



U.S. Department of Energy Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

Submit by E-mail

Proposed Action Title: Purdue University - Automated Sorghum Phenotyping and Trait Development Platform

Program or Field Office: Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy

Location(s) (City/County/State): West Lafayette, IN; Yorktown Heights, NY; Armonk, NY

Proposed Action Description:

Funding will support small-scale, research and development activities that will use wheeled vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and traditional hand collection methods to collect field data and then develop algorithms to analyze the data to extract phenotypic information. The proposed activities will be designed to enable optimization of sorghum for biomass and energy yield for transportation fuel. Purdue will perform work at existing facilities in West Lafayette, IN. IBM will conduct related computer analytics at existing facilities in Yorktown Heights and Armonk, NY.

The proposed action consists of the use by Purdue of small UAVs, which are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Purdue has applied for a for a Certificate of Authorization (COA) with the FAA to fly UAVs at the field test site and will begin use of the UAVs only after the COA is issued. Purdue will maintain compliance with all applicable FAA regulations governing the operation of UAVs and adapt operations to conform to any changes in the applicable regulatory requirements.

Project tasks will be conducted in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local safety and environmental requirements.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

B3.6 - Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of [10 CFR Part 1021](#).

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.

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:

Date Determined: 07/29/2015