

PMC-ND
(1.08.09.13)

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



RECIPIENT: SC ORS Energy Office

STATE: SC

PROJECT TITLE : Edgefield County SC - Parker Elementary Solar Expansion

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
	DE-EE0006996	GFO-0006996-001	

Based on my review of the information concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (authorized under DOE Order 451.1A), I have made the following determination:

CX, EA, EIS APPENDIX AND NUMBER:

Description:

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 (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff's Energy Office to install a 515kW solar system at Parker Elementary in Edgefield, SC.

The proposed project activities include the installation of a 515kW solar photovoltaic (PV) system on just under 2 acres of what is currently vacant land directly adjacent to the Parker Elementary school building just north of downtown Edgefield. Installation of the proposed PV system would necessitate driving helical piles into the ground to support the racking of the panels as well as trenching to the nearest transformer. The planned solar PV system would be metered with power connected directly from the panels to the utility system grid and would be enclosed within a 7-foot-tall fence.

Ground disturbance would be limited to the areas at the placement of the rack supports, between the conduits to the PV panels and between the conduits to the system transformer and meter, all on previously disturbed ground. No prime farmland would be impacted and the project is located outside of the 100-year floodplain. There is one historic district within Edgefield city limits. This historic district runs through downtown Edgefield along both sides of US25 and is home to over 40 contributing objects, buildings and sites including 19th century churches, homes, cemeteries, and governmental buildings. However, Edgefield is a heavily wooded city and the proposed project site lies over a quarter of a mile away from this historic district. The proposed project location is not within the viewshed of the historic district or any of the contributing resources which add to the historical integrity or architectural qualities of the historic district. Therefore, DOE has determined that the project would have no potential to cause effects on historic properties and subsequently, DOE has no further obligations under the National Historic Preservation Act.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program website (IPaC) identifies four endangered or threatened species that are known to, or are believed to occur in this area of Edgefield County, South Carolina. Of these only one has the potential to occur within the proposed project site; the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*). However, the proposed project site does not itself offer appropriate foraging or nesting habitat for this species and is surrounded by plentiful appropriate habitat which would not be further reduced or fragmented by the proposed installation. Therefore, DOE has determined that the proposed activities would have no effect on threatened/endangered species or critical habitat and subsequently DOE has no further consultation requirements under the Endangered Species Act.

There are 16 migratory bird species, including bald eagle, that are listed as possibly occurring in or near the project site in Edgefield County. Several of these species could use the proposed project site as wintering or year-round

habitat; however, due to the plentiful availability of similar foraging habitat in the surrounding area, impacts to individuals or populations of the species named above are not expected as a result of the installation of the PV system. None of the migratory birds listed as possibly occurring in the area year-round or during the breeding season would be expected to utilize the open field of the project site with its specific characteristics as nesting habitat. There is always potential for migratory birds to strike PV panels such as those that would be installed as part of the proposed project. However, due to the small footprint of the proposed PV system, impacts to individuals or populations of the migratory bird species are not expected as a result of the proposed project.

The proposed project would require approval from the Office of School Facilities. They would also require testing reports from one of their approved third party engineers at the beginning, middle, and end of construction. Once the project has been approved by that engineer the local power company would also conduct a test before interconnection. Existing health and safety policies and procedures would be followed throughout the duration of the proposed project including employee training, proper protective equipment, engineering controls, monitoring, and internal assessments.

Based on the review of the proposal, DOE has determined the proposal fits within the class of action(s) and the integral elements of 10 CFR 1021 subpart B outlined in the DOE categorical exclusion(s) selected above. DOE has also determined that: (1) there are no extraordinary circumstances (as defined by 10 CFR 1021.410(2)) related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; (2) the proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and (3) the proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts, related to other proposals with cumulatively significant actions, or an improper interim action. This proposal is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination for this award

Insert the following language in the award:

If the Recipient intends to make changes to the scope or objective of this project, the Recipient is required to contact the Project Officer, identified in Block 15 of the Assistance Agreement before proceeding. The Recipient must receive notification of approval from the DOE Contracting Officer prior to commencing with work beyond that currently approved. If the Recipient moves forward with activities that are not authorized for Federal funding by the DOE Contracting Officer in advance of a final NEPA decision, the Recipient is doing so at risk of not receiving Federal funding and such costs may not be recognized as allowable cost share.

Note to Specialist :

Weatherization & Intergovernmental Programs--State Energy Program
This NEPA Determination does not require a tailored NEPA provision.
NEPA review completed by Rebecca McCord, 12/23/2016

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:  Casey Strickland  Date: 1/4/2017
NEPA Compliance Officer

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER DETERMINATION

Field Office Manager review required

NCO REQUESTS THE FIELD OFFICE MANAGER REVIEW FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:

- Proposed action fits within a categorical exclusion but involves a high profile or controversial issue that warrants Field Office Manager's attention.
- Proposed action falls within an EA or EIS category and therefore requires Field Office Manager's review and determination.

BASED ON MY REVIEW I CONCUR WITH THE DETERMINATION OF THE NCO :

Field Office Manager's Signature: _____ Date: _____
Field Office Manager