

PMC-ND

(1.08.09.13)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
OFFICE OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY
NEPA DETERMINATION



RECIPIENT: FY21 BETO Scale-up and Conversion FOA Awardees (Under the Bioenergy Technologies Office)

STATE: CO

PROJECT TITLE: FY21 BETO Scale-up and Conversion FOA Initial Verification Activities

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002396		FOA-0002396-001	

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

CX, EA, EIS APPENDIX AND NUMBER:

Description:

- A9 Information gathering, analysis, and dissemination** Information gathering (including, but not limited to, literature surveys, inventories, site visits, and audits), data analysis (including, but not limited to, computer modeling), document preparation (including, but not limited to, conceptual design, feasibility studies, and analytical energy supply and demand studies), and information dissemination (including, but not limited to, document publication and distribution, and classroom training and informational programs), but not including site characterization or environmental monitoring. (See also B3.1 of appendix B to this subpart.)
- B3.6 Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects** Siting, construction, modification, operation, and decommissioning of facilities for smallscale research and development projects; conventional laboratory operations (such as preparation of chemical standards and sample analysis); and small-scale pilot projects (generally less than 2 years) frequently conducted to verify a concept before demonstration actions, provided that construction or modification would be within or contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area (where active utilities and currently used roads are readily accessible). Not included in this category are demonstration actions, meaning actions that are undertaken at a scale to show whether a technology would be viable on a larger scale and suitable for commercial deployment.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to issue a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) (DE-FOA-0002396) for research and development projects focused on the development of biomass conversion technologies/processes. Of particular interest are projects focused on the production of low-carbon fuels for aviation, trucking industry, and maritime sector applications. The Scale-up and Conversion FOA would also support projects focused on increasing the efficiency of residential wood heaters and the production of renewable natural gas.

All projects that would receive funding would include an Initial Verification task in which each project Awardee would be required to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed research activities and associated technologies. Information resulting from verification activities would be shared with DOE, prior to initiating any other project work. Much of the Initial Verification task work is expected to occur during award negotiation and prior to award signing, so that DOE can assess the potential Awardee's capacity for undertaking the proposed project activities. Because these activities are completed at such an early stage of the project, DOE is completing a NEPA review of Initial Verification activities as part of the FOA selection process. This NEPA Determination is applicable solely to Initial Verification activities of projects receiving funding as part of this FOA that conform to the description of activities below.

Initial verification activities would include data collection, data analysis, preliminary laboratory experimentation, preliminary assembly and fabrication activities, reporting, and stakeholder engagement. Preliminary laboratory experimentation would be limited to bench-scale demonstrations intended to duplicate previously completed experiments. Laboratory demonstrations may include the small-scale assembly of model devices. No biomass collection or sampling would occur outside of controlled laboratory spaces or dedicated facilities operated by the project awardees.

Participating entities would be identified as part of award selection processes. As such, Awardees and project locations are not yet known. However, initial verification activities would occur solely in controlled laboratory spaces or dedicated facilities where similar tasks are performed as part of each entity's regular course of business. No physical modifications, ground disturbance, or changes to the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities would be performed. All activities would be performed under existing permits, licenses, and authorizations.

Verification activities may involve the use and handling of potentially hazardous materials, including industrial

chemicals and solvents. All such handling would occur in controlled, purpose-built facilities in accordance with each entity's institutional health and safety policies and procedures. Each entity would observe Federal, state, and local health, safety, and environmental regulations.

Any work proposed to be conducted at a federal facility may be subject to additional NEPA review by the cognizant federal official and must meet the applicable health and safety requirements of the facility.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a conditional NEPA determination.

The NEPA Determination applies to the following Topic Areas, Budget Periods, and/or tasks:

[Budget Period 1 - Initial Verification activities](#)

The NEPA Determination does not apply to the following Topic Area, Budget Periods, and/or tasks:

[Budget Period 2 or later](#)

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

This NEPA determination is applicable only to Budget Period 1: Initial Verification activities for projects selected out of the Scale-up and Conversion FOA. If a selected project includes Initial Verification activities that are not consistent with activities described in this NEPA determination, those activities would be subject to additional NEPA review. All other activities, tasks, Budget Periods, etc., proposed as part of projects selected out of the Scale-up and Conversion FOA are subject to additional NEPA review.

Notes:

[Bioenergy Technologies Office](#)
Review completed by Jonathan Hartman, 05/19/2021

FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATIONS

The proposed action (or the part of the proposal defined in the Rationale above) 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 proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

The proposed action 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 proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:



Electronically Signed By: Casey Strickland

Date: 5/20/2021

NEPA Compliance Officer

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER DETERMINATION

- Field Office Manager review not required
- Field Office Manager review required

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

Field Office Manager's Signature:

Field Office Manager

Date: