

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



RECIPIENT: NREL

STATE: CO

PROJECT TITLE: NREL-26-007 FAU ADCP Deployment – FL

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number

Procurement Instrument Number
DE-AC36-08GO28308

NEPA Control Number
GFO-NLR-26-007

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:

**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's (DOE) National Laboratory of the Rockies (NLR) is proposing to provide funding to Florida Atlantic University (FAU) to support the deployment, maintenance, monitoring, and recovery of six bottom-mounted Acoustic Doppler current Profilers (ADCPs) in the Florida Current off the eastern coast of Florida.

The purpose of the project would be to collect ocean current measurements in the Florida current, process the data, and provide support to NLR communications team to develop printed and video format media publications of the project.

LOCATION AND EQUIPMENT

Installation would include six ADCPs and six single anchor mooring systems, each consisting of a main permanent mooring buoy connected to the ocean floor by a galvanized wire rope to an anchor. Moorings generally extend 15 meters above the seafloor and consist of a gravity anchor, acoustic release, submersible buoy(s), and ADCPs.

The proposed activities would take place at six locations, from Dania Beach to Jupiter, Florida.

DEPLOYMENT

A vessel would be chartered that would carry the ADCP mooring systems to the destinations equipped with lifting capabilities required to deploy the systems. When the vessel reaches a specified location, the ADCP mooring buoy would be lowered into the water and the anchor prepared for deployment. The vessel would position itself slightly upstream from the targeted location before releasing the anchor to ensure the full system descends to the seafloor. The deployed ADCP systems would remain moored for the duration of the operation.

Should there be an unintentional release during deployment, the ADCPs are equipped with an Iridium GPS beacon for

retrieval. Upon surfacing, the beacon would activate and transmit the buoys position. FAU personnel would receive an automated email. A local offshore towing company would retrieve the buoy and return it to FAU.

RETRIEVAL

FAU would use either one large vessel to retrieve all moorings or arrange multiple trips with smaller vessels that can tow mooring back to the shore. For reach recovery, the vessel would transit upstream from the buoy and acoustically trigger their release. The buoys would be recovered once they surface. Upon recovery of moorings, the anchors would remain on the sea floor.

SCHEDULE

Proposed project activities include the deployment of the ADCPs for up to three years. Operational time would be limited by both the data storage capacity and battery in the acoustic release system. The ADCPs would deploy as soon as summer 2026. Exactly deployment and recovery dates would be dependent on permits, weather, and ocean conditions conducive to safe operations.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE (FWS) CONSULTATION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Jacksonville Office initiated and completed consultation with the FWS. Pursuant to FWS letters dated April 25, 2013, and May 13, 2019, further consultation is not required because the USACE reached a MANLAA determination for the manatee or its designated critical habitat. This applies to proposed in-water activities evaluated under the April 2013 Manatee Key and May 2019 Addendum, for which the FWS concurs with the USACE determination in accordance with 50 CFR 402.14(b)(1).

GFO communicated with FWS on April 15, 2026, concerning the previous USACE correspondence with the FWS Florida Ecological Services Field Office (FESO). FWS FESO replied on April 15, 2026, confirming that the likelihood of adverse effects to manatees is low and that the Manatee Standard Conditions should be followed in the event manatees are presenting during any of the activities. Based on the prior USACE communications with FWS FESO and the supplementary information provided to GFO, DOE determined there would be no effect to federally listed species under FWS jurisdiction.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE (NMFS) CONSULTATION

The USACE Jacksonville Office initiated consultation with the NMFS Protected Resource Division on May 1, 2025, requesting concurrence with a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination. On September 30, 2025, USACE received concurrence with their determination from NMFS.

GFO initiated consultation with NMFS on April 30, 2026, through the “Late Arriving Action Agencies” process to fulfill DOE’s obligations under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act. DOE reviewed the USACE’s consultation with NMFS and concurred with their Section 7 “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination. NMFS responded on July 1, 2026, concurring with DOE’s determination.

ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

Cultural resources were not identified in the project area. The proposed project would occur at a designated locations with the closest known Shipwreck located approximately 15 nautical miles northwest of one ADCP test site. There are no anticipated impacts to shipwrecks or other cultural resources from project activities. The discharge of brine and fresh water produced by the devices and the operation of vessels would not affect the use, availability, or quality of water resources, or planned or ongoing land uses.

FAU would ensure project work would be performed in accordance with the USACE Nationwide Permit General Conditions, the Jacksonville District Regional Conditions, and the General and Project-Specific Special Conditions provided by the USACE. All required permits should be obtained before project activities commence. Permitting agencies could include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (for activities in navigable waters); U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) (Private Aids to Navigation application/Notice to Mariners); U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management - Coastal Zone Management Authority.

Vessel and vehicle use would result in de minimus air emissions. Project activities may temporarily elevate noise levels and would likely be masked by the existing background noise in the area from waves, existing recreational and commercial vessel activity, and other activities that regularly occur in the project area.

Individuals working on this project could be exposed to various hazards during equipment and device assembly, deployment, testing, and retrieval. Existing corporate health and safety policies and procedures would be followed, including employee training, proper protective equipment, and engineering controls; additional policies and procedures would be implemented as new health and safety risks are identified

DOE has made a final NEPA determination.

Include the following condition in the financial assistance agreement:

All required permits, permissions, notifications, and approvals shall be received prior to commencing project activities.

All work performed to execute the project shall abide by all mitigation measures outlined in DOE's consultation and correspondence with NMFS and FWS.

Notes:

NLR

Brandon Bammel, 07/21/2026

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.

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature:



Electronically Signed By: Nicole Serio

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date:

7/21/2026

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: