

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



RECIPIENT: City of Ithaca

STATE: NY

PROJECT TITLE : Microgrid Integration with Biomass Gasification as a Pathway to Hydrogen Production

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number

Procurement Instrument Number
DE-EE0010153

NEPA Control Number
GFO-0010153-002

CID Number
GO10153

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.)

A11 Technical advice and assistance to organizations

Technical advice and planning assistance to international, national, state, and local organizations.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to administer congressionally directed spending to the City of Ithaca (Ithaca), New York to design and construct an Energy Transfer System (ETS) for the generation, storage, and utilization of renewable hydrogen for electrical and transportation needs. The award consists of four Budget Periods (BPs) with each BP focused on a different phase of the award: (1) planning, (2) engineering, (3) construction, and (4) operation. This review evaluates BP2 project activities, which would target the engineering design, hazard and safety analysis, applications for building permits, and outreach education.

A previous NEPA Determination (ND) was completed for BP1 project activities (GFO-0010153-001 CX A9, A11; 5/2/24). This NEPA Determination (ND) only applies to BP2 activities. BP2 activities are necessary to deliver design and engineering and to develop layout drawings to be submitted for future budget periods. This ND does not apply to BPs 3 or 4. DOE would complete the NEPA review(s) for these BPs when sufficient information is available to conduct a meaningful review.

The City of Ithaca (Ithaca, New York) and Standard Hydrogen Corporation (Standard Hydrogen; Albany, New York) would host team meetings and perform administration and reporting activities. Standard Hydrogen, Center for Hydrogen Safety (New York, NY), and Re:Build Optimization (Rush, NY) would perform engineering work for BP2. SHIFT Capital (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) would provide additional support by hosting team meetings. All BP2 work would be limited to deskwork related to technical conceptual design, community engagement, and education activities and as such, DOE does not anticipate impacts on ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic resources which would be considered significant or require DOE to consult with other agencies or stakeholders.

Any work proposed to be conducted at a federal facility may be subject to additional NEPA review by the cognizant federal official and must meet the applicable health and safety requirements of the facility.

EERE is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. FAA*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, EERE has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, in addition to DOE's procedures/regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a conditional NEPA determination.

The NEPA Determination applies to the following Topic Areas, Budget Periods, and/or tasks:

Budget Period (BP) 2

The NEPA Determination does not apply to the following Topic Area, Budget Periods, and/or tasks:

BP3 and BP4. An additional DOE NEPA review will be required prior to starting BP 3 or 4 activities. BP 3 and 4 activities may commence once the accompanying NEPA Determination(s) resulting from the additional NEPA review(s) has been obtained from DOE.

Notes:

Bioenergy Technologies Office (BETO)
NEPA review completed by James Cherry, 03/31/2025.

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.

A portion of the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review. The NEPA Provision identifies Topic Areas, Budget Periods, tasks, and/or subtasks that are subject to additional NEPA review.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____



NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 3/31/2025

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: _____