



U.S. Department of Energy Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

Proposed Action Title: Clinch River Environmental Studies Organization (CRESO) Partners Wetland Project (CX-CRESO-2012-002)

Program or Field Office: Oak Ridge Reservation

Location(s) (City/County/State): Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Proposed Action Description:

The Clinch River Environmental Studies Organization (CRESO) is an education/research program that designs and creates semi-permanent wetland ecosystems and terrestrial habitats for the purpose of landscape enhancement and educational outreach. CRESO has years of experience and a proven track record in wetland creation, enhancement, monitoring, and education. CRESO and its primary wetland partners, Anderson County Schools, Oak Ridge Schools, ARCADIS, Anderson County Highway Department, and the University of Tennessee Forest Resources Research and Education Center, are experienced in constructing and managing semi-permanent pools ranging in size from 800 to 30,000 square feet and having depths of 18 to 24 inches. CRESO's activities engage local students in the process of design, creation, and monitoring of these systems, as well as providing students with a learning opportunity and a chance to see the biodiversity and the benefits of the systems. The activities also provide an educational tool for local landowners that are looking for better ways for land management.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) agreed that DOE would perform a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) which furthers EPA's goal of protecting and enhancing the environment and public health. The SEP agreed upon by TDEC and DOE meets the EPA guidelines stipulated in the Final Supplemental Environmental Projects Policy. The agreed upon project involves the construction and maintenance of artificial wetlands and the use of these wetlands as an educational tool for local students and the community. DOE proposes to provide funding for these projects through a grant with CRESO.

The CRESO partners have proposed a tri-strategy approach for 11 individual wetland projects (ten wetlands will be located in Anderson County and one wetland will be located in Knox County—most of the wetlands will be created in schoolyards). This categorical exclusion includes the following proposed activities:

1. Constructing (i.e., design, layout, site preparation, purchase of materials, landscaping, and oversight) 11 wetland projects (eight with a liner and three without a liner) and implementing a three-year follow-up management schedule (e.g., mowing, invasive plant removal, and trail maintenance);
2. Creating a three-year monitoring program for establishing baseline water quality and biodiversity information for each constructed/enhanced wetland; and
3. Conducting educational outreach and publishing education materials for the general public and specifically for school groups, landowners, and individuals in construction-related activities.

Specific proposed goals of the CRESO Partners Wetland Project include:

1. Increasing a healthy wetland habitat in Anderson County and nearby communities;
2. Engaging CRESO student researchers in wetland construction, management, monitoring, and educational outreach;
3. Building community capacity for improved land management decisions;
4. Supporting place-based education strategies for reconnecting citizens of all ages to their local landscapes and the natural elements associated with these landscapes; and
5. Expanding the existing partnerships among community organizations.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

B3.3 - Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

B3.8 - Outdoor terrestrial ecological and environmental research

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

Choose an item.

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.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders; (2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities; (3) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; (4) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (5) involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

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. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

The above description accurately describes the proposed action, which reflects the requirements of the CX cited above. Therefore, I recommend that the proposed action be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

Program Point of Contact: John Phelps

Date Determined: 3/30/2012

Based on my review of 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, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA Compliance Officer: original signed by James L. Elmore

Date Determined: 3/30/2012