

PMC-ND

(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT: NREL

STATE: OR

PROJECT TITLE: NREL- Wind Forecast Improvement Project in Complex Terrain (WFIP2) - NREL Tracking No. 15-020

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
	DE-AC36-08GO28308	NREL-15-020	GO28308

Based on my review of the information concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (authorized under DOE Order 451.1A), 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.)

A11 Technical advice and assistance to organizations Technical advice and planning assistance to international, national, state, and local organizations.

B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring Site characterization and environmental monitoring (including, but not limited to, siting, construction, modification, operation, and dismantlement and removal or otherwise proper closure (such as of a well) of characterization and monitoring devices, and siting, construction, and associated operation of a small-scale laboratory building or renovation of a room in an existing building for sample analysis). Such activities would be designed in conformance with applicable requirements and use best management practices to limit the potential effects of any resultant ground disturbance. Covered activities include, but are not limited to, site characterization and environmental monitoring under CERCLA and RCRA. (This class of actions excludes activities in aquatic environments. See B3.16 of this appendix for such activities.) Specific activities include, but are not limited to: (a) Geological, geophysical (such as gravity, magnetic, electrical, seismic, radar, and temperature gradient), geochemical, and engineering surveys and mapping, and the establishment of survey marks. Seismic techniques would not include large-scale reflection or refraction testing; (b) Installation and operation of field instruments (such as stream-gauging stations or flow-measuring devices, telemetry systems, geochemical monitoring tools, and geophysical exploration tools); (c) Drilling of wells for sampling or monitoring of groundwater or the vadose (unsaturated) zone, well logging, and installation of water-level recording devices in wells; (d) Aquifer and underground reservoir response testing; (e) Installation and operation of ambient air monitoring equipment; (f) Sampling and characterization of water, soil, rock, or contaminants (such as drilling using truck- or mobile-scale equipment, and modification, use, and plugging of boreholes); (g) Sampling and characterization of water effluents, air emissions, or solid waste streams; (h) Installation and operation of meteorological towers and associated activities (such as assessment of potential wind energy resources); (i) Sampling of flora or fauna; and (j) Archeological, historic, and cultural resource identification in compliance with 36 CFR part 800 and 43 CFR part 7.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) proposes to deploy meteorological monitoring equipment at two sites in Oregon in support of the DOE EERE Wind Forecast Improvement Project in Complex Terrain (WFIP2) project (see FOA award DE-FOA-0000984 uploaded to the PMC database for more information). The purpose of the FWP2 project is to use meteorological data from sites around the Columbia River Gorge to improve wind/weather forecasting models.

NREL activities in support of the WFIP2 project would include the following:

- Provide and deploy two SODAR (SONic Detection And Ranging) units to two monitoring sites in Oregon. One SODAR unit will be placed at the Condon State Airport (Pauling Field) in Condon, Oregon and other at the private Decker Ranch Airport outside of Kent, Oregon.
- Collect metrological measurement data from the SODAR units for a period up to two years. The collected data will be shared with other WFIP2 partners, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- Conduct periodic maintenance on provided SODAR units. This task may be conducted by NREL personnel or by another WFIP2 team partner.
- Perform limited data analysis of SODAR metrological measurement data
- Remove the SODAR units at the completion of the monitoring phase of the WFIP2 project.
- Provide technical assistant and support to the various WFIP2 project teams established by the WFIP2 steering committee.

Both NREL monitoring sites for this project are flat, previously disturbed, managed grasslands inside the perimeter of active regional airports in rural areas. Figures showing the location of the NREL monitoring sites within each airport are uploaded to the PMC. At the Condon State Airport site, NREL equipment would be co-located with meteorological monitoring equipment from other WFIP2 partners. The NREL SODAR unit will be only piece of monitoring equipment at the Decker Ranch Airport site. This NEPA determination is specific to NREL activities in support of the WFIP2 project. A separate NEPA determination addresses the potential impacts of the overall WFIP2 project (including any potential cumulative impacts).

No ground disturbance, grading, or clearing would be required for the deployment and set-up of the two NREL SODAR units. This proposed project would not result in the use of hazardous materials, or generation of hazardous waste or air emissions. There are no wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands at two proposed monitoring sites that would be impacted by the proposed NREL action.

While there are no federally listed threatened and endangered species or designated critical habitat at the two proposed monitoring sites, there are two federally listed candidate species known to occur in Gilliam County (Condon site) and one candidate species in Sherman County (Decker Ranch site). The two species in Gilliam County are the Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) and the Washington ground squirrel (*Uroditellus washingtoni*), and the one species in Sherman County is also the Greater sage-grouse. DOE has determined that this proposed action would not affect the candidate two species given the lack of suitable habitat, the absence of ground clearing activities, the temporary nature of the proposed project, and the location of the proposed sites within the boundaries of two active airports. No impacts to migratory birds, bats, or other protected species are anticipated. Information from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Conversation (IPaC) system on the two proposed sites has been uploaded to the PMC database.

Due to nature of the proposed action and the lack of ground disturbing activity, the proposed action does not have the potential to impact archaeological resources if they were present at the two proposed monitoring sites. There are no historic properties listed or eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places within five miles of the Decker Ranch site. There is one property listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within five miles of the Condon site known as the Silas A. Rice Log House. This historic building was relocated in 1987 two miles from its original location is now located within the Gilliam County Fairgrounds approximately 3,000ft east of the proposed NREL Condon monitoring site. No direct or indirect (such as visual) impacts to this historic property would occur from this proposed project.

DOE has determined based upon the information above, there are no extraordinary circumstances presented by this proposed action. DOE has determined the proposed project is consistent with the actions contained in DOE categorical exclusions A9 "information gathering, analysis, and dissemination," A11 "technical advice and assistance to organizations," B3.1 "site characterization and environmental monitoring," and is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination for this award

Insert the following language in the award:

If you intend to make changes to the scope or objective of your project you are required to contact the Project Officer identified in Block 11 of the Notice of Financial Assistance Award before proceeding. You must receive notification of approval from the DOE Contracting Officer prior to commencing with work beyond that currently approved.

Note to Specialist :

NEPA review conducted by Rob Smith on 7/10/2015
National Renewable Energy Laboratory

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____
[Handwritten Signature]
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 7/13/2015

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER DETERMINATION

Field Office Manager review required

NCO REQUESTS THE FIELD OFFICE MANAGER REVIEW FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:

- Proposed action fits within a categorical exclusion but involves a high profile or controversial issue that warrants Field Office Manager's attention.
- Proposed action falls within an EA or EIS category and therefore requires Field Office Manager's review and determination.

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

Field Office Manager's Signature: _____
Field Office Manager

Date: _____

