

PMC-ND

(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT:ND Department of Commerce

STATE: ND

PROJECT TITLE : Prairie Sun Community Solar Garden

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Funding Opportunity Announcement Number | Procurement Instrument Number | NEPA Control Number | CID Number |
| DE-SEP-0002015 | EE0006216 | GFO-0006216-001 | |

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 North Dakota Department of Commerce to construct a Community Solar Garden using a ground-mounted, solar photovoltaic (PV) array. The purpose of the project is to provide the Cass County Electric Coop (CCEC) members access to solar energy and to provide data to CCEC membership on the viability of solar energy in northern climates.

The proposed project activities would include the installation of a 300-foot by 150-foot, ground-mounted solar PV array consisting of 324 solar panels rated at 315 Watts each to generate a total of 102 kW of electricity, and a utility interconnect to place the generated electricity back on an existing distribution system. The racking for the panels would use 63 helical anchors measuring five inches in diameter and buried five feet deep. The City of Fargo has leased approximately one acre of a thirteen-acre lot to CCEC for installation of the solar PV array. The site is zoned for public or institutional use. It was historically agricultural land and is currently an empty dirt field. There is a small highway and large agricultural fields to the west, commercial buildings to the north, an above-ground water storage facility to the east, and residential housing to the south. The interconnection to the grid would involve 780 feet of trenching for underground cables that would be tied into existing electrical at a metering box on the southeast corner of the site. All required building and electrical permits would be obtained.

The North Dakota State Historic Preservation Officer was consulted and concurred with a "No Historic Properties Affected" determination. The identified site has been previously disturbed; therefore, no impacts to cultural resources are expected.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program website (IPaC) identifies three endangered or threatened species (Whooping crane, Gray wolf, Northern Long-eared bat) that are known to, or are believed to occur near the project site. However, due to the lack of suitable habitat for those federally listed species at the site, DOE has determined the proposed project would have no effect on threatened and endangered species that may be present in the area. 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 array, impacts to individuals or populations are not expected as a result of the proposed project.

The project would occur outside of the 100 year floodplain so impacts to the floodplain as a result of the proposed project are not expected.

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 the Recipient intends to make changes to the scope or objective of this project, the Recipient is required to contact the Project Officer, identified in Block 15 of the Assistance Agreement before proceeding. The Recipient must receive notification of approval from the DOE Contracting Officer prior to commencing with work beyond that currently approved. If the Recipient moves forward with activities that are not authorized for Federal funding by the DOE Contracting Officer in advance of a final NEPA decision, the Recipient is doing so at risk of not receiving Federal funding and such costs may not be recognized as allowable cost share.

Note to Specialist :

Weatherization and Intergovernmental Program
This NEPA determination does not require a tailored NEPA provision.
Review completed by Logan Sholar on 3/14/2016

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____



Electronically Signed By: Kristin Kerwin

Date: 3/14/2016

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