

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



RECIPIENT: Coonamessett Farm Foundation, Inc.

STATE: MA

PROJECT TITLE : Surveying commercial fish species and habitat in wind farm areas using a suite of non-lethal survey methods

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002237	DE-EE0009799	GFO-0009799-001	

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.

B3.6 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 (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the Coonamessett Farm Foundation, Inc. (CFF) to evaluate the impacts of offshore wind development on commercial fish species and benthic habitats and communities using non-lethal survey methods. During the project, three different survey methods would be developed and field tested: towed off-bottom vehicle survey, stationary camera survey, and video trawl survey. The project would be completed over three Budget Periods (BPs) with a Go/No-Go decision point between each BP.

BP1 would include planning and preliminary research efforts during which a study plan and final study locations would be finalized, BP2 would include baseline data collection, and BP3 would include data collection and analysis post-construction in wind farm lease area. Field testing would be performed in offshore wind lease areas in Southern New England waters. During BP1, consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) would be initiated prior to undertaking field activities. Because testing activities would depend on successfully obtaining all required permits/authorizations and finalizing the study plan, only desktop activities are being reviewed as part of this determination (BP1 Tasks 1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5, 6, and 7). The remaining activities under BP1 Tasks 2, 3, and 4, BP3, and BP4 are restricted until consultation with NMFS and further NEPA review has been completed. Because of expected long lead-time on orders of supplies needed to fabricate survey equipment, tasks reviewed under this NEPA determination also include the purchase of these supplies prior to the review of activities in which equipment would be used.

BP1 activities reviewed under this NEPA determination are described below:

Task 1 – Meetings and discussions with key project partners. This would include establishing formal relationships with stakeholder groups, completing survey system designs, and completing the peer reviewed study design.

Task 2.1, 3.1, and 4.1 - Purchase of necessary equipment for surveys. Under these subtasks, cameras may be built and in-lab technology validation may occur, which would include testing in the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth School of Marine Science and Technology (SMAST) test tank. Aside from test tank activities, no additional in-water work would occur.

Task 5 – Upgrade the operational capacity of Kitware’s Video and Image Analytics for Marine Environments (VIAME) platform (an open-source platform for analysis of underwater imagery) and graphical user interface to handle the increase in image processing required for the project.

Task 6 – Preliminary automated detector model selection, training, and evaluation using imagery previously collected during HabCam surveys funded and conducted under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Scallop Research Set-Aside (RSA). A range of models for detector accuracy and precision would be evaluated.

Task 7 – Initiate NEPA review and finalize the SOPO and budget for BP2.

Locations of activities reviewed in this NEPA determination are as follows:

- Coonamessett Farm Foundation, East Falmouth, MA – Research facilities and offices – Responsible for project oversight and management including project-related meetings, administrative tasks, video annotations, and data analysis.

- Kitware, Clifton Park, NY – Kitware offices and computing facilities – Platform and user interface for Kitware’s open-source VIAME computer vision framework would be upgraded. Preliminary automated detector model selection, training, and evaluation would be conducted using imagery collected during HabCam v3 surveys funded by the Scallop RSA.

- University of Massachusetts Dartmouth SMAST, New Bedford, MA - Design video trawl and conduct test tank activities.

No changes in the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities would be required as part of this project and no additional permits would be required in order to conduct any of the work activities.

Project activities would involve desktop work. All waste products would be disposed of by licensed waste management service providers. CFF and its project partners would observe all applicable Federal, state, and local health, safety, and environmental regulations.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a conditional NEPA determination.

The NEPA Determination applies to the following Topic Areas, Budget Periods, and/or tasks:

Budget Period 1:

Task 1
Task 2.1
Task 3.1
Task 4.1
Task 5
Task 6
Task 7

The NEPA Determination does not apply to the following Topic Area, Budget Periods, and/or tasks:

BP1: Remaining Task 2, 3, and 4 activities
BP2: Tasks 8 – 14
BP3: Tasks 15 – 18

Notes:

Wind Energy Technologies Office
Review completed by Shaina Aguilar on 6/30/22.

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.

A portion of the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review. The NEPA Provision identifies Topic Areas, Budget Periods, tasks, and/or subtasks that are subject to additional NEPA review.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____


NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 7/1/2022

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: _____