

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



RECIPIENT: various (all Phase 1 competitors and Standard Track Phase 2A competitors) **STATE:**

PROJECT TITLE: Phase 1 and Standard Track Phase 2A - American-Made Solar Large Animal and Solar System Operations (LASSO) Prize

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
American-Made Solar Large Animal and Solar System Operations (LASSO) Prize		GFO-LASSO-Prize-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:

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.)

A11 Technical advice and assistance to organizations Technical advice and planning assistance to international, national, state, and local organizations.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to authorize the administration of the American-Made Large Animal and Solar System Operations (LASSO) Prize competition (Prize) to support the design and demonstration of cost-effective co-location of photovoltaic (PV) systems with cattle grazing. Through a multi-phase competitive approach, this Prize aims to establish and expand cattle agrivoltaics sites across the U.S. by incentivizing developers, farmers and ranchers, researchers, and other stakeholders to collaborate, gather comprehensive data, and develop innovative solar cattle grazing systems and best practices. The Prize would be administered by the Solar Energy Technologies Office in partnership with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

There are two tracks in the Prize: the STANDARD TRACK and the OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK. The STANDARD TRACK is structured to run in three phases, with each phase focusing on different aspects including teaming, system and grazing plan design, construction, implementation, and multi-year data collection. The OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK is for currently operational cattle agrivoltaics projects and is structured to run in two phases focusing on data collection.

The Official Rules Prize document to be released in September of 2024 defines only Phase 1 and Phase 2A of the STANDARD TRACK, and Phase 1 of the OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK. This NEPA determination reviews the work being solicited under these phases only, which are summarized below. Official Rules for subsequent phases (Phase 2B and Phase 3 of the STANDARD TRACK and Phase 2 of the OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK) would be released ahead of the respective phase opening date as listed in the Prize document.

STANDARD TRACK

• Phase 1: Team Formation and Project Planning

Competitors are expected to form teams comprised of solar developers (required), cattle ranchers (required), and other stakeholders such as landowners, extension agents, historically underserved producer groups, research organizations, local utilities, product developers, and commodity organizations. Teams would then work to identify a site and develop a plan for integrating PV systems with cattle grazing.

• Phase 2A: Detailed Planning, Design and Permitting

Teams would refine their project plans, finalize system design and complete thorough project due diligence including engineering designs and drawings, proof of site control (e.g., land lease agreement or land title), results of annual energy output modeling, proof of submission of an interconnection application, and applicable land use permits or approvals. Teams are required to prepare a comprehensive narrative addressing design improvements,

construction timelines, cattle integration plans, and data collection strategies.

OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK

• Phase 1: Documentation of Existing Projects

Competitors with existing eligible cattle agrivoltaics systems larger than 250 kilowatts of direct current capacity are asked to submit comprehensive project documentation, including team information, system specifications, construction information, and cattle integration details. The goal is to validate the design and operational aspects of these systems and share insights with the broader agrivoltaics community.

The types of activities associated with these phases of the Prize would be limited exclusively to outreach, stakeholder engagement, information dissemination, project planning, modeling, desktop-based and/or non-invasive site evaluation and selection, preliminary engineering/design, and document preparation. Such work is expected to be conducted from existing offices and meeting space and not require any materials beyond basic office supplies and computers. DOE has considered the nature of the proposed activities to determine potential impacts on sensitive resources, including those of a biological, ecological, 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.

Further NEPA review would be required prior to awarding cash prizes to teams who successfully complete STANDARD TRACK Phases 1 and 2A and OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK Phase 1. Each team is required to submit proposed project information to the cognizant Prize Administrator and must receive a NEPA determination prior to commencing work associated with subsequent phases.

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 conditional NEPA determination.

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

Standard Track: Phase 1 and Phase 2A
Operating Projects Track: Phase 1

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

Standard Track: Phase 2B and Phase 3
Operating Projects Track: Phase 2

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

Further NEPA review shall be required prior to awarding a cash prize to any team who successfully completes STANDARD TRACK Phases 1 and 2A or OPERATING PROJECTS TRACK Phase 1. Each individual team is required to submit proposed project information to the cognizant Prize Administrator and must receive a NEPA determination prior to commencing work associated with Standard Track: Phase 2B or Operating Projects Track: Phase 2.

Notes:

Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO)
This NEPA determination requires legal review of the tailored NEPA provision.
Review completed by Whitney Donoghue on 8/8/2024.

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.

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: _____



Andrew Montano

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 8/8/2024

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: _____