

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



RECIPIENT: [Launch Alaska](#)

STATE: AK

PROJECT TITLE: [Alaska Energysched Tech Stack](#)

| Funding Opportunity Announcement Number | Procurement Instrument Number | NEPA Control Number             | CID Number              |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <a href="#">De-FOA-0002565</a>          | <a href="#">DE-EE0010408</a>  | <a href="#">GFO-0010408-002</a> | <a href="#">GO10408</a> |

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:

- |                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A9 Information gathering, analysis, and dissemination</b>   | 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.)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring</b> | 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. |
| <b>B3.2 Aviation activities</b>                                | Aviation activities for survey, monitoring, or security purposes that comply with Federal Aviation Administration regulations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to [Launch Alaska](#) to characterize the energy infrastructure of twelve underserved communities in Northwest and Southeast Alaska to identify potential future opportunities for development. The communities selected in Northwest Alaska are [Ambler](#), [Buckland](#), [Deering](#), [Kotzebue](#), [Selawik](#), and [Shungnak](#). The communities selected in Southeast Alaska are [Angoon](#), [Haines](#), [Hoonah](#), [Kake](#), [Metlakatla](#), and [Yakutat](#).

DOE previously completed a NEPA Determination (ND) which applied to Task 1, Task 2, Subtask 3.1, and Subtask 3.2 activities ([GFO-0010408-001](#); [CX A9, A11; 02/07/23](#)). This ND applies to all remaining award activities (Subtask 3.3, Subtask 3.4, and Tasks 4–9).

Project activities would include inventories of existing electrical infrastructure in the twelve communities identified above, identification and development of scope, budget, and schedule for potential energy generation project opportunities, project closeout stakeholder engagement, and final development of a funding package for more than three place-based energy generation projects.

Desktop project management activities would occur at several locations, including the Alaska Municipal League and Southeast Conference in Juneau, AK, the National Renewable Energy Lab in Fairbanks, AK, and Veckta in San Diego, CA. DeerStone Consulting, LLC and Kartorium, Inc. (Anchorage, AK) would conduct energy infrastructure inventories using smart devices, tablets, or laptop computers. Kartorium, Inc. would also use small unmanned aerial vehicles (sUAV) and LiDAR to complete inventories.

To be considered for participation in the proposed project, an Expression of Interest was required from a representative of each Alaska Native Village or community. Representatives from the communities have been and would continue to be engaged in the logistics and planning for mapping and inventorying of their community. All necessary permissions from communities and their respective authorities would be obtained prior to any personnel traveling to communities and performing on-site activities.

Inventory activities would include site visits to each community, during which a sUAV would be flown to capture aerial imagery of the power infrastructure. Additional imagery would be captured inside of buildings housing electrical infrastructure using a tri-pod mounted laser scan camera. The communities would be given advanced notification of what days the sUAV would be flown in their communities.

Proposed project activities include the use of sUAV. The recipient is responsible for ensuring that all activities involving sUAV are compliant with 14 CFR Part 107 or an applicable Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA). This includes, but is not limited to, aircraft requirements such as remote pilot-in-command certification, authorities, and responsibilities; ensuring the sUAV is in a condition for safe operation; registration; understanding airspace classifications and requirements; and accident reporting (if applicable).

On May 13, 2024, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concurred with DOE's determination that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered western distinct population segment of Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*). On June 3, 2024, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concurred with DOE's determination that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the federally threatened Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), the federally threatened spectacled eider (*Somateria fischeri*), the federally endangered short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*), and the federally threatened polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*). DOE determined that project activities would have no effect on polar bear critical habitat.

All mitigation measures outlined in the concurrence letters received from NMFS and FWS would be adhered to during project activities. All sUAV flights would take place during daytime hours with sufficient light for visibility. Flights would occur at heights between 100 to 200 feet above ground level and the UAV pilot would descend no lower than 100 feet. The sUAV would only be operated in built-up space within communities and around power infrastructure, and would not occur in wilderness areas, ocean/marine environments, or in/over harbors. Additionally, the sUAV would not be launched in the vicinity of any wildlife, including birds and listed species. If bird species are encountered while a flight is in progress, the sUAV operator would maneuver out of their path and, if necessary, ground the flight until they are no longer present.

Project activities would not occur within the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) except within the areas immediately adjacent to the built-up community of Selawik. As per correspondence with the Refuge Manager, an analysis of impacts to Selawik NWR lands or waters and/or a FWS permit were not required for the project.

Project activities would be limited to built-up areas of each community. No facilities would be modified, and the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities would not be changed. No ground, vegetation, or water resources would be disturbed, and no equipment or structures would be installed.

DOE has considered the scale, duration, and nature of proposed activities to determine potential impacts on resources, including those of an ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic nature. DOE does not anticipate impacts on these resources which would be considered significant.

Any work proposed to be conducted at a federal facility may be subject to additional NEPA review by the cognizant federal official and must meet the applicable health and safety requirements of the facility.

## **NEPA PROVISION**

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

This project includes the use of small unmanned aerial vehicles (sUAV). The recipient is responsible for ensuring that all activities involving sUAV are compliant with 14 CFR Part 107 or an applicable Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA). This includes, but is not limited to, aircraft requirements such as remote pilot-in-command certification, authorities, and responsibilities; ensuring the sUAV is in a condition for safe operation; registration; understanding airspace classifications and requirements; and accident reporting (if applicable).

All mitigation measures outlined in the National Marine Fisheries Service (May 13, 2024) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife (June 3, 2024) concurrence letters must be adhered to for sUAV activities.

Notes:

Water Power Technologies Office (WPTO)

This NEPA Determination requires legal review of the tailored NEPA provision.

NEPA review completed by Melissa Parker, 06/04/24

### 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:

 Electronically Signed By: Andrew Montano

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 6/5/2024

### 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: