

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



RECIPIENT: Rincon San Luiseño Band of Mission Indians

STATE: CA

PROJECT TITLE : Rincon Solar Microgrids

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number
DE-FOA-0002032

Procurement Instrument Number
DE-IE0000125

NEPA Control Number
GFO-0000125-003

CID Number
GO125

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:

B1.11 Fencing

Installation of fencing, including, but not limited to border marking, that would not have the potential to significantly impede wildlife population movement (including migration) or surface water flow.

B1.31 Installation or relocation of machinery and equipment

Installation or relocation and operation of machinery and equipment (including, but not limited to, laboratory equipment, electronic hardware, manufacturing machinery, maintenance equipment, and health and safety equipment), provided that uses of the installed or relocated items are consistent with the general missions of the receiving structure. Covered actions include modifications to an existing building, within or contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area, that are necessary for equipment installation and relocation. Such modifications would not appreciably increase the footprint or height of the existing building or have the potential to cause significant changes to the type and magnitude of environmental impacts.

B4.14 Construction and operation of electrochemical-battery or flywheel energy storage systems

Construction, operation, upgrade, or decommissioning of an electrochemical-battery or flywheel energy storage system within a previously disturbed or developed area or within a small (as discussed at 10 CFR 1021.410(g)(2)) area contiguous to a previously disturbed or developed area. Covered actions would be in accordance with applicable requirements (such as land use and zoning requirements) in the proposed project area and the integral elements listed at the start of appendix B of this part, and would incorporate appropriate safety standards (including the current National Fire Protection Association 855, Standard for the Installation of Energy Storage Systems), design and construction standards, control technologies, and best management practices.

B5.16 Solar photovoltaic systems

(a) The installation, modification, operation, or decommissioning of commercially available solar photovoltaic systems:

1. Located on a building or other structure (such as rooftop, parking lot or facility, or mounted to signage, lighting, gates, or fences); or
2. Located within a previously disturbed or developed area.

(b) Covered actions would be in accordance with applicable requirements (such as land use and zoning requirements) in the proposed project area and the integral elements listed at the start of appendix B of this part, and would be consistent with applicable plans for the management of wildlife and habitat, including plans to maintain habitat connectivity, and incorporate appropriate control technologies and best management practices.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide funding to the Rincon San Luiseño Band of Mission Indians (Rincon) to deploy three (3) energy microgrid systems at buildings owned and operated by Rincon and located on the Rincon Indian Reservation, in Valley Center, CA.

This project (award number DE-EE0000125) received two previous final NEPA determinations (ND; GFO-0000125-001; CXs A9, B1.31, B5.16; 08/23/2019; GFO-0000125-002; CXs A9, B1.31, B5.16; 1/16/2024). The previous NDs

included a determination for three energy microgrid systems; however, since the NDs were signed, changes have been proposed for each of the three microgrid systems. This ND is reviewing these changes, which do not alter the analyses nor conclusions within the previous NDs.

Changes to the project have been reviewed and approved by the Rincon Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO).

Changes to the award activities are as follows:

- 1) Harrah's Resort Southern California (Valley Center, CA) – the lead-acid uninterruptible power system (UPS) would be changed to a 200kW UPS and placed on a gravel section that houses existing inverters and transformers. The dimensions of the UPS would be approximately 9 feet by 13.5 feet.
- 2) PC-4 Well Pump (Valley Center, CA) – a 1000-gallon cistern would be added to capture water run-off from the BESS installation pad. Cistern excavation would require excavating an approximately 15 feet x 9 feet area to a maximum depth of 8 feet (approximately 135 square feet). The 62.7 kW solar array would no longer be installed on a carport and would instead be a ground-mounted system surrounded by an extended fence. The ground-mounted system would require grading an approximately 282 feet x 12.25 feet area and excavating to a maximum depth of 2 feet (approximately 3454.5 square feet). Approximately 256 cubic yards of decomposed granite would be used to fill the area.
- 3) Rincon Fire Station (Valley Center, CA) – a 1000-gallon cistern would be added to capture water run-off from the BESS installation pad. Cistern excavation would require excavating an approximately 15 feet x 9 feet area to a maximum depth of 8 feet (approximately 135 square feet).

These three microgrids would then incorporate approximately 2473 kW of photovoltaic capacity together. 1473 kW would be new, and 1000 kW would be from existing systems, and 1.5 mW would be from existing BESS and diesel standby generators. The existing BESS and 1000 kW system have been not been funded by DOE.

Individuals working on this project could be exposed to various physical and electrical hazards during construction. Workers would adhere to health and safety policies and procedures. Rincon would ensure that all project personnel comply with applicable Federal, state, and local health, safety and environmental regulations.

DOE has considered the scale, duration, and nature of the proposed activities to determine potential impacts on sensitive resources, including those of an ecological, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic nature, and found no effects that would be expected to result from the proposed project activities.

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 10CFR 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.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

If during project activities the Recipient or their staff encounters any cultural material (i.e. historic or prehistoric), all activities must cease in the vicinity of the discovery immediately. The Recipient must inform the Rincon THPO and the DOE Project Officer of the discovery so that an evaluation of the discovery can be completed prior to continuing work.

Notes:

Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs (IE)
NEPA review completed by Alex Colling on 11/5/2025.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____

 Electronically
Signed By: **Nicole Serio**

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: **11/6/2025**

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: _____