

PMC-ND  
(1.08.09.13)

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



**RECIPIENT:**Huslia Tribal Council

**STATE:** AK

**PROJECT TITLE :** Huslia Tribal Council Biomass Project

<b>Funding Opportunity Announcement Number</b>	<b>Procurement Instrument Number</b>	<b>NEPA Control Number</b>	<b>CID Number</b>
DE-FOA-0001660	DE-IE0000091	GFO-0000091-001	

**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:

- 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.
- B5.20 Biomass power plants** The installation, modification, operation, and removal of small-scale biomass power plants (generally less than 10 megawatts), using commercially available technology (1) intended primarily to support operations in single facilities (such as a school and community center) or contiguous facilities (such as an office complex); (2) that would not affect the air quality attainment status of the area and would not have the potential to cause a significant increase in the quantity or rate of air emissions and would not have the potential to cause significant impacts to water resources; and (3) would be located 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 Huslia Tribal Council (HTC) for the design, construction, and operation of a wood-fired district heating system in Huslia, Alaska that would serve the community Clinic, Washeteria, and the K-12 school. The system would include three biomass boilers with a total maximum output of 600,000 Btu/hour located in a new prefabricated steel building on a concrete slab adjacent to the Clinic and Washeteria, approximately 700 linear feet of insulated heat distribution piping, and a fenced wood yard with covered fuelwood storage.

**Biomass System and Construction**

A small, approximately 16 foot tall 30x30 foot, steel building with concrete, monolithic slab foundation would be built to house the biomass boilers. The location of the new building, wood yard, and fuelwood storage area would be within a previously disturbed area that previously served as an airport runway taxi area. Minimal disturbance or excavation would be needed for the biomass building construction. The biomass system's boiler units would burn cord wood that is 20% or dryer moisture content. These boiler units are Environmental Protection Agency approved and meet all New Source Performance Standards for 2020 and beyond. By supplanting the use of fossil fuels for heating in the three buildings that would be served by the biomass system, these units would reduce the emission of SOx, NOx, and other harmful gases associated with the burning of fossil fuels. Heat distribution piping would be buried at a depth of 6 feet that would run within previously disturbed areas from the new biomass building to the three buildings being served by the new system. Changes expected to each of the buildings served by the system would be a small penetration into the side of the buildings with an insulated elbow where the heat distribution piping would enter the facility and the installation of a heat exchanger in the mechanical room of each building. Some modifications to existing buildings for

tie-in of the new system to the existing oil-fired system would be required as well as mechanical and electrical system upgrades for heat exchangers, pumps, meters, and controls. No hazards are expected beyond general construction risks. These risks would be mitigated through safe site conditions, appropriate training, and using certified individuals to handle all construction material. Construction debris would be generated and would be disposed of in accordance with appropriate disposal policies at the local landfill. The Huslia landfill is permitted for the disposal of construction and demolition wastes with the State of Alaska (Permit No. SW3A087-22). All lands where the above activities would occur is above flood stage and not in wetlands.

#### Harvesting

Installation of the biomass system would require harvesting of timber resources as feedstock for the system. The expectation is for woodcutters to harvest the resources that would then be purchased by HTC for use in the biomass system. While the harvesting of timber is not directly funded by the DOE project, this activity would not occur without the DOE project and is therefore considered a connected action whose potential impacts will be reviewed as part of this project. Approximately 250 – 500 tons per year of timber resources would be needed to run the proposed system. An Assessment of Woody Biomass Energy Resources was completed for the Huslia area by the Tanana Chiefs Conference to determine the resources available for a biomass system. The resource assessment considered an area within a 25 mile radius of the village and found that there was approximately 25,000 tons per year of timber available as Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) on either Native Corporation or Native allotment lands. AAC is deemed to be the maximum level of annual harvest that is possible in perpetuity without diminishment of the level of harvest or the amount and quality of the resource. This indicates that the tonnage of timber resources needed to fuel the proposed system is well within the sustainable yield of Native Corporation and Native allotment lands in the Huslia area.

#### Resources of Concern

Huslia is located on the north bank of the Koyukuk River in western Interior Alaska within the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge in an area of extensive wetlands. Harvesting of timber resources would occur exclusively on Native Corporation or Native allotment lands. To help ensure that harvesting would not occur from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) managed lands of the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge, HTC would provide publically available maps posted in the Tribal office and at the biomass building showing where tribal members would be allowed to cut wood from and what areas would be off limits to harvesting. The USFWS lists no threatened or endangered species and 9 migratory bird species (including bald eagle) as possibly occurring within the resource harvesting area. To ensure that there would be no impacts to wetlands or migratory birds during the breeding season, timber resources would be collected during the winter months and transported by snow-machine. As bald eagles are year-round residents of the area, HTC would provide outreach and public notices to residents to help identify what bald eagle nests look like to ensure that trees that contain eagle nests are not targeted for timber harvesting. With the implementation of the above requirements, DOE does not anticipate any impacts to the wildlife refuge, wetlands, migratory birds, or bald eagles from the proposed project activities. There were no other resources of concern found during review of the proposed project activities or timber harvesting activities.

#### Determination

Based on the review of the proposal, DOE has determined the proposal fits within the class of action(s) and the integral elements of Appendix B to Subpart D of 10 CFR 1021 outlined in the DOE categorical exclusion(s) selected above. DOE has also determined that: (1) there are no extraordinary circumstances (as defined by 10 CFR 1021.410 (2)) related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; (2) the proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and (3) the proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts, related to other proposals with cumulatively significant actions, or an improper interim action. This proposal 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 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.

Insert the following language in the award:

You are required to:

The recipient must provide publically available maps posted in the Tribal office and biomass building showing where tribal members are allowed to cut wood from (Native Corporation lands and Native allotments) and what areas are off limits to harvesting (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands of the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge).

The recipient will ensure that timber resources for the biomass system will be collected during the winter months only.

The recipient must provide outreach and public notices to residents to help identify what bald eagle nests look like to ensure that trees that contain eagle nests are not targeted for timber harvesting.

Note to Specialist :

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

**SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.**

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



Casey Strickland

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 8/23/2017

**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: \_\_\_\_\_