

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



RECIPIENT: Pacific Ocean Energy Trust

STATE: OR

PROJECT TITLE : Network Director for the TEAMER Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number

Procurement Instrument Number
DE-EE0008895

NEPA Control Number
GFO-0008895-042

CID Number
GO8895

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:

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.

B3.16 Research activities in aquatic environments

Small-scale, temporary surveying, site characterization, and research activities in aquatic environments, limited to: (a) Acquisition of rights-of-way, easements, and temporary use permits; (b) Installation, operation, and removal of passive scientific measurement devices, including, but not limited to, antennae, tide gauges, flow testing equipment for existing wells, weighted hydrophones, salinity measurement devices, and water quality measurement devices; (c) Natural resource inventories, data and sample collection, environmental monitoring, and basic and applied research, excluding (1) large-scale vibratory coring techniques and (2) seismic activities other than passive techniques; and (d) Surveying and mapping. These activities would be conducted in accordance with, where applicable, an approved spill prevention, control, and response plan and would incorporate appropriate control technologies and best management practices. None of the activities listed above would occur within the boundary of an established marine sanctuary or wildlife refuge, a governmentally proposed marine sanctuary or wildlife refuge, or a governmentally recognized area of high biological sensitivity, unless authorized by the agency responsible for such refuge, sanctuary, or area (or after consultation with the responsible agency, if no authorization is required). If the proposed activities would occur outside such refuge, sanctuary, or area and if the activities would have the potential to cause impacts within such refuge, sanctuary, or area, then the responsible agency shall be consulted in order to determine whether authorization is required and whether such activities would have the potential to cause significant impacts on such refuge, sanctuary, or area. Areas of high biological sensitivity include, but are not limited to, areas of known ecological importance, whale and marine mammal mating and calving/pupping areas, and fish and invertebrate spawning and nursery areas recognized as being limited or unique and vulnerable to perturbation; these areas can occur in bays, estuaries, near shore, and far offshore, and may vary seasonally. No permanent facilities or devices would be constructed or installed. Covered actions do not include drilling of resource exploration or extraction wells.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the Pacific Ocean Energy Trust (POET) to administer the Testing and Access for Marine Energy Research (TEAMER) program. POET would collaborate with a Technical Board (TB) which would include representatives from DOE, DOE National Laboratories, and National Marine Renewable Energy Centers. The primary objective of TEAMER is to provide marine energy (ME) technology developers access to a network of facilities within the U.S. which provide testing and modeling assistance for ME technologies. Developers would apply for assistance through a competitive process.

Proposed project activities would include community meetings and fieldwork in McGrath, Alaska. Data analysis, numerical modeling, data archiving, and reporting would occur at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. All fieldwork would be conducted by University of Alaska – Alaskan Center for Energy and Power (ACEP) staff. All logistics associated with meeting facilitation would be conducted from the Renewable Energy Alaska Project office in Anchorage, Alaska prior to travel. Smaller community meetings would be held at the Cap’N Snow Center while larger community meetings would be held at the McGrath Native Village Council (MNVC) Community Hall.

The fieldwork would take place on the river adjacent to the state-owned McGrath airport, where there may be float plane traffic. Fieldwork would consist of surveying the Kuskokwim River with at least four pairs of vessel-mounted acoustic Doppler current profiler (ADCP) transects to characterize the flow regime and a multibeam echosounder to record bathymetry, with position and navigation provided by two GNSS antennae. Water level sensors (HOBOT) would record stage height and benthic grab samples would be collected from the riverbed in the thalweg for basic characterization of the river sediment regime. All fieldwork would be conducted by the ACEP staff by means of a locally hired vessel/operator.

The lands surrounding the river at the study sites are owned by McGrath and by MTNT, Ltd. (MTNT), the Alaska Native Village Corporation which represents the villages of McGrath, Takotna, Nikolai, and Telida. On May 24, 2024, MTNT issued a letter of authorization in support of the project granting permission for project team members to access MTNT land to deploy and monitor the onshore HOBOT moorings. The recipient also received a State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources land use permit on June 28, 2024 for deployment of the HOBOT moorings.

The temporary instrumentation placed in the river would not affect the floodplain. The river is of local importance for transportation and subsistence harvest. No impacts to these activities are anticipated. The MNVC is in support of the proposed project, which is outlined in email correspondence with the MNVC Tribal Administrator from May 20, 2024.

Project activities would not involve ground disturbance or vegetation clearing. DOE has determined that there would be no effect to the wood bison (*Bison bison athabasca*), which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, as the proposed fieldwork would occur in a populated area and would primarily be limited to the river itself. No designated critical habitat or other listed species occur in the project area.

Award activities would present typical hazards associated with open water activities that involve the deployment, maintenance, and removal of instrumentation and mooring systems. A local vessel operator would be hired to transport the project field crew and perform transects. The field crew is trained and experienced with boating on Alaskan rivers. To avoid potential encounters with other river users, the HOBOT anchor lines would be weighted on the river bottom and the attachment points marked on the bank with a high visibility marker and/or float.

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 which would be considered significant.

For Categorical Exclusion Determinations:

- The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021 or Appendix B and C of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (June 30, 2025). To fit within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021, or Appendix B of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures, a proposal must satisfy the conditions that are integral elements of the classes of actions in Appendix B of both 10 CFR Part 1021 and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures.
- 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.
- The proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

Water Power Technologies Office (WPTO)
NEPA review completed by Chris Akios, 10/03/2025

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:

 Electronically
Signed By: Nicole Serio
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 10/3/2025

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: _____