

PMC-ND

(1.08.09.13)

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

**RECIPIENT:** Hualapai Indian Tribe**STATE:** AZ

PROJECT TITLE: Building Resiliency into the Grand Canyon West Micro-Grid project

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002168	DE-IE0000128	GFO-0000128-002	GO128

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.)
- B5.16 Solar photovoltaic systems** The installation, modification, operation, and removal of commercially available solar photovoltaic systems located on a building or other structure (such as rooftop, parking lot or facility, and mounted to signage, lighting, gates, or fences), or if located on land, generally comprising less than 10 acres within a previously disturbed or developed area. Covered actions would be in accordance with applicable requirements (such as local land use and zoning requirements) in the proposed project area and would incorporate appropriate control technologies and best management practices.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the Hualapai Indian Tribe for the construction and interconnection of a 993 kW solar array and 750kW/1500kWh lithium battery bank to the existing 20.8 KV micro-grid at Grand Canyon West on the Hualapai Reservation. Tasks within the approved Statement of Project Objectives that helped to inform the design and details of the PV and battery bank installations (Tasks 1-3) were previously reviewed by GFO-0000128-001 (A9, B3.1) on 06/24/20. This NEPA review is for all remaining tasks of the project.

Installation of the solar array and battery bank would consist of clearing, by grubbing and light grading, a 3.7 acre area for the solar panels, battery bank, and switchgear. The solar array would rest on concrete ballast pads to reduce ground excavation. The array would be connected to the existing microgrid via trenched conduit (buried at least 24 inches below grade) placed within the existing roadway right-of-way where land has been previously disturbed. The area would be surrounded by an eight-foot view-obscuring fence along the perimeter. Required permits would be issued by the Tribal Environmental Review Commission and Tribal Council and would be in place prior to beginning work on site.

The Hualapai Tribe requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) be performed on projects that may disturb the natural and human environment on the Hualapai Indian Reservation. An EA was prepared under Tribal Law to analyze the potential impacts of the project activities at five potential sites that met the Tribe's site selection criteria. The potential environmental consequences of each site were evaluated across 14 areas of concern as follows: land use, ground and air transportation, visual resources, glare/light/noise, topography/geology/soils, air quality and global climate change, biological resources (threatened and endangered species), cultural resources, infrastructure, hazardous materials/waste, socioeconomics, public safety, unavoidable adverse and short-term impacts, and irreversible commitment of resources.

To ensure that the proposed project would not result in an impact on aviation safety as a result of the potential for glare and ocular impacts, a glare and ocular impact analysis was completed in accordance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines and policy for the five potential installation locations. Glare and ocular impacts were assessed for various receptors consisting of flight paths and neighboring roadways. FAA stipulates no potential for glare or "low potential for after-image" along the final approach path for any existing or future landing thresholds (including any planned interim phases). The final approach path is defined as 2 miles from 50 feet above the landing threshold using a standard 3° glide path. At Grand Canyon West Airport the final approach path for incoming aircraft is Runway 17/35 (Grand Canyon West Airport does not have an Air Traffic Control Tower). The conclusion of the analysis was that none of the PV installations would cause glare to incoming aircraft on final approach at an intensity

above a "low potential for after-image." This level of glare meets the FAA standard for no objection to construction of the project. Based on this analysis, DOE does not anticipate any adverse impacts to incoming aircraft along the final approach path as a result of project activities.

A biological assessment was completed for each of the five sites. No threatened or endangered species or their habitats were encountered at any of the sites. Based on the biological assessment, DOE has determined there would be no effect to special status species as a result of project activities.

Class III cultural surveys were completed for each of the five sites and there were no historic properties found. Although no historic resources were found during the cultural surveys, the following will be required as part of best management practices for the project: If during project activities the recipient or their staff encounters any cultural material (i.e. historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The recipient must inform the Hualapai THPO and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.

The Proposed Action (i.e. installation of the solar array, battery bank, and associated infrastructure) was determined not to have a significant or adverse effect on any of the areas of concern analyzed within the Tribal EA and a finding of no significant impact was signed by the Tribal Chairman on June 9th, 2021. DOE has independently completed a review of potential issues relating to resources of concern that could be impacted by the proposed project at any of the five sites that may be selected and has determined that the project activities would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources. Based on the Tribal EA and DOE's review of potential impacts to resources of concern, remaining project activities are categorically excludable and fit within the classes of actions listed above.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

If during project activities the Recipient or their staff encounters any cultural material (i.e. historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The recipient must inform the Hualapai THPO and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.

Notes:

Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs
This NEPA Determination requires a tailored NEPA provision.

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**
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 7/9/2021

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: _____