

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



RECIPIENT: Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, Inc.

STATE: AK

PROJECT TITLE : Stebbins/St. Michael Renewable Energy Construction Project

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-IE-0001847	DE-IE0000098	GFO-0000098-002	GO98

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.) |
| B1.31
Installation or relocation of machinery and equipment | Installation or relocation and operation of machinery and equipment (including, but not limited to, laboratory equipment, electronic hardware, manufacturing machinery, maintenance equipment, and health and safety equipment), provided that uses of the installed or relocated items are consistent with the general missions of the receiving structure. Covered actions include modifications to an existing building, within or contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area, that are necessary for equipment installation and relocation. Such modifications would not appreciably increase the footprint or height of the existing building or have the potential to cause significant changes to the type and magnitude of environmental impacts. |
| B5.18
Wind turbines | The installation, modification, operation, and removal of a small number (generally not more than 2) of commercially available wind turbines, with a total height generally less than 200 feet (measured from the ground to the maximum height of blade rotation) that (1) are located within a previously disturbed or developed area; (2) are located more than 10 nautical miles (about 11.5 miles) from an airport or aviation navigation aid; (3) are located more than 1.5 nautical miles (about 1.7 miles) from National Weather Service or Federal Aviation Administration Doppler weather radar; (4) would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on bird or bat populations; and (5) are sited or designed such that the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts to persons (such as from shadow flicker and other visual effects, and noise). 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. Covered actions include only those related to wind turbines to be installed on land. |

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC) for the installation of a 900-kilowatt capacity direct-drive wind turbine with associated access road and wind turbine pad. The wind turbine would be installed and maintained on Stebbins Native Corporation lands and would connect to an existing powerline that runs between the communities of Stebbins and St. Michael, Alaska. Tasks within the approved Statement of Project Objectives that helped to inform the design and details of the project (Task 1 and Subtasks 2.1 – 2.4) were previously reviewed by GFO-0000098-001 (A9) on 04/15/19. This NEPA review is for all remaining tasks of the project.

Project Description

The proposed project involves the installation of a 900 kW wind turbine approximately 1.2 miles north of Stebbins, Alaska. The final height of the turbine would not exceed 345 feet above ground level (AGL) or 499 feet above mean sea level (MSL). Improvements to the existing Stebbins power plant and St. Michael pumphouse such as installation of a modular grid bridging energy system and secondary control boilers would also be completed for integration of the wind turbine into the existing microgrid and recovered heat system.

Associated project activities include contracting, mobilization and site work, turbine installation, testing and commissioning, and energy production verification. The project involves the normal potential hazards associated with construction activities. Applicable permits, regulations, safety codes, and other requirements would be followed

throughout the project period.

Resources of Concern

Due to the height of the proposed turbine (345 feet above ground level) and the proximity to the Stebbins Airport (approximately 6643 feet north of the airport reference point), AVEC submitted project information to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for an Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis. The FAA completed an aeronautical study of the wind turbine and determined that the structure would have no adverse effect on the safe and efficient utilization of the navigable airspace by aircraft or on the operation of air navigation facilities provided the structure is marked/lighted and the turbine is painted alternating bands of white and orange on the support structure (mast) in accordance with FAA Advisory Circular 70/7460-1M. FAA issued a Determination of No Hazard (2019-WTW-12150-OE) on December 9, 2021.

Project details for the turbine installation and associated work were submitted to the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for review. The area of potential effects (APE) was determined to be the direct project footprint due to the remote location of the proposed project. A review of the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey was completed and no known cultural, historic, prehistoric, or archaeological sites were identified within the APE. Based on the research conducted, the project contractor determined there would be no historic properties affected. The Alaska SHPO concurred with that determination on 10/14/16. The APE for the project has not changed therefore DOE is in agreement with the SHPO, and although no historic resources are known to occur at the project site, DOE will require the following 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 Alaska SHPO and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.

The project area for the turbine installation would require placing approximately 2,661 cubic yards of structural fill material into 0.53 acre of palustrine wetlands to develop the wind generation facility, including the turbine foundation and access road. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) reviewed potential impacts associated with the submitted project and authorized the recipient to undertake these activities with a Department of the Army (DA) permit, file number POA-2017-27, issued December 14, 2017. To remain in compliance with this permit, the recipient must follow all required general and special conditions of the permit.

As part of the ACOE review of the DA permit application from the recipient, the ACOE completed a biological assessment and formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The project would occur within the known or historic range of the spectacled eider, Steller's eider, and polar bear. The project is not within the designated critical habitat of any listed species but is adjacent to the critical habitat of the spectacled eider in Norton Sound. FWS completed a biological opinion based on information provided in the biological assessment and request for consultation letter submitted by ACOE. The FWS biological opinion concurred with the ACOE's may affect but not likely to adversely affect determination for Steller's eider and polar bear. After reviewing the current status of spectacled eider, the environmental baseline for the action area, the effects of the proposed wind turbine, and the cumulative effects, it was the FWS's biological opinion that the wind turbine, as proposed, is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the spectacled eider. FWS did anticipate that some spectacled eiders could be taken as a result of the proposed project and therefore provided an incidental take statement to the ACOE with associated reasonable and prudent measures, terms and conditions, and reporting requirements that ultimately became part of the required conditions of the DA permit (POA-2017-27) to the recipient.

DOE also conducted a review of potential issues relating to other resources of concern not discussed specifically above and found that no effects would be expected to result from the project.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

The Recipient must follow all requirements and conditions of approval found in the Determination of No Hazard (2019-WTW-12150-OE) issued by the Federal Aviation Administration on December 9, 2021 for the proposed structure.

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 Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be

completed prior to continuing work.

The Recipient must follow all general and special conditions of the Department of the Army permit, file number POA-2017-27, including all mandatory terms and conditions associated with incidental take of the associated Biological Opinion.

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:  Casey Strickland Date: 1/25/2022
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: _____ Date: _____
Field Office Manager