

PMC-ND*

(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT:Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

STATE: AL

PROJECT TITLE
: ARRA Financing Program - Alabama SAVES

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
SEP-ALRD-2014	DE-EE0004122	GFO-0004122-005	

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:

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 state of Alabama for their financing program, Alabama SAVES. With these funds, PJ Kraft Solar Enterprise would install a 199kW solar photovoltaic (PV) system which would connect to the City of Athens Utility lines already on the property. Ultimately, the electricity generated by the solar installation would be sold to the Athens Utility company.

The proposed project activities include the installation of 28 modules of PV panels and 3 inverters on approximately 1.1 acres of private, vacant land. The proposed site includes an additional 2.1 acres which is managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) as a Right-of-Way for an existing transmission line. The PV modules would be supported by pipe columns which would be placed into an 18 inch wide, 4 foot deep augured hole and filled with concrete. The utility company would add an additional power pole with a transformer to connect to the PV system on the property. A below ground 4-inch conduit would connect the PV system to the 480 volt transformer on the new power pole. An interconnection agreement would be in place between Athens Utilities and the Tennessee Valley Authority with PJ Kraft Solar Enterprise. Construction would be completed by the end of December 2015. All required permits would be obtained.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program website (IPaC) identifies 17 endangered or threatened species that are known to, or are believed to occur near the project site in Limestone County, Alabama. However, due to the lack of habitat for federally listed species at the site, DOE has determined the proposed project would have no effect on threatened and endangered species in the area.

Additionally, there are 16 Migratory Birds that are listed as Birds of Conservation Concern in Limestone County. Four of these species are likely to use the proposed project site as wintering habitat: the loggerhead shrike, red-headed woodpecker, rusty blackbird, and short-eared owl. Due to the small footprint of the proposed project and the plentiful availability of similar foraging habitat in the surrounding area, impacts to individuals or populations of the species named above are not expected as result of construction of the proposed project. The proposed project would include the installation of one new power pole. Bald eagles are known to use power poles for perching and nesting. DOE recommends that the construction of the proposed power pole follow the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines (2006) to reduce impacts to bald eagles and other raptors. There is potential for migratory birds to strike PV panels such as those that would be installed as part of the proposed project. However, due to the small footprint of the proposed PV system, impacts to individuals or

populations of the species of conservation concern are not expected as result of the proposed project. If site preparation and/or construction is not complete between November and the end of 2015, and would instead occur between mid-April and mid-August, a ground nesting bird survey must be completed no more than 72 hours in advance of beginning work.

No prime farmland would be impacted. The project is located outside of the 100-year floodplain.

Based on a review of the project information and the above analysis, DOE has determined that the proposed project would not have a significant individual or cumulative impact to human health and/or environment. DOE has determined that this project is consistent with actions outlined in DOE categorical exclusions B5.16 "Solar photovoltaic systems" and is therefore 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.

Insert the following language in the award:

You are required to:

If site preparation and/or construction occurs between mid-April and mid-August, a ground nesting bird survey must be completed no more than 72 hours in advance of beginning work on site.

DOE recommends that the construction of the proposed power pole follow the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines (2006) to reduce impacts to bald eagles and other raptors.

Note to Specialist :

Weatherization & Intergovernmental Programs Office
This NEPA Determination requires a tailored NEPA provision.
NEPA review completed by Diana Heyder, 10/14/15

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:



Electronically Signed By: Kristin Kerwin

Date: 10/28/2015

NEPA Compliance Officer

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:

Date:

Field Office Manager