

PMC-ND
(1.08.09.13)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

OFFICE OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

NEPA DETERMINATION



RECIPIENT: University of California Irvine

STATE: CA

PROJECT TITLE: Development of Composite Photocatalyst Materials that are Highly Selective for Solar Hydrogen Production and their Evaluation in Z-Scheme Reactor Designs

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0002022	DE-EE0008838	GFO-0008838-001	GO8838

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.)
- 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 University of California Irvine (UCI) to develop novel photocatalyst particles and ultrathin oxide coatings for use in solar water splitting applications. The project would be completed over three Budget Periods (BPs), with a Go/No-Go Decision Point in between each BP.

Proposed project activities would include computer modeling, material characterization/synthesis (e.g. photocatalyst particles, coatings), coating development, coating deposition onto thin film electrodes, and experimental testing using a particle suspension reactor.

UCI would coordinate all project activities. Project work would be performed at existing, purpose-built laboratory facilities. Benchtop reactor evaluation would be performed at the University of Michigan (UM). Small reactor prototypes measuring 10cm x 10cm x 10cm would be developed for testing. These would be assembled from off-the-shelf materials and would not require electrical connections or any modifications to the laboratory space. Materials synthesis would be performed at UCI, Columbia University (Columbia), the California Institute of Technology (CalTech), Tokyo University of Science, and Shinshu University. No physical modifications to existing facilities, construction of new facilities, ground disturbing activities, or changes to the use, mission, or operation of existing facilities would be required. Likewise, no additional permits or authorizations would be needed for the completion of project activities.

Project work would involve the use and handling of metals, semi-conductors, material precursors, and industrial chemicals. Specialized laboratory equipment would be used, including high-powered LEDs and lasers. Nano-scale materials would also be synthesized and characterized. Risks associated with the performance of project activities would be mitigated through adherence to established health and safety policies and procedures. Protocols would include employee training, the use of personal protective equipment, engineering controls, monitoring, and internal assessments. Fume hoods would be used when handling nano-scale materials. UCI and its project partners would observe all applicable Federal, state, and local health, safety, and environmental regulations.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

[Fuel Cell Technologies Office](#)

[This NEPA determination does not require a tailored NEPA Provision.](#)

[NEPA review completed by Jonathan Hartman, 01/29/2020](#)

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.

DOE has determined that work to be carried out outside of the United States, its territories and possessions is exempt from further review pursuant to Section 5.1.1 of the DOE Final Guidelines for Implementation of Executive Order 12114; "Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions."

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____



[Casey Strickland](#)

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: [1/29/2020](#)

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: _____