

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
OFFICE OF CRITICAL MINERALS AND ENERGY INNOVATION
NEPA DETERMINATION**

RECIPIENT: GE Vernova Operations LLC, DBA GE Vernova Advanced Research Center

STATE: NY

PROJECT TITLE : Polymer Based Add-ons to Improve Existing Hydro Power Generation Flexibility Rapidly with Little Need for Plant Outage

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number
FOA Number: DE-FOA-0003103

Procurement Instrument Number
DE-EE0011654

NEPA Control Number
GFO-0011654-002

CID Number
GO11654

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:

**B3.1 Site
characterization
and environmental
monitoring**

Site characterization and environmental monitoring (including, but not limited to, siting, construction, modification, operation, and dismantlement and removal or otherwise proper closure (such as of a well) of characterization and monitoring devices, and siting, construction, and associated operation of a small-scale laboratory building or renovation of a room in an existing building for sample analysis). Such activities would be designed in conformance with applicable requirements and use best management practices to limit the potential effects of any resultant ground disturbance. Covered activities include, but are not limited to, site characterization and environmental monitoring under CERCLA and RCRA. (This class of actions excludes activities in aquatic environments. See B3.16 of this appendix for such activities.) Specific activities include, but are not limited to: (a) Geological, geophysical (such as gravity, magnetic, electrical, seismic, radar, and temperature gradient), geochemical, and engineering surveys and mapping, and the establishment of survey marks. Seismic techniques would not include large-scale reflection or refraction testing; (b) Installation and operation of field instruments (such as stream-gauging stations or flow-measuring devices, telemetry systems, geochemical monitoring tools, and geophysical exploration tools); (c) Drilling of wells for sampling or monitoring of groundwater or the vadose (unsaturated) zone, well logging, and installation of water-level recording devices in wells; (d) Aquifer and underground reservoir response testing; (e) Installation and operation of ambient air monitoring equipment; (f) Sampling and characterization of water, soil, rock, or contaminants (such as drilling using truck- or mobile-scale equipment, and modification, use, and plugging of boreholes); (g) Sampling and characterization of water effluents, air emissions, or solid waste streams; (h) Installation and operation of meteorological towers and associated activities (such as assessment of potential wind energy resources); (i) Sampling of flora or fauna; and (j) Archeological, historic, and cultural resource identification in compliance with 36 CFR part 800 and 43 CFR part 7.

**B3.11 Outdoor
tests and
experiments on
materials and
equipment
components**

Outdoor tests and experiments for the development, quality assurance, or reliability of materials and equipment (including, but not limited to, weapon system components) under controlled conditions. Covered actions include, but are not limited to, burn tests (such as tests of electric cable fire resistance or the combustion characteristics of fuels), impact tests (such as pneumatic ejector tests using earthen embankments or concrete slabs designated and routinely used for that purpose), or drop, puncture, water-immersion, or thermal tests. Covered actions would not involve source, special nuclear, or byproduct materials, except encapsulated sources manufactured to applicable standards that contain source, special nuclear, or byproduct materials may be used for nondestructive actions such as detector/sensor development and testing and first responder field training.

**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.

**B5.1 Actions to
conserve energy
or water**

(a) Actions to conserve energy or water, demonstrate potential energy or water conservation, and promote energy efficiency that would not have the potential to cause significant changes in the indoor or outdoor concentrations of potentially harmful substances. These actions may involve financial and technical assistance to individuals (such as builders, owners, consultants, manufacturers, and designers), organizations (such as utilities), and governments (such as state, local, and tribal). Covered actions include, but are not limited to weatherization (such as insulation and replacing windows and doors); programmed lowering of thermostat settings;

placement of timers on hot water heaters; installation or replacement of energy efficient lighting, low-flow plumbing fixtures (such as faucets, toilets, and showerheads), heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, and appliances; installation of drip-irrigation systems; improvements in generator efficiency and appliance efficiency ratings; efficiency improvements for vehicles and transportation (such as fleet changeout); transportation management systems (such as traffic signal control systems, car navigation, speed cameras, and automatic plate number recognition); development of energy-efficient manufacturing, industrial, or building practices; and small-scale energy efficiency and conservation research and development and small-scale pilot projects. Covered actions include building renovations or new structures, provided that they occur in a previously disturbed or developed area. Covered actions could involve commercial, residential, agricultural, academic, institutional, or industrial sectors. Covered actions do not include rulemakings, standard-settings, or proposed DOE legislation, except for those actions listed in B5.1(b) of this appendix.

(b) Covered actions include rulemakings that establish energy conservation standards for consumer products and industrial equipment, provided that the actions would not:

1. Have the potential to cause a significant change in manufacturing infrastructure (such as construction of new manufacturing plants with considerable associated ground disturbance);
2. involve significant unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (such as rare or limited raw materials);
3. have the potential to result in a significant increase in the disposal of materials posing significant risks to human health and the environment (such as RCRA hazardous wastes); or
4. have the potential to cause a significant increase in energy consumption in a state or region.

Rationale for determination:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide federal funding to GE Vernova Operations LLC, DBA GE Vernova Advanced Research Center (GE Vernova) to develop and mature polymeric add-on technology for improved hydropower operation.

This project (award number DE-EE0011265) received a Conditional NEPA determination (GFO-0011265-001; CX B3.1, B3.11, B3.6, and B5.1) on December 3rd, 2025. This NEPA Determination applied to all Budget Period 1 activities within the statement of project objectives (SOPO). The 2025 ND applied to Subtasks 1.1, 1.3, as well as Tasks 2 through 5 and Task 7. These included the development and laboratory analyses of polymers and composite materials at GE Vernova (Niskayuna, NY) and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (Richland, WA). Engineering analysis, modeling, testing, and performance improvement of the existing Francis runner occurred at GE Hydro France (Boulogne-Billancourt, France).

The remaining project tasks (Subtask 1.2, Subtask 1.4, and Task 6) are included under the current NEPA review. These efforts would include the evaluation, modification, and testing of the Francis runner during regular operations; specifically, capturing turbine geometry, assessing turbine behavior, taking additional site measurements as needed, and testing fabricated attachment prototypes at the site. This effort was originally expected to occur in Nevada, however, plans have been updated, and these efforts would occur at the Yellowtail Hydropower Plant, operated by the US Bureau of Reclamation in Fort Smith, Montana.

Physical and equipment hazards would include large loads, test debris, use of the hydraulic test bench, and chemical hazards. Existing institutional health and safety policies, including mandatory employee training, use of appropriate personal protective equipment, engineering controls and adherence to standard safety procedures would be followed. Compliance with federal, state, and local health and safety regulations would be maintained throughout the project to ensure the safety of all personnel. Additional policies and procedures would be implemented as new health and safety risks are identified. No new permits are needed.

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.

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 or require DOE to consult with other agencies or stakeholders.

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Notes:

Water Power Technologies Office (H20)
NEPA review completed by Chris Akios, 7/21/2026

FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATIONS

The proposed action (or the part of the proposal defined in the 'Rationale for Determination' above) 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.

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 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 Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021; (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 Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021.

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, is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts and is not precluded by applicable regulations or procedures 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: _____


Electronically Signed By: Kristin Kerwin
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 8/7/2026

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: _____