

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



RECIPIENT: University of Washington

STATE: WA

PROJECT TITLE: National Marine Renewable Energy Center Infrastructure Upgrades

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002080	DE-EE0008955	GFO-0008955-004	G08955

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.)
B2.3 Personnel safety and health equipment	Installation of, or improvements to, equipment for personnel safety and health (including, but not limited to, eye washes, safety showers, radiation monitoring devices, fumehoods, and associated collection and exhaust systems), provided that the covered actions would not have the potential to cause a significant increase in emissions.
B2.4 Equipment Qualification	Activities undertaken to (1) qualify equipment for use or improve systems reliability or (2) augment information on safety-related system components. These activities include, but are not limited to, transportation container qualification testing, crane and lift-gear certification or recertification testing, high efficiency particulate air filter testing and certification, stress tests (such as "burn-in" testing of electrical components and leak testing), and calibration of sensors or diagnostic equipment.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the University of Washington to support the upgrade of existing marine renewable energy testing and research infrastructure located at National Marine Renewable Energy Centers (NMRECs).

The proposed project was previously divided into five tasks, with one task for each of five universities where NMREC research and testing is performed: University of Washington (UW); Oregon State University (OSU); University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF); Florida Atlantic University (FAU); and the University of Hawaii (UH). As a result of a Determination of Non-Competitive Financial Assistance (DNFA), additional tasks (6-11) have been added to this award.

DOE previously completed two NEPA Determinations (NDs) for Tasks 1-5 (GFO-0008955-001, 04/09/2020: A9, B1.31, B2.3, B3.6, B5.15 and GFO-0008955-002, 12/07/2021: A9, B3.6, B5.15) which did not apply to Subtasks 5.2.2 and 5.2.4. This ND applies only to the newly added Tasks 6-11. DOE will need to complete the NEPA review for Subtasks 5.2.2 and 5.2.4 when sufficient information is available to conduct a meaningful review.

Note: The DOE Water Power Technology Office (WPTO) officially changed the naming structure from National Marine Renewable Energy Center (NMREC) to National Marine Energy Center (NMEC) in February 2023. The two acronyms apply to the same consortia of universities. Tasks 1-5 were defined and implemented prior to the name change and Tasks 6-11 were defined after the name change.

Proposed Tasks 6-11 include activities that would ensure the Pacific Marine Energy Center's (PMEC) continued sustainability, relevance, and impact. Since its establishment as an NMEC in 2008, PMEC has grown, with activity now supported by a range of federal, state, and private sources and a large set of students, faculty, and staff engaged across three partner institutions: UW, OSU, and UAF.

Task 6 would involve hiring support staff to strengthen PMEC communications, including internal communications with project partners and external communications for stakeholders.

Task 7 would involve hiring additional personnel to serve as points of contact, facilitators, and coordinators. This would

extend leadership capacity and would allow for relationship-building through events such as an annual meeting and seminars at each institution.

Task 8 would involve maintenance of and assessing continued access to infrastructure and facilities. Funds would be used to support laboratory managers at UW, OSU, and UAF. Activities at UW would involve working with leadership, UW departments, and communications staff to increase awareness of experimental testing facilities and project outcomes with potential industry and academic partners. Activities at OSU would involve updating current operating processes and procedures as needed to reduce barriers and facilitate ease of laboratory access and use for marine energy testing clients. Operations and maintenance activities would occur at the O.H. Hinsdale Wave Research Laboratory and the Wallace Energy Systems and Renewables Facility, including calibration of data loggers and sensors, maintenance of wave gauges and electrical components, and replacement of personal protective equipment (PPE). Activities at UAF would involve annual maintenance and calibrations to ensure access and availability to the Tanana River Test Site (TRTS) and the Power Systems Integration Lab.

Task 9 would provide support for travel for students and faculty and travel and personnel time for PMEC leadership to promote coordination between PMEC institutions, other NMECs, and DOE programs.

Task 10 would involve the collaborative development and implementation of a strategy to collect lessons learned through research and development, operations, education, and testing activities at PMEC. PMEC, NMECs, and DOE would work to build a cohesive and durable process to collect, disseminate, and utilize the lessons.

Task 11 would involve coordination activities with the DOE WPTO's University Marine Energy Research Community (UMERC). Activities would include joining the UMERC portal, attending periodic in-person or virtual meetings hosted by the UMERC, and responding to occasional requests for information from the UMERC.

Proposed activities at the TRTS (Subtask 8.3) would occur entirely onshore and would include calibration of data loggers and sensors, maintenance of fishing nets, and replacement of PPE. The current onshore facility consists of a gravel lot with a metal shipping container (Connex) and an ATCO modular office space with grid power. UAF has obtained a Land Use Permit for TRTS activities from the landowner, the Nenana Native Council.

All other proposed project work at UW, OSU, and UAF would be performed at existing, purpose-built facilities. No changes to the use, mission, or operation of these facilities, modifications, or ground disturbing activities would be required. No additional permits, licenses, or authorizations would be required. Activities would involve typical hazards associated with office workspaces and research facilities. Existing University Environmental, Health, and Safety policies and procedures would be followed at all facilities.

DOE has considered potential impacts on resources, including those of an ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic nature. DOE does not anticipate adverse impacts on these resources.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a conditional NEPA determination.

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

Tasks 6-11 (All subtasks)

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

Subtasks 5.2.2 and 5.2.4

Notes:

Water Power Technologies Office (WPTO)
NEPA review completed by Melissa Parker, 05/07/24

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.

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:  _____ Date: 5/9/2024
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: _____ Date: _____
Field Office Manager