

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



**RECIPIENT:** Galena Village (aka Louden Tribe)

**STATE:** AK

**PROJECT TITLE :** Community-Scale Solar PV and Battery Project Galena, Alaska

|  |                                      |                            |                   |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Funding Opportunity Announcement Number</b> | <b>Procurement Instrument Number</b> | <b>NEPA Control Number</b> | <b>CID Number</b> |
| DE-FOA-0002774                                 | DE-IE0000169                         | GFO-0000169-001            | GO169             |

**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 Louden Tribe/Galena Village (Tribe) to procure, install, integrate, and operate a 1.5 MW ground-mounted community-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) panel array to supplement the existing power distribution system located on city-owned property in the City of Galena, Alaska.

Separately from this DOE funded award, a 1 MWh battery storage system would be installed at the existing Galena Power Plant. The battery storage system is considered a connected action because it is being installed as a result of the new solar array and is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Potential impacts of the battery storage system installation are considered in this NEPA Determination.

The ground-mounted solar array would occupy an area up to ten acres on the northern edge of the city adjacent to an existing road. A security fence would be placed around the array along with an elevated inverter and transformer. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) classified the proposed installation site as a freshwater forested/shrub wetland typically absent of surface water. Potential impacts to the wetlands caused by installation activities would include rutting and possible ponding of disturbed areas post construction. These impacts are preexisting at the site due to previous utility installation projects and snow-machine trails. The Tribe proposes to mitigate these impacts by forgoing the use of gravel, elevating the inverter and transformer, and drilling the support post holes (helical piles driven into the ground) via a small skid steer while the ground is frozen during the months of March or April. Each post hole would measure approximately 2.4 inches in diameter, resulting in approximately 260 square feet of disturbance distributed over the entire array site. Installation of panels would occur in between May and September. Equipment would be hand-carried into the site and work would be conducted atop scaffolding to reduce impacts. Trenched conduit to connect the array to existing utilities is already in place, but minimal trenching may be required between individual sub-solar panels to facilitate connection within the array.

The battery storage system would be installed at the Galena Power Plant within the city. The storage system would be housed within a small shed constructed adjacent to the power plant (within 100 feet) on a pre-disturbed site. An area of approximately 180 square feet would be cleared of brush and gravel would be placed to level and elevate the system. The battery system would be connected with existing switchgears within the power plant via overhead powerlines. An ARC cabinet would be installed within the existing power plant to control the microgrid system. The Power Plant is existing, and purpose built.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website identifies one

threatened species (Wood Bison) which may occur in the proposed project area. DOE determined consultation was not required for Wood Bison as individuals within Alaska are part of a nonessential experimental population. Furthermore, the Tribe provided at letter from the USFWS verifying the closest population of Wood Bison are known to reside approximately 200 miles southwest of Galena and there are no Wood Bison herds on or near the Koyukuk and Kaiyuh National Wildlife Refuges.

Minimal air emissions would occur during construction from the use of small-scale construction equipment and vehicles. Significant air impacts are not anticipated as construction equipment and vehicle use would be temporary and intermittent. Project activities would involve hazards associated with routine construction activities, working with electricity, and working in cold environments. Any risks working with hazards would be mitigated through established Tribal and corporate safety and construction protocols. The Tribe would observe all applicable health, safety, and environmental regulations. The Tribe would obtain and comply with all applicable local, state, and federal permit requirements and regulations. DOE does not anticipate any impacts to resources of concern due to the proposed activities of the DOE funded project or the connected USDA funded battery storage system installation.

## 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 contractors encounter any cultural materials (i.e. historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The Recipient must inform 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 (OIE)  
This NEPA Determination requires legal review of the tailored NEPA provision.  
NEPA review completed by Amy Lukens, 10/30/2023.

## 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.

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

## SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 10/31/2023

**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: \_\_\_\_\_