

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



RECIPIENT: Ho'āhu Energy Cooperative Molokai

STATE: HI

PROJECT TITLE: Community-owned Solar on Molokai

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
	DE-EE0010726	GFO-0010726-001	GO10726

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 administer Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) to the Ho'āhu Energy Cooperative Molokai (Ho'āhu) to support the pre-development of two community-owned solar projects on the island of Molokai, HI. These projects have been fully planned by community members and stakeholders through several years of intensive outreach and engagement led by Ho'āhu, which formed to advocate for residents to design and own renewable energy. Ho'āhu and Hawaiian Electric have already finalized terms and details for the solar photovoltaic (PV) and paired battery energy storage systems (BESS).

Federal funds administered by DOE would support a limited range of pre-development tasks: interconnection studies; preliminary engineering, design, and permitting; financing; and procurement of certain long lead items. The majority of these tasks would involve computer and desktop activities at the offices of project participants, including Shake Energy Collaborative (Honolulu, HI) and Mana Pacific Inc. (Kihei, HI). The proposed scope of work also includes non-invasive site surveys that would be conducted by contractors at the previously selected community solar project sites: the Kualapu'u Recreation Center and a vacant, utility-owned parcel in an industrial area of Pala'au. Surveys would be conducted on foot and require no equipment or machinery beyond handheld battery-powered devices. Field activities would not include any sampling, modification, or other ground disturbance. Long-lead items ordered during the pre-development phase would not yet be assembled or transported to the project sites.

The performance period of the DOE award would be two years. Installation of solar PV and BESS would occur subsequent to the close of the award. Ho'āhu is currently supported by multiple external funding partners and intends to obtain one or more construction loans to further develop these projects. DOE has therefore determined that the construction and operation of two community solar sites is a non-Federal action and, further, the decision to administer CDS in support of pre-development tasks would not prevent or modify Ho'āhu's existing plans for these projects.

DOE has considered the scale, duration, and nature of proposed activities to determine potential impacts on resources of concern, including those of a biological, ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic nature. DOE does not anticipate impacts on these resources which would be considered significant or require DOE to consult with other agencies or stakeholders.

## NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO)  
Review completed by Whitney Donoghue on 5/8/2024.

## 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: 5/9/2024

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