

PMC-ND
(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT: [NREL](#)

STATE: CO

PROJECT TITLE: [NREL-20-025-CCHRC RTF Lease, Research, and Operations – Fairbanks, AK](#)

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
	DE-AC36-08GO28308	NREL-20-025	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:

A11 Technical advice and assistance to organizations	Technical advice and planning assistance to international, national, state, and local organizations.
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.)
B1.24 Property transfers	Transfer, lease, disposition, or acquisition of interests in personal property (including, but not limited to, equipment and materials) or real property (including, but not limited to, permanent structures and land), provided that under reasonably foreseeable uses (1) there would be no potential for release of substances at a level, or in a form, that could pose a threat to public health or the environment and (2) the covered actions would not have the potential to cause a significant change in impacts from before the transfer, lease, disposition, or acquisition of interests.
B3.6 Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects	Siting, construction, modification, operation, and decommissioning of facilities for smallscale research and development projects; conventional laboratory operations (such as preparation of chemical standards and sample analysis); and small-scale pilot projects (generally less than 2 years) frequently conducted to verify a concept before demonstration actions, provided that construction or modification would be within or contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area (where active utilities and currently used roads are readily accessible). Not included in this category are demonstration actions, meaning actions that are undertaken at a scale to show whether a technology would be viable on a larger scale and suitable for commercial deployment.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) proposes to lease and conduct research in the Cold Climate Housing Research Center's (CCHRC) Research and Testing Facility (RTF) located at 955 Draanjik Drive in Fairbanks, Alaska. The lease would begin in 2020 and would be for a 3 year period with the potential for 2, 1-year lease extensions. The purpose of the lease is to enable NREL to conduct research in energy-efficient building techniques for cold climates, including testing building techniques, designing and overseeing construction of prototype housing, conducting policy research, and doing building energy rating/modeling.

Facility Information

CCHRC is a non-profit organization that works to develop, use, and test energy-efficient, durable, healthy, and cost-effective building technologies for people living in circumpolar regions around the globe. CCHRC owns the RTF, which is located on approximately 5 acres of land leased by CCHRC from the University of Alaska – Fairbanks, and would lease the RTF to DOE/NREL. The RTF is a 23,720 square foot facility consisting of office and laboratory/testing space. In addition to the RTF, NREL would occupy some of the adjacent surface parking lot. The RTF would be leased as-is, and no construction or modifications would be required.

Operations and Maintenance

NREL would be a tenant in the RTF; as such, CCHRC would be responsible for building operations and maintenance, including building heating, water systems and storage, sewage treatment system, janitorial services, grounds-keeping, snow removal, repairs, etc.

Research

NREL would perform various research activities at the RTF, including:

- Building science research, which would include testing the performance of various wall designs and insulation products and assessing innovative ventilation strategies.
- Product development, which would include household wastewater and sanitation systems, heating and ventilation, foundations, wall assemblies, and other technologies related to rural and/or cold climate building technology.
- Construction, which would involve constructing prototype housing onsite for assembly offsite.
- Policy research, such as feasibility studies and building code reviews.
- Consulting services, such as building energy modeling, design, and data analysis.
- Data analysis and distribution, such as development of technical reports, journal articles, building manuals, videos, and educational materials for contractors and homeowners.

NREL would also conduct general office work such as meetings, trainings, tours, and program administration.

Research activities would occur onsite within the RTF; however, various pieces of equipment and sections of building wall prototypes are periodically staged, fabricated, and assembled in the parking lot adjacent to the RTF.

In addition to the onsite work, NREL would conduct offsite activities. These activities are not in the scope of this review; they will be analyzed in separate NEPA reviews once project specifics, such as location and types of activities, are known.

Lease Conclusion

At the conclusion of the lease, all DOE property would be removed from the facility. Conclusion of the lease may also require an evaluation of the RTF by a mutually agreed upon environmental consultant to identify any contamination resulting from hazardous materials use. The RTF would then be returned to CCHRC for continued operation. Specific activities needed to terminate the lease will be evaluated in a separate NEPA review once they are known.

Analysis

NREL's work at the RTF would be consistent with the current use of the facility; as such, increases in water use, air emissions, energy demands, and waste generation (both non-hazardous and hazardous) are anticipated to be minimal. As such, no direct or indirect impacts resulting from the lease or onsite research operations would be anticipated.

Research operations would generate non-hazardous wastes such as building materials, cardboard, wood, metals, mixed recyclables, and trash. Waste products would be separated for recycling and trash disposal and managed appropriately.

Hazardous materials, such as those found in construction adhesives, caulk, insulating foam sealant, lubricants, paints, paint thinner, polypropylene glycol, and refrigerant may be used in the performance of research operations. All such materials would be managed, stored, used, and disposed of in accordance with regulatory requirements. NREL would annually disclose to CCHRC, at their request, any incidents of hazardous materials spills and the types and quantities of hazardous materials stored or used (except consumer quantities of electronic equipment, including computers, cellphones, and PV panels) containing non-spillable batteries or heavy metals. NREL would promptly respond to and correct any incidents that occur that may lead to environmental contamination.

Workers could potentially be exposed to physical hazards during the course of research activities. Physical hazards would include heavy lifting, operation of vehicles and equipment, use of construction products, small-scale fabrication of housing component prototypes, work in the machine shop, and use of hand tools. Existing NREL health and safety policies and procedures would be followed, including employee training, proper protective equipment, engineering controls, and monitoring. All work would be conducted in accordance with NREL's written procedures or authorized via a Safe Work Permit.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

This review is specific to entering into the lease and performance of onsite research activities only; any work or research that is proposed that would involve onsite construction, offsite work, or terminating the lease would be reviewed in separate NEPA reviews when they are proposed.

Notes:

NREL
Nicole Serio, 5/14/2020

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: Lisa Jorgensen Date: 5/15/2020
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: _____ Date: _____
Field Office Manager