

PMC-ND

(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT: NREL

STATE: NY

**PROJECT
TITLE:**

Cornell SETO Co-Locate Ag & Solar – Cypress Creek; NEPA Tracking No. 19-037

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-LC-000L044	DE-AC36-08GO28308	NREL-19-037	GO28308

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.)

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's (DOE) Solar Energy Technology Office (SETO) is proposing to provide funding to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to partner with Cornell University and Cypress Creek Renewables for the "InSPIRE 2.0 Task 2, "Conduct Co-Located Field Research at Test Plots". The purpose of the proposed project is to evaluate the impact of different groundcover vegetation on predator habitat and populations.

Cypress Creek Renewables has agreements to collect data for the proposed project from five private, active farms that are in the process of co-locating solar and agriculture. The five farms are: Aegis Solar in Canandaigua, NY;

Aviator War Solar in Queensbury, NY; Davis Solar in Goshen, NY; Frog Hollow Solar in Ellenville, NY; and Howland Solar in Sandy Creek, NY. The solar arrays being installed are adjacent to agricultural fields, and the land below the solar arrays would either be allowed to recover naturally or be revegetated by the solar installer. Approximately 1 acre at each location would be studied. Development of these sites into dual use agricultural and solar farms and subsequent revegetation efforts are independent of this proposed project.

NREL and Cornell would collect ecological observation data of the study plots, and would utilize existing monitoring equipment to collect empirical data; the project would not involve installing additional monitoring equipment or invertebrate collection. NREL would manage the overall project and provide technical support for the study design. Cornell would conduct field observations at the study plots over an approximately 6 month period, and would perform analytical desktop studies of the data. If needed, Cornell would grow predatory habitat vegetation in a greenhouse to collect supplemental data for comparison to field data. Indoor research activities would occur at the Agricultural Experiment Station located in Ithaca, NY, which includes a greenhouse that is equipped to perform such work.

The proposed project would not involve modification or construction of facilities, nor ground disturbance. The use, mission and operation of the sites would not be changed to support the proposed project. The proposed action would not affect cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands.

Workers could be exposed to physical hazards during the course of the proposed project. Existing corporate health and safety policies and procedures would be followed.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

NREL
Nicole Serio, 6/6/2019

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: _____

 Electronically
Signed By: **Kristin Kerwin**

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 6/10/2019

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: _____

Field Office Manager

Date: _____