

PMC-ND
(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT: Pala Band of Mission Indians

STATE: CA

PROJECT TITLE: Pala Community Microgrids Project

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002317	DE-IE0000147	GFO-0000147-001	GO147

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.)
- B5.16 Solar photovoltaic systems** The installation, modification, operation, and removal of commercially available solar photovoltaic systems located on a building or other structure (such as rooftop, parking lot or facility, and mounted to signage, lighting, gates, or fences), or if located on land, generally comprising less than 10 acres 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 Pala Band of Mission Indians for the Pala Community Microgrids Project on the Pala Reservation in northern San Diego County, California. The project would provide integrated renewable energy systems for autonomous operation to power multiple essential tribal facilities during emergency situations. The project would install approximately 1073 kW of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems at eight tribal facilities and a 10 kW/26 kWh battery energy storage system (BESS) at one of the facilities. The new PV systems would be integrated into existing storage systems already installed.

Tribal facilities where PV would be installed include:

- Tribal Admin Building – solar carports – 406.1 kW
- Radio Station – solar carports – 37.8 kW
- Pala Fitness Center – roof-mounted – 71.6 kW
- Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) – ground-mounted – 479.9 kW
- Tribal Services Building – solar carports and new BESS – 13 kW
- Utilities Building – solar carports – 28.1 kW
- Tribal Law Enforcement Building– solar carports – 16.2 kW
- Youth Center – roof-mounted – 20.5 kW

Proposed project activities would include project management; procurement and contracting; engineering design; permitting; construction, installation, and integration; commissioning and interconnection; construction closeout; and operations and maintenance training. Microgrid system performance would be documented, and reports would be provided to DOE for one year after commissioning.

The proposed project would not include any physical modification of existing facilities or construction of new facilities or any change in the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities. Installation of solar carports would require ground disturbance for concrete footings for the carport structures and trenching for conduit to connect system components. Ground disturbing activities would occur entirely within areas that are already developed and/or disturbed. Solar carports would be installed within existing parking lots and the WWTP ground-mount PV system would be installed within an area that has been graded and cleared. None of the roof-mounted PV arrays would be installed on facilities over 50 years old and would not require tree removal due to shading effects. All construction supplies, equipment, and machines would be temporarily staged during the installation on existing paved or dirt parking areas. Existing roads would be used to access the project sites.

Project activities would pose potential general construction related health and safety hazards to project workers during installation. They would also pose electrical related health and safety hazards to project workers during the installation of the microgrid controls system and electrical components of all the connected systems. Hazards associated with the performance of project work would be mitigated through compliance with all applicable Federal and Tribal occupational health and safety laws. Compliance plans would be in place prior to proceeding with the project work. No new permits or modifications to existing permits, licenses, or authorizations would be required for project activities.

A number of threatened or endangered species are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as possibly occurring within the vicinity of the project, including mammal, bird, amphibian, and flowering plant species. However, considering all project activities would occur on already disturbed and developed lands that are not suitable habitat for these species, DOE has determined that this project will have no effect on any special status species of concern.

No cultural resources were found during the cultural survey completed at the location of the ground-mounted system. There are no known historical, archaeological, or cultural resources within the proposed project areas. Although no historic resources are known to occur within or near the project locations, the following will be required as part of best management practices for the project: If during project activities the recipient or their staff encounters any cultural material (i.e., historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The recipient must inform the Pala Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.

Some of the soils around the ground-mounted system location at the WWTP are considered prime farmland if irrigated. However, this area is not irrigated and has been previously disturbed for human use, therefore there would be no conversion of protected farmlands to non-agricultural use as a result of the DOE funded project.

DOE also conducted a review of potential issues relating to other resources of concern and found that no effects would be expected to result from the proposed project activities.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

If during project activities the Recipient or their staff encounters any cultural material (i.e., historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The Recipient must inform the Pala Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.

Notes:

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

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: _____



Casey Strickland

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 8/16/2021

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: _____