

PMC-EF2a

(20102)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
EERE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CENTER
NEPA DETERMINATION



RECIPIENT: Rockford Solar Partners LLC

STATE: IL

PROJECT
TITLE : Rockford Solar

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
de-foa-0000052			0

Based on my review of the information concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (authorized under DOE Order 451.1A), I have made the following determination:

CX, EA, EIS APPENDIX AND NUMBER:

Description:

- A9** Information gathering (including, but not limited to, literature surveys, inventories, audits), data analysis (including computer modeling), document preparation (such as conceptual design or feasibility studies, analytical energy supply and demand studies), and dissemination (including, but not limited to, document mailings, publication, and distribution; and classroom training and informational programs), but not including site characterization or environmental monitoring.
- A11** Technical advice and planning assistance to international, national, state, and local organizations.
- B5.1** Actions to conserve energy, demonstrate potential energy conservation, and promote energy-efficiency that do not increase the indoor concentrations of potentially harmful substances. These actions may involve financial and technical assistance to individuals (such as builders, owners, consultants, designers), organizations (such as utilities), and state and local governments. Covered actions include, but are not limited to: programmed lowering of thermostat settings, placement of timers on hot water heaters, installation of solar hot water systems, installation of efficient lighting, improvements in generator efficiency and appliance efficiency ratings, development of energy-efficient manufacturing or industrial practices, and small-scale conservation and renewable energy research and development and pilot projects. The actions could involve building renovations or new structures in commercial, residential, agricultural, or industrial sectors. These actions do not include rulemakings, standard-settings, or proposed DOE legislation.

Rational for determination:

The State of Illinois will use \$4,025,000 of Recovery Act funds to support the efforts of ROCKFORD SOLAR PARTNERS LLC, comprised of NEW GENERATION POWER LLC and WANXIANG in the development of a 40 Megawatt solar farm in Rockford, IL. The facility will be constructed on property owned by the Greater Rockford Airport Authority (GRAA) located on Southbend Road, Rockford, Illinois. ROCKFORD SOLAR anticipates a long-term lease from GRAA on a site fully permitted for the use intended. Both the City of Rockford and the GRAA support development of the project.

Rockford Solar Partners (Rockford) will use Recovery Act funding to acquire and install equipment and construct and maintain the 40 Megawatt solar farm. When fully constructed, it will be one of the largest in the country and the largest in the Midwest. All material, installations, maintenance and operations will comply with all federal, state and local ordinances, codes and regulations. Funds will also be used to collect and report data from the operation and efficiency of the solar farm to DOE to provide a baseline for developmental standards, regulations and codes for future solar farm development in the Midwest and other localities. A broad education and outreach program will also be developed and implemented during the funding period(s).

Rockford will install locally produced (Rockford, IL) Wanxiang Solar modules in the farm. The modules are made from crystalline-silicon cells encapsulated and protected by an anodized aluminum alloy frame and low-iron tempered glass. The Wanxiang panels are highly climate resistant and anti-aging. The panels convert solar energy/sunlight including ultra violet radiation directly into electricity. Installation and operation of the solar arrays are not expected to pose an environmental concern.

The estimated area to be affected is approximately 180 acres. This will occur through 4 phases of development, each of about 45 acres. The development site is currently classified and designated for future urban development and has been identified for commercial and industrial development by zoning code, ordinance, and a comprehensive land use plan by the City of Rockford and the Greater Rockford Airport Authority. It is not considered prime, unique or important farmland. The IDNR has determined by an evaluation of their resources that the proposed action is not likely to have any adverse effects on the site. The site will have no significant land disturbance. Site clearing and excavation will include tree removal, none of which will be in forested areas; topsoil stripping; topsoil replacement; fine grading; excavation for service roadways, culverts, fencing, and trenching for electric cable and utilities; and various miscellaneous unclassified excavations. Digging operations will include cylindrical foundation supports for solar panel

structures, foundation for inverter houses, fencing and trenching for utilities, site warning and identification signage and site lighting. Excavation spoils will remain at the location of excavation and spread and leveled during onsite grading operations. No net quantity of material is anticipated to be added or removed with the exception of gravel required for service roads and parking facilities. The runoff or erosion potential will remain unchanged. Control techniques for erosion control and runoff employed may include installation of silt fencing, erosion mats, riprap, seeding, mulching, fertilizing, etc. and will be specified pursuant to future final engineering plans. The project site on the northwesterly boundary abuts the Kishwaukee River, a portion of which is designated as a floodplain. Several wetlands also exist on the site and are designated for mitigation. The proposed layout of the solar arrays is not expected to affect the wetland areas; however, and mitigation might not be required. All required federal, state and local permits will be obtained upon final approval of engineering plans, specifications and scope of work. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has not identified any archaeological sites or threatened/endangered species within the project vicinity. Finally, the project will not affect navigable air space according to the Greater Rockford Airport Authority. The height of all project facilities is lower than the height of existing trees on the site.

The sheer size of the project (i.e., 180 acres) raises the potential for public concern and environmental impact. Likewise, the project site sits partially in a floodplain with wetland areas nearby. This raises the possibility of impact to wildlife. Finally, the nature of the project does not lend itself to any listed categorical exclusion applicable to general agency actions. As a result, an EA is recommended. In review of the environmental studies already completed, there is little reason to suspect that the project will require an EIS.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a conditional NEPA determination for this award, and funding for certain tasks under this award is contingent upon the final NEPA determination.

Insert the following language in the award:

You are restricted from taking any action using federal funds, which would have an adverse affect on the environment or limit the choice of reasonable alternatives prior to DOE/NNSA providing either a NEPA clearance or a final NEPA decision regarding the project.

Prohibited actions include:

Construction of the Solar Farm until completion of the Environmental Assessment and issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

This restriction does not preclude you from:

Performing work to collect information and generate data required for the Environmental Assessment including, but not limited to, conducting environmental studies and public meetings in regard to the proposed project.

If you move forward with activities that are not authorized for federal funding by the DOE Contracting Officer in advance of the final NEPA decision, you are doing so at risk of not receiving federal funding and such costs may not be recognized as allowable cost share.

Insert the following language in the award:

You are required to:

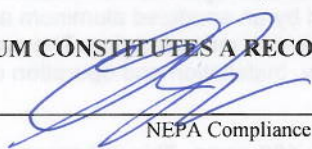
Complete an Environmental Assessment for review by the Golden Field Office.

Note to Specialist :

According to the Project Officer, funds for this project are set at \$4,025,000. According the the Project Officer, \$30,000 should be made available to the State and Applicant to support completion of the Environmental Assessment (EA). The remaining funds are to be withheld pending review of the EA and issuance of a FONSI.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____



NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: _____

3/17/10

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER DETERMINATION

Field Office Manager review required

NCO REQUESTS THE FIELD OFFICE MANAGER REVIEW FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:

Proposed action fits within a categorical exclusion but involves a high profile or controversial issue that warrants Field Office Manager's attention.

Proposed action falls within an EA or EIS category and therefore requires Field Office Manager's review and determination.

BASED ON MY REVIEW I CONCUR WITH THE DETERMINATION OF THE NCO :

Field Office Manager's Signature: _____
Field Office Manager

Date: _____