reasonably foreseeable (40 CFR Part 1508). Cumulative impacts are discussed in Section 4.6.

#### 4.1    PHYSICAL RESOURCES

##### 4.1.1    Geology and Soils

The geology of Idaho County is complex and diverse, with a mixture of volcanic and sedimentary features. Along the western border of the county are the Seven Devils Mountains and Hells Canyon of the Snake River. The rocks here are Paleozoic volcanic and sedimentary rocks that formed along the Idaho Suture Zone, which runs north-south through Idaho County, following the Clearwater River. West of this suture (underling the project area) are diverse exotic volcanic assemblages overlain by Miocene Columbia River basalts that form the Camas Prairie near Grangeville, approximately 20 miles southeast of the project area (Link 2002).

Soils in the project area are predominantly Brody cobbly loam and Telcher silt loam, derived from basalt and volcanic rocks (USDA 2010). This type of soil is vulnerable to accelerated erosion caused by disturbance of natural conditions through burning, excessive grazing, or tillage. Water and wind typically cause the most erosion in the project area. The topography of the project area is mainly flat.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.) requires Federal agencies to minimize the extent to which their programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance to non-agricultural uses. There are no prime and unique farmlands designated in the project area (USDA 2010).

### 4.1.2 Climate

The CEQ has recently released guidance on how Federal agencies should consider climate change in their action decision-making. The suggested threshold whereby quantitative analysis should be done in NEPA documents is for an action to release over 25,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases per year (CEQ 2010). The Proposed Action would not meet this threshold so it will not be addressed further therein.

### 4.1.3 Consequences of Alternatives

#### *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, FEMA would not provide funding to reduce vulnerabilities from wildfires and severe storms at the NICI. There would be no changes to geologic conditions. Impacts to climate could occur if wildfires near the project area were to generate an excess of 25,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases in one year, as a consequence of excessive fuels. There would be minor adverse impacts to soil resources in the project area if a catastrophic fire occurred. These impacts may include de-vegetation caused by uncontrolled fire and subsequent soil erosion.

#### *Proposed Action*

There would be minor, short-term impacts to soils in the project area due to ground disturbance from power line burial. Installation of 3,264 linear feet of power lines underground would require trenching, with approximately 725 cubic yards of excavation. After construction, these trenches would be refilled with the excavated material and seeded with grass. The generators would be placed on concrete slabs and would be engineered to prevent leakage of fuels into the ground by using a double walled tank. The generators would be refueled by qualified contractors and the local power co-op as needed. The generators would be exempt from permits through the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality as they would be used exclusively during emergencies (Idaho Administrative Procedures Act 58.01.01.222.d). Any impacts would be negligible. There would be no impacts to prime and unique farmlands, as there are none in the project area.

Vegetation removal would be done by hand, and logging trucks would be confined to existing dirt roadways. Vegetation thinning would be done in increments to avoid removal in overly large areas at a time, and best management practices (BMPs) for erosion control would be employed. Impacts would be negligible.

## 4.2 WATER RESOURCES

### 4.2.1 Ground Water, Surface Water, and Floodplains

The project area is underlain by the Southern Clearwater Plateau volcanic aquifer, which spans Idaho County in Idaho, and Lewis and Nez Perce Counties in Washington. The aquifer is not

designated as a sole source aquifer (EPA 2011). The approximate depth to groundwater in the project area is more than 7 feet (80 inches) below ground surface (USDA 2010).

There are currently five drilled wells at the facility. The main well on the site is located north of the parking area and produces more than 90 gallons of water per minute. Another well produces 10 gallons per minute and can be used in emergencies. The remaining three wells are dry holes and are not in use.

There are no surface water bodies in the project area. There are 2 streams within 0.5 mile of the project area, but they are unnamed and do not carry water year-round. The closest year-round stream is an unnamed tributary to Cottonwood Creek, approximately 0.6 mile east of the site.

According to FEMA (Panel 1602130600B, effective 1991), the project area is located in Zone X, an area of minimal flood hazard outside of the 500-year flood (FEMA 1991).

### 4.2.2 Wetlands

Executive Order (EO) 11990, Protection of Wetlands, requires Federal agencies, in planning their actions, to consider alternatives to conducting activities in wetlands and limit potential damage if an activity affecting a wetland cannot be avoided.

According to the National Wetland Inventory, the sewer lagoons approximately 60 feet west of the project area are the closest wetlands (USDI 2010). These are considered artificially flooded, excavated wetlands. A site visit by a biologist in November 2010 confirmed that the sewer lagoons are the closest wetlands and that there are no wetlands present in the project area.

### 4.2.3 Consequences of Alternatives

#### *No Action Alternative*

If a severe winter storm disrupts power to the facility, well water would be available in a limited capacity using the existing generator. The existing generator's backup fuel supply would become exhausted after three days.

No adverse impacts on wetlands, surface water bodies, or floodplains are anticipated because there are none in the project area.

#### *Proposed Action*

Installation of the generator near the main water well would require excavation of less than a foot below the 10-foot by 10-foot concrete slab to ensure a level surface. The concrete slab and double-walled tank would minimize leakage of fuels into the ground and groundwater. The generator would be refueled by qualified contractors and the local power co-op as needed. This generator would be used during power outages to provide a consistent source of water to the facility. Impacts would be negligible. There would be no modifications to any other wells on-site.

As project activities would not occur in or adjacent to wetlands, surface water bodies, or floodplains, adverse impacts on these resources are not anticipated.

### 4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

#### 4.3.1 Vegetation

The project area is dominated by conifer trees including Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), grand fir (*Abies grandis*), and White fir, with some tamarack (*Larix occidentalis*). The forested area has been logged at least once, and the current trees are up to 50 or 60 years old. The sparse shrub understory includes snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) and oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*).

#### 4.3.2 Wildlife and Fish

Several large mammals have been observed by NICI staff including black bear (*Ursus americanus*), cougar (*Puma concolor*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*). In addition, the project area has free range livestock (cows) that move through the area.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended, provides Federal protections for migratory birds, their nests, eggs, and body parts from harm, sale, or other injurious actions. The act includes a “no take” provision. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Migratory Bird Management maintains a list of migratory birds (50 CFR 10.13). The project area provides habitat for a variety of migratory birds, including songbirds and birds of prey and is generally within the Pacific Flyway.

No streams or natural ponds exist in the project area; therefore, no fish are present.

#### 4.3.3 Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitat

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) established a program to conserve, protect, and restore threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Section 7 of the ESA (50 CFR 401) requires Federal agencies ensure their actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species and do not result in adverse modification to designated critical habitat.

Data from the Idaho Conservation Data Center (ICDC) was requested for known special-status species at and near the project area (ICDC 2010). The Idaho Department of Fish and Wildlife and USFWS were consulted for potential ESA-listed species in the project area (USDI 2009). This list of potential ESA-listed species in the project area was updated by referring to the latest USFWS county record data for Idaho County (USFWS 2011).

According to the USFWS, there are four federally listed ESA species that may occur in the project area. Three species are listed as Threatened: Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), MacFarlane’s four-o’clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*), and Spalding’s catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*). The fourth species is gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), which is listed as Endangered. No Proposed or Candidate species are known from the project area. No Critical Habitat has been designated in the project area.

Idaho County has four federally listed fish species: bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) – threatened, sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) – endangered, spring/summer Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) – threatened, and steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) – threatened. Critical habitat is designated in the County for bull trout. As there are no streams or natural ponds in or near the project area, fish are not present and will not be discussed further in this EA.

### 4.3.3.1 *Canada Lynx*

The Canada lynx is a federally and Idaho State-listed species. The Canada lynx is listed as Threatened under the ESA and is considered Critically Imperiled by Idaho State. In Idaho, critical habitat for lynx has only been designated in the extreme northeast corner of the State.

The Canada lynx occurs throughout Canada and Alaska, in the extreme northeastern and north-central United States, and in the northern and central Rocky Mountains. Within Idaho, populations exist north of the Salmon River in the west and north of the Caribou Range in the east. The total population size in Idaho is unknown, but it is thought to be less than 100 individuals (IDFG 2005).

In Idaho, the Canada lynx inhabits montane and subalpine coniferous forests typically above 4,000 feet. Habitat used during foraging is usually early successional forest. Dens are usually in mature forests. Individuals are wide-ranging and require large tracts of forest. The Canada lynx preys on the snowshoe hare, particularly during the winter, as well as variety of birds and other small mammals (IDFG 2005).

The Final EIS for the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction project (USDA 2007) was reviewed to assess the likelihood that Canada lynx use the project area. This document shows occupied lynx habitat as well as core areas, secondary areas, and peripheral areas. According to the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Final EIS, the project area is outside of all predicted lynx use areas, and Canada lynx are not expected to be present or pass through the project area.

### 4.3.3.2 *Gray Wolf*

Gray wolf is listed as Endangered in four counties in Idaho. Within the rest of the counties in Idaho (including Idaho County), this species is considered “Experimental/Nonessential”. This designation is due to reintroduction efforts and means that the gray wolf is not actually listed as Endangered in Idaho County.

Wolves in Idaho were declared endangered in 1974 under the ESA. The USFWS's 1987 recovery plan for wolves in the Northern Rocky Mountains included reintroducing them in central Idaho in 1995 and 1996.

Wolf packs tend to follow deer and elk. Wolves may pass through the project area, but are not expected to spend much time there.

### 4.3.3.3 *MacFarlane's Four-O'Clock*

MacFarlane's four-o'clock is a federally and Idaho State-listed species. It is listed as Threatened under the ESA and is considered Imperiled by Idaho State. MacFarlane's four-o'clock is a perennial plant with bright magenta flowers; it grows on very rocky steep slopes loosely covered in soil with sunny exposures. MacFarlane's four-o'clock is narrowly endemic to portions of the Snake, Salmon, and Imnaha River canyons. The species' global range is approximately 28.5 miles (ORBIC 2010).

No MacFarlane's four-o'clock have been found in the project site. The nearest known MacFarlane's four-o'clock site to the project area is approximately 20 miles to the south. In addition, appropriate habitat for the species does not occur on the project site, as there are no very rocky exposed steep slopes.

### 4.3.3.4 *Spalding's Catchfly*

Spalding's catchfly is a federally and Idaho State-listed species. It is listed as Threatened under the ESA and is considered Critically Imperiled by Idaho State. Spalding's catchfly is a perennial plant with white petals and sticky tubular sepals. The species is a regional endemic that is restricted to remnants of the Palouse prairie grassland of eastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, northern Idaho, and western Montana (ORBIC 2010). It inhabits undisturbed prairie on hills at low to mid elevations. In this part of Idaho, Spalding's catchfly is most commonly seen in canyon grasslands.

Spalding's catchfly has not been observed on the project site. The nearest site is over 4 miles north. In addition, the project site does not contain appropriate habitat for Spalding's catchfly, as it has not been found in conifer forests in Idaho.

### 4.3.4 Consequences of Alternatives

#### *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, vegetation management activities would not be funded. The high risk of vegetation loss from wildfires would continue. Adverse impacts would be minor.

There would be no direct effects to wildlife, including ESA Federally listed species, State-listed species, or special status species in the project area. However, the potential for losses of wildlife due to wildfire would remain. Impacts would be moderate. Future uncontrolled wildfires could affect wildlife through the loss of habitat or the mortality of individuals.

#### *Proposed Action*

Impacts to vegetation would be negligible to minor. Various disturbances from work crews, removal of individual small trees/brush, and hand pruning or limbing would result in localized, indirect, small adverse effects to native plant communities. However, in these habitat types, thinning is generally desirable and promotes reduction of overstocked understory trees and shrubs. Trees larger than 12 inches DBH would not be removed. Fuels reduction would be conducted in conjunction with the IDL and the Idaho County Disaster Mitigation Office.

Changes in the vegetative community or species population would be minor, with small and localized adverse effects to a relatively minor proportion of native species. Many of these species are ecologically dependent on fire and fire cycles, and effects are considered minor in the short-term and beneficial in the long-term.

Wildfire fuel reduction activities are not expected to affect threatened and endangered species since they are not present in the project area. The one exception is the gray wolf, which may pass through the project area. However, any impact would be negligible as the modification to wolf habitat would be minor to none. Minor adverse impacts to non-listed wildlife, including migratory birds, could occur through habitat modification. The timing of vegetation removal activities should occur within the non-breeding season (considered from October 1 to May 1 each year, or as determined by a local qualified biologist). Changes in food sources, shelter, and population density would determine the severity of impacts on non-listed wildlife.

### 4.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources consist of locations of human activity, occupation, or use identified through field inventory, historic documentation, or oral evidence. The term encompasses historic properties as defined by the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), including archaeological and architectural properties as well as sites or places of traditional cultural or religious importance to Native American Tribes or other social or cultural groups. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 requires that activities needing Federal permits or using Federal funds, undergo a review process to consider historic properties that are listed in or may be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is the Federal agency's primary Section 106 partner. Because Section 106 is a process by which the Federal government assesses the effects of its undertakings on historic properties, it is the primary regulatory framework used in the NEPA process to determine impacts on cultural resources.

The Proposed Action would take place in and near a developed facility. In accordance with Section 106, FEMA has delineated the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the Proposed Action as approximately 30 acres surrounding the NICI facility.

#### 4.4.1 Ethnographic and Historic Context

Ethnographic records indicate the Nipeheme band of Nez Perce occupied the Cottonwood area (Schwede 1966). The Nez Perce were a hunter-gatherer group that acquired resources available in seasonal abundance (Chalfant 1974; Marshall 1977). Winter villages, early spring camps, summer camps, and later summer camps were located in low riverside to upland mountain locations, respectively. Large winter villages were located along low elevation streams and rivers. During spring, the villages would disband so that smaller family groups could travel between fishing and hunting camps. Camas roots were harvested during the summer and stored for the winter (Chalfant 1974). Significant economic resources included fish, especially salmonids, large game such as deer and elk, and plants such as camas and cous (Marshall 1977). The number of Nez Perce settlements in the region has been estimated at 130 (Anastasio 1985). Most were found at elevations below 2,500 feet (Schwede 1970) and near the confluence of a stream with a major drainage (Spinden 1908). The U.S. National Park Service's Native American Consultation Database lists the following Tribes as having ancestral interest in Idaho County: the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (Montana), and the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho (NPS 2011).

Euro-American exploration of the region began with the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805, which traveled the Clearwater River region to the north of the project area (BLM 2010a). Following increased settlement by whites, a treaty between the United States of America and the Nez Perce Tribe of Indians was signed in 1855 establishing a reservation that included the project area. But the discovery of gold in the early 1860s and increasing encroachment by whites resulted in a new treaty being drafted in 1863 which greatly reduced the size of the Nez Perce Reservation (Conley 1982).

Gold mining was prevalent in the Salmon River area from the 1860s through the 1880s, and again during the Depression of the 1930s. Along with the miners came stockmen, who drove cattle and sheep through the area beginning in the 1860s. Cottonwood was first settled in 1862 and served as a stage stop for travelers of the Florence and Elk City-Warren roads (Conley

1982). By the 1880s, the town was well established as a cattle round-up center, and its population was boosted by the arrival of the railroad in 1908. A fire destroyed the town later that same year. In 1919, construction began on the St. Gertrude's Convent and Chapel, and by the late 1920s, a boarding and day school were opened. The Sisters of St. Gertrude's operated a school until 1970 and continue to staff schools and St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood. Today, Cottonwood is a community of about 2,200 residents whose economy is based primarily on agriculture (CCOC 2011).

During the Cold War era of the 1950s, the Cottonwood Air Defense Radar Station was constructed and originally consisted of three properties (the Cantonment Area, Housing Area, and Radio Facility). Activated by the 822nd Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron in 1959, the facility was deactivated due to fiscal year 1965 cutbacks (Radomes 2011). The former Cantonment Area of this facility now comprises the NICI facility, which was established in 1974.

General Land Office (GLO) maps were reviewed to determine if any late-nineteenth century historic-era features are potentially present in the project area (BLM 2010b). The GLO original survey plat, dated 1872, does not depict any features of interest in the project area, which is labeled as having first-rate soil and timber (BLM 2010b). The project area is approximately 0.75 mile from a wagon road to Lewiston; however, at present the remains of this wagon road have not been documented as an archaeological or historic resource. GLO latent records indicate the lands within and surrounding NICI were mostly patented in the 1890s, but it has not been determined if this specific parcel had any historic-era development.

Though the project area has no distinguishing geographic features to suggest increased cultural sensitivity, such as a prominent butte or water course, it is located in an upland setting near the headwaters of Cottonwood Creek and within an area of ancestral Tribal importance to the Nez Perce. Cottonwood Creek would have likely been used as a travel corridor and for resource acquisition activities prior to Euro-American settlement and the establishment of reservations.

Historic development of the region suggests intensive nineteenth-century mining and agricultural activities occurred along the Salmon River and near the Cottonwood area, and thus evidence for such activities may exist in the project area. However, historic maps and the preliminary literature review do not indicate that early development occurred specifically within the project area. Development of the NICI site in 1955 as the Cantonment Area of the Cottonwood Air Defense Radar Station may have obliterated potential evidence of earlier use of the project area.

### 4.4.2 Identification of Historic Properties

The Proposed Action would take place in and near a developed facility. In accordance with Section 106, FEMA has delineated the APE for the Proposed Action as approximately 30 acres surrounding the NICI facility. The 30-acre APE is considered to be identical for both above-ground and archaeological resources because the Project has limited potential to affect historic properties beyond the defined APE given its secluded forested setting.

Efforts to identify historic properties included a desktop review of archival materials, including data on file at the SHPO, aerial photographs and maps, and materials provided by the subapplicant. The Project was reviewed by a URS Archaeologist, qualified under the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* (36 CFR Part 61) for archaeology, and a URS architectural historian, qualified under the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional*

*Qualification Standards* (36 CFR Part 61) for architectural history. A site visit was not conducted for cultural resources evaluation.

### 4.4.2.1 *Above-ground Resources*

A review of the records on file at the Idaho SHPO office in Boise, Idaho, was conducted in November 2010 to determine the presence or absence of previously recorded historic properties and the extent of cultural resource survey coverage in and near the project area. The results of the record search indicate that only one small-scale inventory has been conducted within a 1-mile radius of the project location, but does not appear to have overlapped it. No previously recorded resources are found within a 1-mile radius of the project area.

NICI is the former cantonment area of the Cottonwood Air Defense Radar Station, built in 1955 and located approximately 4 miles northwest of the rural community of Cottonwood. The Cottonwood Air Defense Radar Station, which consisted of three properties (the Cantonment Area, Housing Area, and Radio Facility) was deactivated in 1965. NICI is located in a secluded, forested area off Radar Road and features multiple buildings functioning as dorms, a gym, a school, maintenance facilities, a medical facility, a kitchen, and an administration office (built between 1955 and 1973). The buildings vary in size, construction materials, and design. The buildings are single- or two-story, wood-frame or of concrete block construction, and a few trailers are present on the property. The buildings appear have undergone modifications over the years including change in materials, specifically doors, windows, and roofing fabric.

Although the former Cottonwood Air Defense Radar Station was used during the Cold War-era (and therefore is associated with military history), the facility is not intact and does not appear to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The buildings and structures associated with the former Radio Facility approximately 2 miles southwest of NICI are no longer extant. The former Housing Area along Cottonwood Butte Road in the northern limits of Cottonwood is extant and is now owned by the Bureau of Land Management and being used as a field office. Due to the physical modifications made to the NICI and associated properties, SHPO has determined in a letter dated November 2009 to NICI that the property is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. FEMA has determined that no additional above-ground historic properties are located within the APE.

### 4.4.2.2 *Archaeological Resources*

No previously recorded archaeological resources are found within the APE. The subapplication and attachments, including aerial photographs and desktop resources, indicate that the NICI property grounds have been largely disturbed, beginning with the 1955 construction of the Radio Facility structures and associated features (fences, roads, walkways), and grading of the grounds to create level yard areas. The forested areas surrounding the facility have been previously logged. Due to the extent of development associated with the Radio Facility and present NICI facility, as indicated via aerial photography review and information provided by the subapplicant, the likelihood of encountering intact, significant archaeological resources within this setting is minimal.

FEMA has corresponded with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (Montana), and the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho. To date, FEMA has not received any information regarding potential properties of religious or cultural significance to the tribes within the APE.

### 4.4.3 Consequences of Alternatives

#### *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, FEMA would not provide funding to prevent wildfire and storms from damaging the NICI facility. The facility, which was constructed in 1955, would continue to be at risk of wildfire damage, as it has since its construction. Because no Federal undertaking would occur, Section 106 would not apply.

#### *Proposed Action*

The Proposed Action would reduce the vulnerabilities from wildfire and severe storms to the NICI. A defensible space would be created around the perimeter of the facility and remove hazardous or flammable fuels by focusing on tree thinning and clearing. Wood siding on at-risk buildings would be replaced with fire-resistant material. Power lines (3,264 linear feet) running into and through the facility would be buried.

In a letter from the SHPO to Vicki Yanzuk of the Idaho Department of Corrections dated November 5, 2009, the SHPO provided their opinion that the NICI is not eligible for listing in the NRHP due to the level of modification to the buildings (SHPO 2009). Therefore, FEMA has determined that the Proposed Action would have no effect on above-ground historic properties.

The Proposed Action would have limited potential to adversely affect intact, significant archaeological resources because the area for the buried power lines and vegetation removal has been subject to prior development disturbances and logging activities. No new access roads would be constructed. Therefore, barring new information provided by the SHPO or Tribes, FEMA has determined that the Proposed Action would have no effect on archaeological historic properties.

It remains a possibility that buried archaeological resources, or other unanticipated cultural resources, could be exposed or disturbed by the Proposed Action. FEMA conditions all its funded ground disturbing projects to protect cultural resources during site work. In the event of an unanticipated discovery, and in compliance with State and Federal laws protecting cultural resources, including Section 106, all work is required to cease in the immediate vicinity of the find until the appropriate parties (including the SHPO) are consulted and an appropriate resolution plan is established.

In compliance with Section 106, FEMA has sent a formal finding of No Historic Properties Affected to the SHPO, and a request for comment from the following Tribes: the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (Montana), and the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho.

## 4.5 SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES

### 4.5.1 Environmental Justice

EO 12898, Environmental Justice, directs Federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations resulting from Federal programs, policies, and activities. Socioeconomic and demographic data for residents in the project vicinity were studied to determine if the Proposed Action would have disproportionate impacts on minority or low-

income persons. Data counts for the 2000 U.S. Census include prison populations in the county where the NICI facility was located.

U.S. Census Bureau 2000 data for Idaho County was used to identify the minority<sup>1</sup> and low-income<sup>2</sup> compositions of the study area, which is located in Block Group 2 (within Census Tract 9603). The minority population was approximately 8 percent, and approximately 15 percent of the population in Block Group 2 was below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Because these levels are consistent with the county and state as a whole, minority and low income populations are not considered to be present.

### 4.5.2 Consequences of Alternatives

#### *No Action Alternative*

Under the No Action Alternative, FEMA would not provide funding to reduce wildfire and severe storm risks at the NICI. There are no minority or low-income populations in the project area, thus no disproportionately high and adverse effect would occur.

#### *Proposed Action*

The project area was chosen as high-priority for a mitigation project based solely on the need to protect NICI, a critical Idaho State facility; demographics were not a factor in decision-making. Furthermore, there are no minority or low-income populations in the project area.

## 4.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA requires an assessment of cumulative effects during the decision-making process for Federal projects. Cumulative effects are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7). Cumulative effects were determined by combining the effects of these alternatives with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

Vegetation management activities proposed by neighboring properties, similar in scale to those of the Proposed Action, would further reduce the possibility of an intense fire in the project vicinity.

The Proposed Action and other activities that are planned by the County are not expected to have adverse cumulative impacts to geology, soils, and climate; water resources, wetlands, and floodplains; vegetation, wildlife, and fish; cultural resources; or environmental justice, as no project impacts are anticipated.

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<sup>1</sup> A minority person is “a person who is: (1) Black (a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa); (2) Hispanic (a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race); (3) Asian American (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands); or (4) American Indian and Alaskan Native (a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition).”

<sup>2</sup> Low-income is identified as “one whose median household income is at or below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.” Income data based on Department of Health and Human Services guidelines are difficult to gather, so Census Bureau data are often used for environmental justice analyses.

### SECTION FIVE      AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

During project development, NICI staff contacted the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security (BHS), the IDL, and SHPO for review and concurrence with the project. During preparation of this EA, the SHPO and following Tribes were also contacted for comment: the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (Montana), and the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho.

A public notice is required for the draft EA (Appendix B). The public, Tribes, and agencies will have the opportunity to comment on the EA for 30 days after the publication of the notice. The notice identifies the action, location of the proposed site, participants, location of the draft EA, and who to write to provide comments. FEMA will review all substantive written comments for issues that need to be addressed with the County, and will incorporate resolution into the final EA, as appropriate.

The following plans are relevant to public involvement efforts supporting this EA.

#### 5.1      STATE OF IDAHO HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The State of Idaho Hazard Mitigation Plan, a comprehensive, statewide mitigation planning effort, was updated in 2007 (IBHS 2007). This plan promotes the completion of county-specific mitigation plans. The plan was updated by the Idaho BHS with input from various State agencies and community representatives.

Wildland fires are considered a significant risk and are listed as one of the three principal natural hazards in the state. Severe storms are considered a lesser threat. Specific mitigation measures include assisting with the development of fire-resistant State facilities and reducing fuels on State-owned lands within wildland-urban interface areas and within the vicinity of State facilities.

#### 5.2      IDAHO COUNTY, IDAHO MULTI-HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The Idaho County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted in 2009. The planning team responsible for developing this plan was led by the Idaho County Commissioners, and included local, State, and Federal agencies/organizations and the Nez Perce Tribe. The plan includes an assessment of natural hazards, including flooding, landslides, earthquakes, severe weather, and wildland fire.

Both severe weather and wildland fire were rated as a high risk for the County. Wildland fire risk was considered high based on the number of structures within the wildland-urban interface, presence of fire-prone vegetation, and the limited availability of firefighting resources. The severe weather risk was based on historic winter storm patterns, severity and duration of typical storms, and the high elevation of the County.

#### 5.3      IDAHO COUNTY REVISED WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLAN

The Revised Wildland-Urban Interface Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan (2004) is the result of analyses, professional cooperation and collaboration, assessments of wildfire risks and other factors considered with the intent to reduce the threat of wildfires to people, structures, infrastructure, and unique ecosystems in Idaho County. The Idaho County Fire Mitigation

## **Agency Coordination and Public Involvement**

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Working Group is responsible for implementing the plan. This group includes Idaho County staff, incorporated cities, city and rural fire protection personnel, law enforcement, Idaho BHS, IDL, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, fire mitigation specialists, resource management professionals, and hazard mitigation experts.

Goals of the plan include reducing the area of the wildland-urban interface, and prioritizing the protection of people, structures, and infrastructure.

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## Permitting, Project Conditions, and Mitigation Measures

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### SECTION SIX PERMITTING, PROJECT CONDITIONS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The project may require an electrical permit through the State of Idaho. No other permits are anticipated. Activities at the Proposed Action site will comply with the project's permitted scope of work. The project subapplicant shall comply with the following project conditions and mitigation measures:

- In order to minimize potential impacts to nesting birds, the timing of vegetation removal activities will be restricted to the non-breeding season. This is considered October 1 to May 1 each year, or as determined by a local qualified biologist.
- The boundaries of clearing will be clearly marked and restricted to the areas identified in this EA.
- The subapplicant is responsible for selecting, implementing, monitoring, and maintaining BMPs to control erosion and sediment, reduce spills and pollution, and provide habitat protection.
- Any change to the approved scope of work will require re-evaluation for compliance with NEPA and other laws and Executive Orders.
- In the event that potentially significant cultural resources are discovered during project activities, and in compliance with State and Federal laws protecting cultural resources, including Section 106 of the NHPA, work in the immediate vicinity shall cease, the area secured, and the SHPO and FEMA notified.
- All construction equipment will be cleaned and inspected by the operator prior to arriving on site to reduce the potential spread of noxious or invasive plant species.
- Fuels reduction shall be conducted in conjunction with the IDL and the Idaho County Disaster Mitigation Office.
- The generators shall use a double-walled tank (Convault or similar) to minimize fuel leakage.
- The generators shall be used exclusively for emergency purposes, be operated less than 500 hours per year, and be fueled by natural gas, propane gas, liquefied petroleum gas, distillate fuel oils, residual fuel oils, or diesel fuel; waste oil, gasoline, or refined gasoline shall not be used (Idaho Administrative Procedures Act 58.01.01.222.d).

**SECTION SEVEN CONCLUSION**

The draft EA evaluated environmental and historic resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action. The evaluation did not identify any significant adverse impacts associated with the resources of geology, soils, climate; water resources, floodplains, wetlands; vegetation, fish and wildlife (including ESA-listed and habitat); historic, archaeological, and cultural resources; and socioeconomic and environmental justice. Implementing the Proposed Action, along with conditions associated with permits or approvals is expected to avoid or minimize potential for adverse effects associated with the action. Following public involvement, FEMA will determine whether to issue a Finding Of No Significant Impact for the Proposed Action.

**SECTION EIGHT LIST OF PREPARERS**

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Jeff Walker, PWS, Biologist

*FEMA*

Science Kilner, FEMA Reviewer

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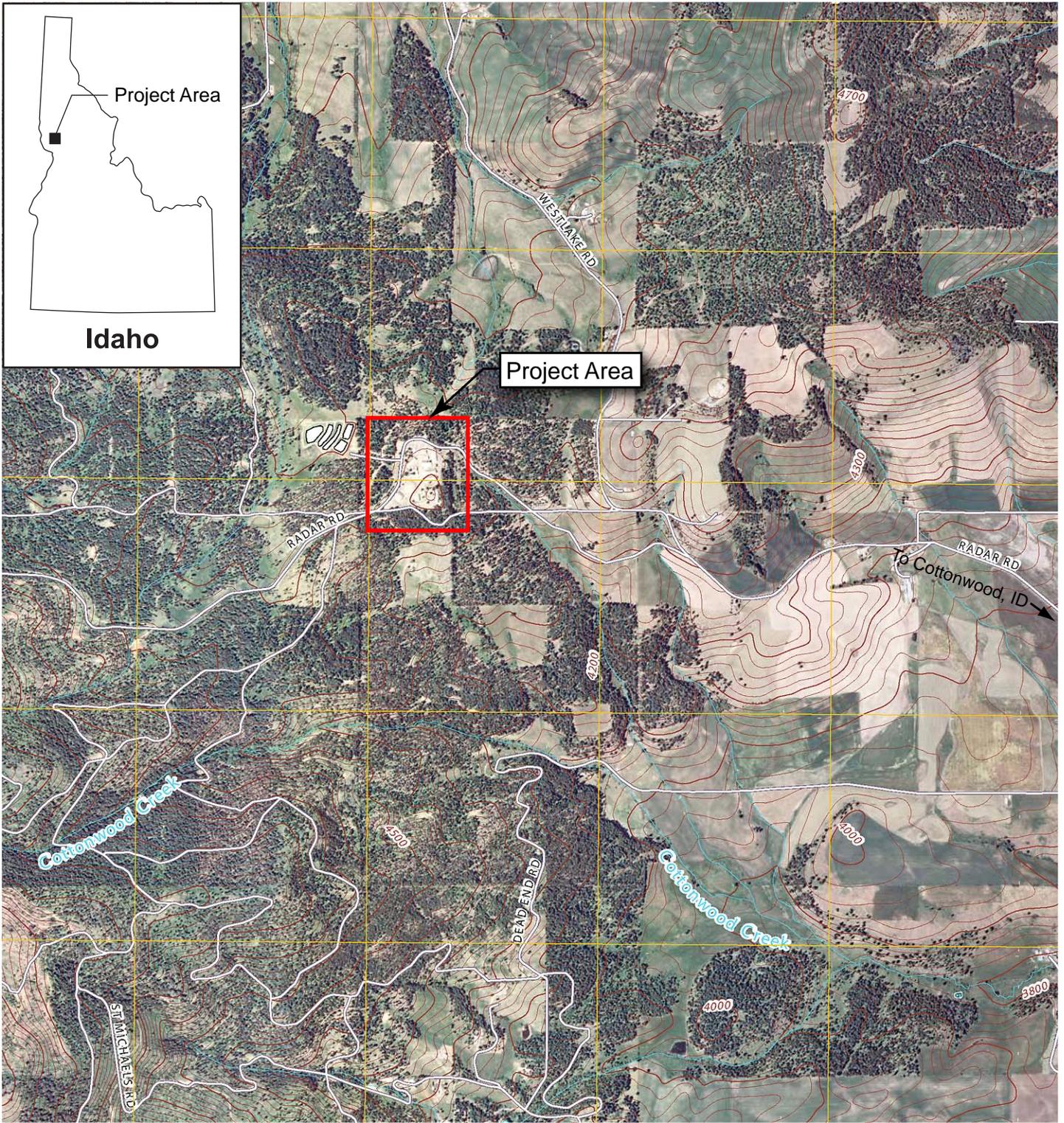
**Appendix A**  
**Figures**

Figure 1 – Project Vicinity Map

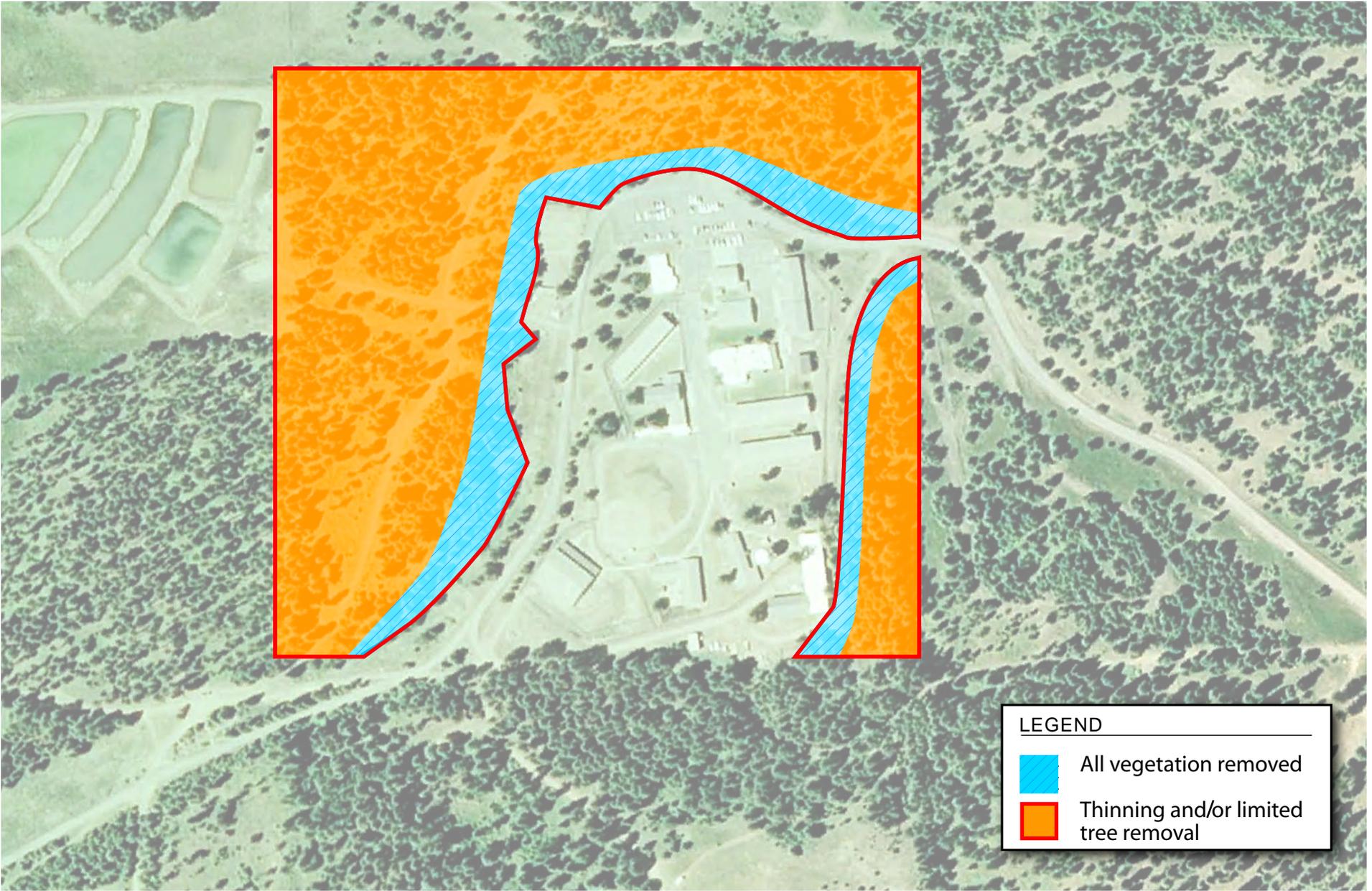
Figure 2 – Proposed Project

Figure 3a and 3b – Site Photographs

Figure 4 – Proposed Power Line Burial



Scale in Miles



Source: Google Earth



Job No. 15702511

**Figure 2**  
**Proposed Vegetation Removal**



Trees surrounding the facility.



Buildings on-site.



Existing generator.

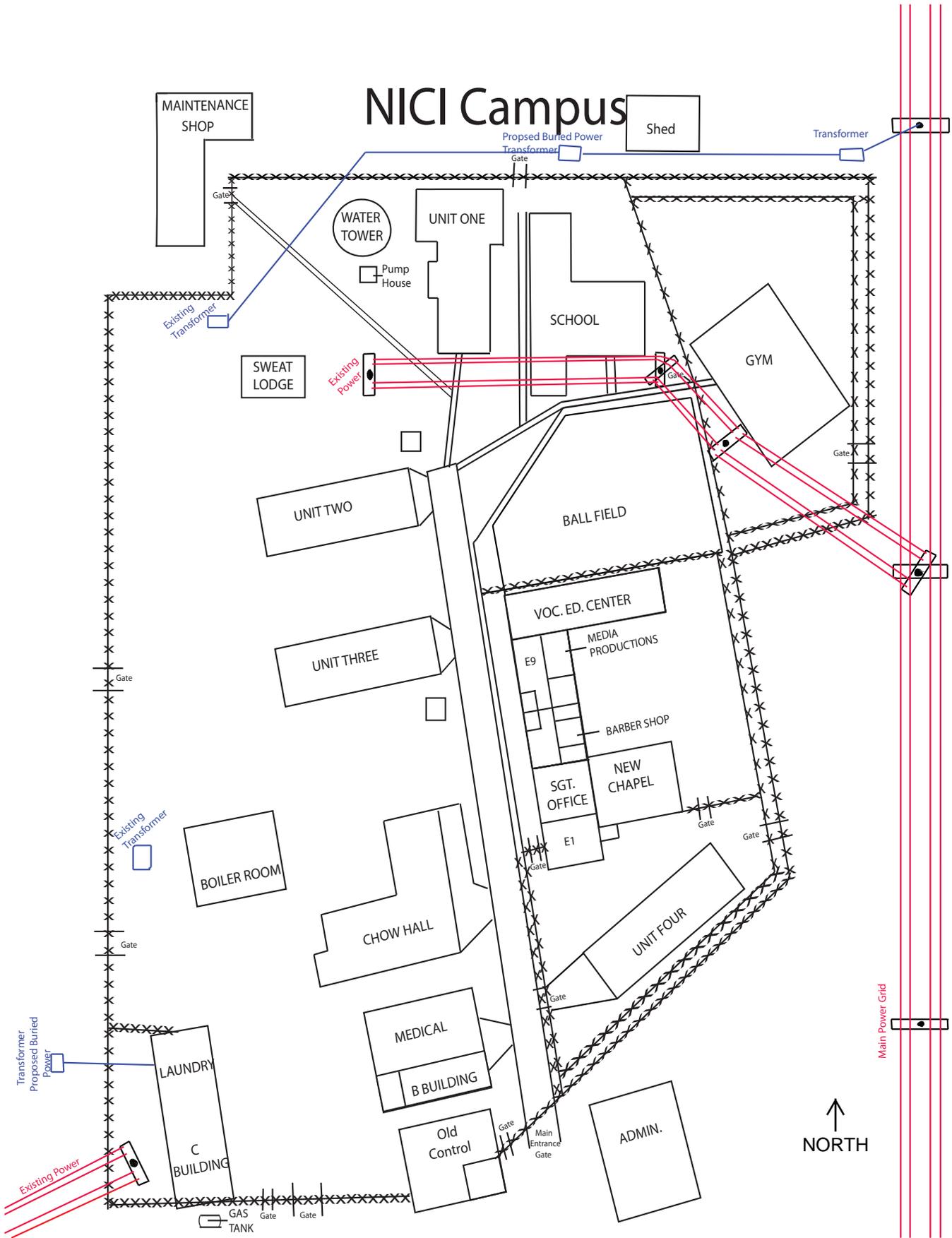


Figure 4

### Proposed Power Line Burial

Job No. 15702511

Source: NICI (note: lines to be buried are shown in blue)

**Appendix B**  
**Public Notice**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Draft Environmental Assessment  
Wildfire Fuels Reduction/Severe Storm Mitigation in Western Idaho**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) proposes to provide funding to the North Idaho Correctional Institution for a wildfire fuels reduction and severe storm mitigation project in western Idaho. Funding would be provided as authorized by §203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Assistance and Emergency Relief Act (Stafford Act), 42 U.S. Code.

FEMA prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed project pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and FEMA's implementing regulations found in 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 10. The EA evaluates alternatives for compliance with applicable environmental laws, including Executive Orders #11990 (Protection of Wetlands), #11988 (Floodplain Management), and #12898 (Environmental Justice). The alternatives evaluated in the EA are (1) no action; and (2) reduction and management of fuel loads through manual/mechanical means, replacement of flammable wood siding, power line burial, and installation of backup generators to protect against severe storms (Proposed Action).

The EA is available for review online at the FEMA environmental Web site at: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments> under Region X. If no significant issues are identified during the comment period, FEMA will finalize the EA, issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and fund the project. Unless substantive comments are received, FEMA will not publish another notice for this project. However, should a FONSI be issued, it will be available for public viewing at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments> under Region X.

The draft EA is also available for review on April 6, 2011, at the North Idaho Correctional Institution at 236 Radar Road, Cottonwood, ID 83522.

Written comments on the draft EA should be directed no later than 5 p.m. on May 6, 2011 to Mark Eberlein, Regional Environmental Officer, FEMA Region X, 130 228th Street SW, Bothell, WA 98021, or by e-mail to [mark.eberlein@dhs.gov](mailto:mark.eberlein@dhs.gov). Comments also can be faxed to 425-487-4613.