

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



RECIPIENT: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

STATE: NY

PROJECT TITLE : National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0001767	DE-EE0008390	GFO-0008390-051	GO8390

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:

**B3.16
Research
activities in
aquatic
environments**

Small-scale, temporary surveying, site characterization, and research activities in aquatic environments, limited to: (a) Acquisition of rights-of-way, easements, and temporary use permits; (b) Installation, operation, and removal of passive scientific measurement devices, including, but not limited to, antennae, tide gauges, flow testing equipment for existing wells, weighted hydrophones, salinity measurement devices, and water quality measurement devices; (c) Natural resource inventories, data and sample collection, environmental monitoring, and basic and applied research, excluding (1) large-scale vibratory coring techniques and (2) seismic activities other than passive techniques; and (d) Surveying and mapping. These activities would be conducted in accordance with, where applicable, an approved spill prevention, control, and response plan and would incorporate appropriate control technologies and best management practices. None of the activities listed above would occur within the boundary of an established marine sanctuary or wildlife refuge, a governmentally proposed marine sanctuary or wildlife refuge, or a governmentally recognized area of high biological sensitivity, unless authorized by the agency responsible for such refuge, sanctuary, or area (or after consultation with the responsible agency, if no authorization is required). If the proposed activities would occur outside such refuge, sanctuary, or area and if the activities would have the potential to cause impacts within such refuge, sanctuary, or area, then the responsible agency shall be consulted in order to determine whether authorization is required and whether such activities would have the potential to cause significant impacts on such refuge, sanctuary, or area. Areas of high biological sensitivity include, but are not limited to, areas of known ecological importance, whale and marine mammal mating and calving/pupping areas, and fish and invertebrate spawning and nursery areas recognized as being limited or unique and vulnerable to perturbation; these areas can occur in bays, estuaries, near shore, and far offshore, and may vary seasonally. No permanent facilities or devices would be constructed or installed. Covered actions do not include drilling of resource exploration or extraction wells.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to form a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) entity, the "National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium" which would be led by NYSERDA, along with key industry stakeholders and research institutions. The Consortium would finance research initiatives seeking to address the technical barriers faced by offshore wind developers, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and supply chain partners, with the goal of reducing the Levelized Cost of Electricity (LCOE) for U.S. offshore wind plants and increasing opportunities for U.S. manufacturing.

The proposed project is divided into four (4) Budget Periods (BPs). DOE previously completed NEPA reviews for BP1, 2, 3, and 4 (GFO-0008390-001 CX A1, A9, and A13, 10/09/2018; GFO-0008390-002 CX A1, A9, and A13, 01/13/2020; GFO-0008390-019 CX A1, A9, and A13, 12/02/2020; GFO-0008390-042 CX A1, A9, A11, and A13, 12/28/2021). In addition, DOE completed NEPA reviews for 16 subawards made by the consortium under Task 19 and 22 subawards made by the consortium under Task 27, as well as awards under an Annual Operating Plan to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (various CX determinations and dates). This NEPA review is for a subaward proposed to be made under Task 35 to Sailldrone Inc.

Task 35 in BP4 involves reviewing applications received in response to the solicitation released in Task 34, and then choosing specific projects which would receive a sub award. While NYSERDA is allowed under the previous NEPA determination to proceed with choosing projects under Task 35, all projects chosen for sub award are subject to additional NEPA analysis prior to NYSERDA contracting for the sub award and prior to any work being completed on the sub award.

Under the proposed sub award, Saildrone would utilize uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs), advanced artificial intelligence, and machine learning technologies, developed by Saildrone and RPS, to create a near real-time monitoring network to detect, classify, and localize marine mammals from shore. The goal of the project would be to enable relevant data to be transmitted to monitoring operators to request mitigation actions when marine mammals are present during offshore wind construction.

During the project, deployments would happen on four separate occasions, ranging in duration from five to thirty days, over the course of ten months. During deployments, two Saildrone USVs would be placed in Cape Cod Bay, during which they would record imagery from a high-definition camera array and acoustic data from a broadband hydrophone. Saildrones USVs are 23 feet to 33 feet long and are wind or solar powered, only moving at 1-2 knots with an absolute maximum of 8 knots. During acoustic monitoring, sound is only recorded, not emitted. DOE has reviewed potential stressors to listed species or critical habitats from proposed project activities and determined that there would be no effect to Endangered Species Act listed species.

USV production would occur at the Saildrone headquarters and production facility in Alameda, CA. Acoustic integration into the USV platform and testing of the platform prior to the demonstration would take place at Saildrone's Acoustic Center of Excellence in Fall River, MA. RPS Group would process data at their facility in Boston, MA.

Project activities would involve hoisting and rigging of Saildrones, at-sea work, exposure to minor hazmat materials, and the handling of lithium batteries. Existing corporate health and safety policies, mitigation plans, and training would be followed. Saildrone 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
Budget Period 2
Budget Period 3
Budget Period 4
Sub Award to Saildrone Inc.

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

All sub awards made under Task 35 (in Budget Period 4) will be subject to additional NEPA review prior to any work being completed on those projects.

Notes:

Wind Energy Technologies Office
Review complete by Shaina Aguilar 3/8/23

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:  **Electronically Signed By: Casey Strickland** _____ Date: 3/10/2023
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