

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



RECIPIENT: City of Seward, Alaska

STATE: AK

PROJECT TITLE: Seward Heat Loop - Phase 1 Activities

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002632	DE-EE0010668	GFO-0010668-001	

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.)

B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

Site characterization and environmental monitoring (including, but not limited to, siting, construction, modification, operation, and dismantlement and removal or otherwise proper closure (such as of a well) of characterization and monitoring devices, and siting, construction, and associated operation of a small-scale laboratory building or renovation of a room in an existing building for sample analysis). Such activities would be designed in conformance with applicable requirements and use best management practices to limit the potential effects of any resultant ground disturbance. Covered activities include, but are not limited to, site characterization and environmental monitoring under CERCLA and RCRA. (This class of actions excludes activities in aquatic environments. See B3.16 of this appendix for such activities.) Specific activities include, but are not limited to: (a) Geological, geophysical (such as gravity, magnetic, electrical, seismic, radar, and temperature gradient), geochemical, and engineering surveys and mapping, and the establishment of survey marks. Seismic techniques would not include large-scale reflection or refraction testing; (b) Installation and operation of field instruments (such as stream-gauging stations or flow-measuring devices, telemetry systems, geochemical monitoring tools, and geophysical exploration tools); (c) Drilling of wells for sampling or monitoring of groundwater or the vadose (unsaturated) zone, well logging, and installation of water-level recording devices in wells; (d) Aquifer and underground reservoir response testing; (e) Installation and operation of ambient air monitoring equipment; (f) Sampling and characterization of water, soil, rock, or contaminants (such as drilling using truck- or mobile-scale equipment, and modification, use, and plugging of boreholes); (g) Sampling and characterization of water effluents, air emissions, or solid waste streams; (h) Installation and operation of meteorological towers and associated activities (such as assessment of potential wind energy resources); (i) Sampling of flora or fauna; and (j) Archeological, historic, and cultural resource identification in compliance with 36 CFR part 800 and 43 CFR part 7.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide federal funding to the City of Seward, Alaska, to develop the Seward Heat Loop Project: a community-scale geothermal heating and cooling system that would refine the existing design of a CO2 heat-pump system to meet nearly all heating demand for half of municipal buildings.

The proposed project was selected under the first phase of DOE's Community Geothermal Heating and Cooling Design and Deployment Funding Opportunity Announcement (DE-FOA-0002632), during which awardees are to design their systems, finalize project sites and use, assess the geothermal resource, analyze environmental and permitting needs, conduct feasibility analysis and local engagement, and identify workforce and training needs. DOE intends to conduct a competitive down-selection process upon the completion of an initial 12-month Budget Period (BP1). If the proposed project is selected to advance to the second phase, additional NEPA review will be required.

BP1 of the proposed project would involve completion of final engineering design documents for the geothermal heat pump system along with generation of workforce development, training, system maintenance, and permitting plans. Activities associated with design preparation would include data collection from four (4) City of Seward buildings, analysis, and the development of an energy system model, in addition to non-invasive land surveys along a short urban corridor that connects the proposed geothermal field to the buildings of interest.

Desktop work would be conducted by various project participants in the City of Seward as well as subrecipient the National Renewable Energy Laboratory Cold Climate Housing Research Center (Fairbanks, AK). Project efforts related to community engagement and the development and implementation of a workforce training program would utilize the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (Seward, AK). The four City buildings targeted for the proposed study are the Seward Community Library & Museum, City Annex, City Hall, and Fire Hall. Activities at these locations would be limited to Level 2 energy audits.

The proposed activities would not involve any ground disturbance or modifications to existing facilities. Project activities funded under BP1 would be limited to administrative and analytical activities. As such, DOE does not anticipate any impacts to resources of concern due to the proposed activities of the project.

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

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

Budget Period 2

Notes:

Geothermal Technologies Office (GTO)
Review completed by Whitney Donoghue on 06/20/2023.

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

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 6/22/2023

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: _____