

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



RECIPIENT: Orcas Power & Light Co-operative (OPALCO)

STATE: WA

PROJECT TITLE: Bailer Hill Microgrid

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0000052	DE-EE0000139	GFO-0000139-001	

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:

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| 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 fund a 2.5 Megawatt (MW) solar array with a 1 MWh and a 4 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) at 1724 Douglas Rd in Friday Harbor, WA. DOE funds have been provided to the Washington State Energy Office which would then be awarded to the Orcas Power & Light Co-operative (OPALCO). The OPALCO would install and operate the community solar and battery storage site. Once constructed, the solar panels and battery systems would serve the greater San Juan community by enhancing grid reliability and storing energy for later use.

Of the 19-acre parcel for the proposed site, nine acres is managed for hay production, and the remaining area is unmanaged open field with numerous rock formations and shrub vegetation. The 600 solar panels and BESS equipment would cover 6.5 acres of the parcel, primarily where the hay is grown. The BESS equipment including switchgear would be located in two metal cabinets on concrete bases, located within a 136-foot by 119-foot graveled area surrounded by a chain link security fence on the southwestern portion of the parcel. A landscape buffer with trees and shrubs would also be added around the fence. Underground lines from the BESS equipment would connect the system to existing lines on the east side of the property. Two trees would be removed. Native grass would be planted to grow under the solar panels. The entire facility would be enclosed by a new fence bordered by a 10-foot landscape buffer planted with native shrubs and ground cover on the north, east, and southern portion of the site. The existing hedge and mature trees on the western parcel boundary would remain. Two existing access points would be improved to gain better access to the project site from Douglas Road and Bailer Hill Road. Gates would be added at the access points. OPALCO would work with a local farmer to lease the site for sheep grazing following the solar panel and BESS installation.

A required Stormwater Drainage Report and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan were developed. Based on these reports, a storm drain system to collect and divert the run-off stormwater from the culvert along the southern property line to discharge downstream of two proposed detention ponds adjacent to an existing pond on the property would be constructed.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website identifies two birds, (Marbled Murrelet and Yellow-billed Cuckoo) one fish, (Bull Trout), and three insects, (Island Marble Butterfly, Monarch Butterfly, and Taylor's (whulge) Checkerspot), and 13 migratory birds (Bald Eagle, Black Oystercatcher, Black Swift, Black Turnstone, California Gull, Evening Grosbeak, Lesser Yellowlegs, Marbled Godwit, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Rufous Hummingbird, Short-billed Dowitcher, Tufted Puffin, and Western Grebe) that may occur in the project area. The Marbled Murrelet spends the majority of its time on the ocean, resting and feeding in near-shore marine waters

and comes inland to nest on mountainsides on islands or well inland in mature forest. Yellow-billed Cuckoo prefer wooded habitat with dense cover and water nearby, including woodlands with low, scrubby, vegetation, overgrown orchards, abandoned farmland and dense thickets along streams and marshes. Habitat for these birds is not located at the project site. Additionally, Bull Trout river habitat does not occur at the project site. Habitat conditions for the Island Marble Butterfly are open grasslands, disturbed sites, and herbaceous or sparsely vegetated habitats including native prairie, fields, and pastures, however, the Island Marble Butterfly's hostplant is not found at the project site due to regular planting and harvesting of crops. The Taylor's (whulge) Checkerspot generally prefers prairie and grassland habitats. The Monarch Butterfly favors woodland edges where milkweeds are prevalent. Although these environments may be in close proximity to the project site for these insects, they do not occur at the site of the proposed installation. 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 6.5 acres of farmland of statewide importance to non-farmland 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 149. 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 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 Washington 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, 1/29/24

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: _____



Casey Strickland

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 1/30/2024

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: _____