

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



**RECIPIENT:** Wisconsin Public Service Commission; Schmidt Farms (Replacement Application due to changes)

**STATE:** WI

**PROJECT TITLE :** Wisconsin Energy Innovation Grant Program 2021

<b>Funding Opportunity Announcement Number</b>	<b>Procurement Instrument Number</b>	<b>NEPA Control Number</b>	<b>CID Number</b>
SEP-ALRD-2020	DE-EE0010052	GFO-0010052-004	

**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 is proposing to provide funding to the Wisconsin Office of Energy Innovation to install a 750-kW ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) system with six-100 kW inverters, and a 130-kWh battery storage system at the Schmidt Farm West in Richland County, Wisconsin. This project is an update/modification to a previous project reviewed under GFO-0008669-034. This NEPA determination replaces the previous review for the project.

Project activities would include the installation of approximately 120 posts 6" in diameter driven approximately 6' deep into the ground to support the solar panels in a field where crops are not currently planted. Approximately 900 feet of trenching under and along a road would connect the solar array to a 6'x 8' x 8' battery energy storage system on the northside of the farm's largest free stall barn. A concrete pad would be installed for the placement of a weatherproof cabinet which would house the BESS. The barn's electric panel would be upgraded to accommodate the BESS.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website identifies two mammals (Northern Long-eared Bat and Tricolored Bat), one bird (Whooping Crane), two clams (Higgins Eye (pearlymussel) and Salamander Mussel), two insects (Hine's Emerald Dragonfly, and Monarch Butterfly), and eight migratory birds (Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Black-billed Cuckoo, Bobolink, Chimney Swift, Henslow's Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Wood Thrush), that may occur in the project area. No trees are located at the project site for either the Northern Long-eared Bat or the Tricolored Bat. The Whooping crane is designated as non-essential populations in Wisconsin and consultation is only required if the proposed project occurs within a National Wildlife Refuge or National Parks; the project would not occur within those land designations. Water habitat for the Higgins Eye (pearlymussel) and Salamander Mussel do not occur at the project site. The Hine's Emerald Dragonfly preferred habitat is spring fed wetlands, wet meadows, and marshes, and the Monarch Butterfly prefers woodland edges where milkweeds are prevalent. Although these environments may be in close proximity to the project site, they do not occur where the installation would occur. Because of the nature and location of the project (i.e. installation of equipment on regularly disturbed ground from planting and harvesting crops and trenching adjacent to roadways that are also disturbed areas) it is unlikely that any of the species of concern would be present in the project area. Additionally, the proposed project site is outside of the critical habitat of all listed species. Accordingly, DOE has determined there would be no effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species. Further, DOE does not anticipate adverse impacts to migratory bird species.

The project would convert approximately 5 acres of farmland of statewide importance to non-agricultural use, so a Farmland Conversion Impact Rating form (AD-1006) was used to determine the impact of the conversion. The relative

value of the farmland was rated at 106. Sites receiving a total score of less than 160 need not be given further consideration for protection and no additional sites need to be evaluated. Based on the AD-1006 rating, no further consideration for the protection of Prime Farmland is required.

The proposed solar array would occur near, but not in the the 100-year floodplain.

The recipient is working directly with their State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to ensure protection of cultural resources during the course of project activities, per their historic preservation programmatic agreement with DOE and the Wisconsin SHPO.

Installation of the proposed project may involve the use of heavy equipment and working with electricity. Potential hazards would be mitigated through adherence to established institutional health and safety policies and procedures. The sub-recipient and their partners would adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local health, safety, and environmental regulations. DOE does not anticipate any impacts to resources of concern due to the proposed activities of the project.

Any changes to the project activities or locations are subject to additional NEPA review by DOE and are not authorized for federal funding unless and until the Contracting Officer provides written authorization on those additions or modifications.

## NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

Office of State and Community Energy Programs – State Energy Programs  
(State Energy Program Transformation & Planning)  
NEPA review completed by Diana Heyder, 12/11/23

## 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.

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: 12/12/2023

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_