

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



RECIPIENT: Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

STATE: WI

PROJECT TITLE: Solar PV Consortium - Cooperative Educational Service Agency 10 - EIGP 2023

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
SEP-IIJAALRD	DE-EE0010109	GFO-0010109-002	

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 provide funds to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin for renewable energy projects to offset energy use at three school districts in Wisconsin. The solar photovoltaic arrays, would be installed at four schools including Cornell High (CHS) and Cornell Elementary School (CES) in Cornell, the Gilman School District (GSD) building in Gilman, and the Eleva-Strum School District (ESD) building in Strum.

Project activities at CHS would include the installation of a 104 kW ground-mounted PV array near the outfield of the baseball field which would cover 350 feet (ft) by 30 ft, and the installation of racking, inverters, and monitoring equipment. The project would require trenching for approximately 320 ft of PV wire and under 8th Street from the array to the school building. Directional drilling under 8th Street and the CHS parking lot would also be required. Additional activities would include the relocation of 12 sugar maple trees and installing nets to protect the PV array from activities at the baseball field.

Project activities at CES would include the installation of a 50kW rooftop PV array on existing roof spaces, and the installation of racking, inverters, and monitoring equipment. The project would require trenching and directional drilling of approximately 130 ft of PV wire between buildings and under 5th Street.

Project activities at the GSD building would include the installation of a 160 ft by 100 ft, 124 kW ground-mounted PV array, and the installation of racking, inverters, and monitoring equipment near the parking lot south of Crumb Street. The project would include trenching for approximately 420 ft of PV wire south from the school and across an open field, to the array. Directional drilling under East Crumb Street would also be required.

Project activities at the ESD building would include the installation of a 385 ft by 15 ft, 99 kW ground-mounted PV array, and the installation of racking, inverters, and monitoring equipment in an open space between the ESD building and US Hwy 10. The project would include trenching for approximately 60 ft of PV wire. Directional drilling under a parking lot would also be required. Additional activities would include the removal of eight oak trees and one pine tree. The recipient has worked 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 Wisconsin SHPO. On October 16, 2024, the recipient received concurrence from the Wisconsin SHPO that no eligible properties will be affected as none are present.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website identifies one mammal (northern long-eared bat), one bird (whooping crane), one insect (monarch butterfly), and four migratory birds (bald eagle, black-billed cuckoo, bobolink, and chimney swift) that may occur in all project areas.

IPaC identifies one mammal (gray wolf), one clam (salamander mussel), one insect (Karner blue butterfly), and three

migratory birds (golden-winged warbler, veery, and wood thrush) that may occur in the CHS and CES project areas. IPaC identifies one mammal (gray wolf), one clam (salamander mussel), and five migratory birds (eastern whip-poor-will, golden-winged warbler, olive-sided flycatcher, veery, and wood thrush) that may occur in the GSD project area. Additionally, IPaC identifies one reptile (eastern massasauga) and four migratory birds (American golden-plover, Canada warbler, lesser yellowlegs, and pectoral sandpiper) that may occur in the ESD project area. There would be tree relocations and removals at two project areas (CHS and ESD); to avoid impacts to the northern long-eared bat and nesting migratory bird species, tree removal and relocation shall occur between November 15 and March 15. DOE used the USFWS determination key and received concurrence that project activities “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” the northern long-eared bat at these locations. No trees would be removed at CES or GSD; DOE has determined there would be no effect on the northern long-eared bat at these locations. The whooping crane is designated as non-essential populations in Wisconsin and consultation is only required if the proposed project occurs within a National Wildlife Refuge or National Parks; the project would not occur within those land designations. The monarch butterfly prefers woodland edges where milkweeds are prevalent, although these environments may be in close proximity to the project areas, they do not occur on any project area. DOE has determined there would be no effect on the whooping crane and monarch butterfly at any project location. Project activities have no potential to harm gray wolves directly or indirectly, the project would not increase vehicle traffic beyond temporary increases during construction. Additionally, as all project areas are schools, there is already consistent human activity that would deter gray wolves. Water habitat for the salamander mussel does not occur at any project location. The Karner blue butterfly prefers oak savannas and pine barren ecosystems and requires wild blue lupine. Although these habitats may be in close proximity to the project areas at CHS and CES, they do not occur in these project locations. The eastern massasauga (rattlesnake) uses shallow wetland habitat and their surrounding uplands. The Buffalo River is south of the ESD project area, while there may be potential for the rattlesnake to use this habitat, it is approximately 600 ft from the project area and there is no wetland habitat within the ESD project area. Because of the nature and location of the projects (i.e., installation of equipment on regularly disturbed ground and trenching adjacent to roadways that are also disturbed areas), it is unlikely that any species of concern would be present in the project areas. Additionally, the proposed project locations are outside of the critical habitat of all listed species. Accordingly, DOE has determined there would be no effect on the gray wolf, the Karner blue butterfly, and the eastern massasauga at any project location. Furthermore, DOE does not anticipate adverse impacts to migratory bird species, as tree removal and relocation would occur between November 15 and March 15. 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. All required permits, licenses, and authorizations, including a utility interconnection agreement would be obtained prior to construction activities. No change in the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities would arise out of this effort. 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.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

To avoid impacts to the northern long-eared bat and nesting migratory birds, tree removal and relocation at Cornell High in Cornell, WI and Eleva-Strum School District in Strum, WI shall occur between November 15 and March 15.

Notes:

Office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP) – State Energy Programs
Tailored NEPA Provision requires legal review
Review completed by Brittany White on 10/15/2024

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:  **Electronically Signed By: Matthew Blevins** Date: **10/21/2024**
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