

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



RECIPIENT: Washington State University

STATE: WA

PROJECT TITLE : Improving the Robustness and Longevity of Methanothermobacter wolfeii strain BSEL when Converting Biogas with Hydrogen to Renewable Natural Gas

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002636	DE-EE0010302	GFO-0010302-001	GO10302

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.)

**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 Washington State University (WSU) to develop mutant strains from a single microorganism (archaea) strain which could be capable of acting as catalysts in the transformation of biogas into natural gas. Mutant strains would be developed through an iterative process of manipulating growth conditions and selecting optimal strains (i.e. directed evolution).

Mutant strains would be selected according to increased productivity and longevity. Strains would be characterized and analyzed, which would include genetic sequencing. All laboratory activities would occur at WSU and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) facilities in Richland, WA. Four bioreactors would be fabricated for laboratory cultivation and a 100 L bioreactor would be built at WSU's Einstein Pilot Plant (Richland, WA) for larger scale cultivation.

All project activities would be completed in existing, purpose-built facilities using conventional technologies and techniques. While award activities would involve the fabrication of bioreactors, there would be no modifications to or change in use of existing facilities. No new permits or licenses would be needed to perform award activities.

Award activities would involve typical hazards associated with biological laboratories, including the handling and storage of pressurized gas and chemical reagents. All such handling and storage would occur within controlled laboratory settings and would follow existing policies and procedures for handling and disposal of these materials. While genetic sequencing technologies would be used, genetic engineering activities would not be completed as part of this award. Existing university and corporate health, safety, and environmental policies and procedures would be followed at all facilities, including personnel training, proper personal protective equipment (PPE), engineering controls, monitoring, and internal assessments.

DOE has considered potential impacts on resources, including those of an ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic nature. DOE does not anticipate adverse impacts on these resources.

Any work proposed to be conducted at a federal facility may be subject to additional NEPA review by the cognizant federal official and must meet the applicable health and safety requirements of the facility.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

Bioenergy Technology Office (BETO)
NEPA review completed by Andrew McClellan, 11/29/2022

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: Andrew Montano
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 12/16/2022

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: _____