

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



**RECIPIENT:** Miami University

**STATE:** OH

**PROJECT TITLE :** MUO Western Campus Solar Field 2025

**Notice of Funding Opportunity Number**

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**Procurement Instrument Number**

DE-EE0010093

**NEPA Control Number**

GFO-0010093-003

**CID Number**

**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.)

**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 federal funding to The Ohio Office of Energy and Environment (OH EEO) for the design and installation of an 800 kWac solar photovoltaic (PV) system. The proposed project would be located adjacent to the Geothermal Energy Plant at 341 Western College Drive in Oxford, Ohio.

The proposed project involves the construction of a new solar array at Miami University's Geothermal Energy Plant. The array would be installed using ballasted, surface-mounted supports for the structure and racking of the solar panels. The solar racking system would be installed on a poured concrete ballasted system that would sit directly on top of the ground. The installation would include trenching for power transmission from the arrays to the electric equipment. These ducts would be no more than 30" below finish grade. New equipment would be installed on concrete housekeeping pads that would be placed no deeper than 12" below grade. The solar array would be installed on top of the existing Geothermal Well Field and would tie into an existing 2,500 kVA transformer at the Geothermal Energy Plant.

The project area is comprised of 2.9 acres of manicured grass field with a nearby retention reservoir. There are no wetlands within the project area and it does not occur within the 100-year floodplain.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website identifies one mammal and one bird that have home ranges that overlap with the project site. The Indiana bat (federally endangered) is a species that requires trees with exfoliating bark for roosting during the activity season and caves or mines for hibernation during the inactivity season. No habitat for hibernating persists within the project area and no trees would be cleared as part of the project. The IPaC also cites a non-essential experimental population of whooping crane in proximity to the site. This designation affords species protection on National Wildlife Refuges and National Park land exclusively, which does not occur at the site. The proposed project site is outside of the critical habitat of all IPaC listed species. Accordingly, DOE has determined there would be no effect on federally listed threatened or endangered species. Further, DOE does not anticipate adverse impacts to migratory bird species.

The recipient reached out to the Ohio History Connection (OHC) to engage in consultation for potential impacts to architectural and archaeological resources in relation to project implementation on the October 8th, 2024. The OHC provided a response letter on November 4th, 2024, outlining that no adverse effect on historic properties or significant archaeological sites would be expected as a result of project implementation. The letter also states that no further coordination with OHC is necessary, unless new or additional properties are discovered during the implementation of the project. In the unlikely event that this occurs, the OHC should be contacted by the recipient as per 36 CFR 800.13

guidelines.

All required construction and operating permits (including zoning, building, structural, electrical, sewer discharge, etc.) would be obtained and verified on site by DOE's Independent Engineer. Any and all permits required for the execution of the project at the above-referenced locations would be the responsibility of the recipient.

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 recipient would adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local health, safety, and environmental regulations. 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.

DOE has considered the scale, duration, and nature of proposed activities to determine potential impacts on resources, including those of an ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic nature. DOE does not anticipate impacts on these resources that would be considered significant or require DOE to further consult with agencies or stakeholders.

Any changes to the project activities or location are subject to additional NEPA review by DOE and are not authorized for federal funding unless and until the Contracting Officer provides written authorization.

## NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

1. The University of Miami must adhere to the terms and restrictions of the DOE-executed Historic Preservation Programmatic Agreement with the State of Ohio, available at <https://www.energy.gov/node/812599>.
2. If during project activities the University of Miami or their contractors encounter any cultural materials (i.e. historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The University of Miami must inform the Ohio History Connection and DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.
3. The University of Miami is responsible for reviewing the online NEPA and Historic preservation training at [www.energy.gov/node/4816816](http://www.energy.gov/node/4816816) and contacting [gonepa@ee.doe.gov](mailto:gonepa@ee.doe.gov) with any NEPA or general historic preservation questions.

Notes:

Office of State and Community Energy Programs – State Energy Programs  
(State Energy Program Transformation & Planning)  
NEPA review completed by Chris Akios, 12/04/2024

## 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: 12/4/2024  
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