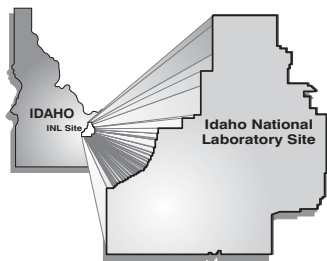


# Agencies Set Public Comment Period on Proposal to Expand the Public Hunting Boundary at INL Site



**T**he U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and State of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (known as "the Agencies") have initiated a 30-day public comment period (**beginning November 22 and ending December 21, 2024**) on a proposal to expand an existing hunting boundary at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site, allowing for greater public access.

During the late 1980s, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) noted that big game, primarily elk and pronghorn antelope, were benefiting from the hunting prohibition on the INL Site, resulting in crop damage to surrounding agricultural fields. In 1989, the IDFG and DOE established an authorization and agreement to allow limited hunting on the INL Site within 0.5 miles of the agricultural fields on an as-needed basis to address the monetary loss of the producers and the subsequent limited financial compensation issued by the state. The 1989 agreement was modified six times between 1990 and 1998, and hunting continues per the agreement. The agreement continues to limit the hunting to pronghorn antelope and elk during the seasons prescribed by the IDFG.

Despite the hunting agreement, elk herd size has increased to an estimated 400 to 600 animals. Depredation claims for properties adjacent to the INL Site amounted to \$379,505 in 2023, or approximately 21% of the state's depredation claim budget. Claimants are limited to \$125,000 per year, resulting in some producers not receiving full reimbursement. In addition to the direct financial compensation, the IDFG and

producers have taken additional mitigation measures to reduce damage. This includes the installation of more than 3,200 feet of metal panels and 12,000 feet of plastic netting, as well as hundreds of hours of hazing elk.

To reduce both the direct and indirect financial costs associated with the increased depredation, the Agencies, in consultation with the IDFG, have proposed an expansion of the hunting boundary at the INL Site. The proposed expansion impacts four Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) Records of Decision (RODs), i.e., for Operable Units (OUs) 10-04, 4-13, 5-12, and 1-10, all of which limit hunting access to the INL Site. However, only the OU 10-04 ROD addresses CERCLA sites associated with the hunting boundaries. The OU 10-04 ROD states that potential unexploded ordnance may be present within the boundaries of the OU 10-04 identified CERCLA institutional control (IC) sites. While the current hunting boundary includes portions of the OU 10-04 CERCLA site, the proposed expansion represents a significant incremental increase in the potential for public exposure to ordnance because previously restricted areas would be accessible by the public for hunting. The proposed expansion includes public access to an additional 79.8 square miles of the INL Site, including 7.8 square miles designated as a low-hazard IC area. The risk of encountering ordnance within the expansion area remains low because it serves as a buffer to medium- and high-hazard IC areas where ordnance has previously been found. To date, no ordnance has been found in these low-hazard IC areas.

More information can be found in the Explanation of Significant Differences for Operable Units 10-04, 4-13, 5-12, and 1-10 Records of Decision for the Expansion of Public Hunting Boundaries at the Idaho National Laboratory Site (DOE/ID-12100), which is available in the Administrative Record (<https://idahoenvironmental.com/ARIR/>) by searching for Document ID: DOE/ID-12100. Comments on this ESD should be sent to [HuntingBoundary.ESD@icp.doe.gov](mailto:HuntingBoundary.ESD@icp.doe.gov).