

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



RECIPIENT: EPRI

STATE: CA

PROJECT TITLE : Establishing Baseline Data on Bat Activity in The Offshore Environment: Developing Tools and Models to Quantify Risk of Offshore Wind Energy Development

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002237	DE-EE0010289	GFO-0010289-001	GO10289

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.)

B3.16 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 Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) to deploy acoustic bat monitoring and passive radio telemetry equipment to define the envelope in which bat activity occurs along the coast of California and Oregon. Findings would help to identify the risk that offshore wind development may pose to bats along the West Coast of the United States as well as advance the development of monitoring technologies. The project would be completed over two Budget Periods (BPs) with a Go/No-Go decision point between each BP. Specific sites and methodologies are not yet defined, these would be developed in BP1. Accordingly, this NEPA Determination applies only to BP1. BP2 would be reviewed when sufficient information is available to provide for a meaningful review.

BP1 would primarily focus on preparation, planning, and development of the study plan. Partners and field sites (on land, buoys, and/or ships) for acoustic detectors would be secured and additional tracking tower locations would be confirmed. In addition, one field test would be conducted in order to validate data collection methods.

The field test would involve the collection of acoustic data at the docks in Alameda County, CA, then the deployment of an ultrasonic acoustic sensor on an autonomous vehicle (Saildrone) designed to collect ocean data. The Saildrone would be launched from Alameda, CA to sail around the Southeast Farallon Island State Marine Reserve outside of San Francisco, CA. It would collect bat acoustic data for up to 30 days in September/October of 2023 to evaluate

whether this method could be used in BP2. This Saildrone has an underwater profile of 7 to 11 feet and 33 to 44 feet in length. Saildrones are wind or solar powered, moving slowly with a maximum speed of 6-7 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. If permits are necessary for accessing the Southeast Farallon Island State Marine Reserve, they would be obtained prior to conducting field work activities.

Project participants include EPRI (Palo Alto, CA), Bat Conservation International (Austin, TX), US Geological Survey (Dixon Field Station, CA), Stantec (Topsham, ME), and Woods Hole Group (Bourne, MA and Richmond, TX). All would assist in team coordination, engagement with site partners, drafting of study plans, and project management. In addition, Woods Hole would assist in data analysis, modeling, and documentation. Saildrone in Alameda, CA would install and test detectors on Saildrones.

Project activities would involve installing detectors on Saildrones and would include risks of slipping and falling. Any associated risks would be mitigated through adherence to established health and safety policies and procedures. All waste products would be disposed of by licensed waste management service providers. EPRI and its project partners would observe all applicable federal, state, and local health, safety, and environmental regulations.

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 conditional NEPA determination.

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

Budget Period 1 - all tasks

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

Budget Period 2 - all tasks

Notes:

Wind Energy Technologies Office
Review completed by Shaina Aguilar on 3/30/23.

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: _____



Signed By: Casey Strickland

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: _____

4/5/2023

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: _____