PMC-ND
(1.08.09.13)

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

RECIPIENT: Texas A&M AgriLife Research **STATE:** TX

PROJECT TITLE: Sustainable Herbaceous Energy Crop Production in the Southeast United States

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE FOA 0001917	DE-EE0008522	GFO-0008522-001	GO8522

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:

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.)
B3.6 Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects	Siting, construction, modification, operation, and decommissioning of facilities for smallscale research and development projects; conventional laboratory operations (such as preparation of chemical standards and sample analysis); and small-scale pilot projects (generally less than 2 years) frequently conducted to verify a concept before demonstration actions, provided that construction or modification would be within or contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area (where active utilities and currently used roads are readily accessible). Not included in this category are demonstration actions, meaning actions that are undertaken at a scale to show whether a technology would be viable on a larger scale and suitable for commercial deployment.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to Texas A&M AgriLife Research (Texas A&M) to develop a comprehensive assessment of economic viability and environment sustainability of producing advanced energycane and biomass sorghum in the southeast United States. Field experiments would be conducted using three new genotypes of energycane and three genotypes of biomass sorghum at seven sites (three in Texas, and one each in Louisiana, Mississippi; Georgia, and Florida). Data on the crops and surrounding environment would be collected and analyzed over a five (5) year period.

Proposed project activities would include field observations, destructive sampling (e.g. analysis of plant material), analysis of aerobic and anaerobic storage methods, field plot analysis (e.g. soil sample, water runoff, ecosystem services and life-cycle carbon footprint analysis), development of best management practices and site-specific operational plans, and economic analysis of biomass production, harvest and storage.

The following seven sites would be directly involved in field production of energy crops: Beaumont, TX (Texas A&M - Energycane and biomass sorghum); College Station, TX (Texas A&M - Energycane and biomass sorghum); Weslaco, TX (Texas A&M - Energycane and biomass sorghum); Houma, Louisiana (USDA-ARS Sugarcane Research Unit - Energycane only); Starkville, Mississippi (Mississippi State University - Energycane and biomass sorghum); Tifton, Georgia (USDA-ARS Crop Genetics and Breeding Research Unit - Energycane and biomass sorghum); and Fort Pierce, Florida (University of Florida - Energycane and biomass sorghum). Tennessee State University (TSU – Nashville, TN) would also contribute to the project in the form of economic analysis of energy crop production. No field work would be carried out at TSU.

All sites in which field production would take place are existing, dedicated agricultural research sites owned and/or operated by the universities and U.S. federal agencies specified above. No change in the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities would result from any of the proposed project activities. Neither Texas A&M nor any of its project partners would need to obtain any additional permits in order to realize the work activities proposed as part of this

award.

Field production would likely involve the application of pesticides for weed, disease, and insect pest control. Frequency and types of pesticides used would vary by site according to the particular conditions at each location. At all sites, standard precautions for pesticide application would be strictly adhered to, in order to avoid potential negative impact. Conditions for aerial application would be closely monitored so that pesticide drift is minimized. Fertilizers would also be used for field production. At all sites, standard precautions would be taken in applying fertilizers and in using a nitrogen stabilizer, in order to minimize nutrient runoff. At all locations, all applicable Federal, State and local health, safety and environmental regulations would also be observed.

Based on the review of the proposal, DOE has determined the proposal fits within the class of action(s) and the integral elements of Appendix B to Subpart D of 10 CFR 1021 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 :

Bioenergy Technologies Office
This NEPA determination does not require a tailored NEPA Provision.
NEPA review completed by Jonathan Hartman, 10/09/2018

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: Electronically Signed By: Casey Strickland Date: 10/22/2018

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