PMC-EF2a

(2/04/02)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
EERE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CENTER
NEPA DETERMINATION

RECIPIENT: NREL

STATE: TX

PROJECT TITLE : Los Tomates Meteorological Tower; NREL Tracking No. 11-009

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
		NREL-11-009	GO10337

Based on my review of the information concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (authorized under DOE Order 451.1A), I have made the following determination:

CX, EA, EIS APPENDIX AND NUMBER:

Description:

A9 Information gathering (including, but not limited to, literature surveys, inventories, audits), data analysis (including computer modeling), document preparation (such as conceptual design or feasibility studies, analytical energy supply and demand studies), and dissemination (including, but not limited to, document mailings, publication, and distribution; and classroom training and informational programs), but not including site characterization or environmental monitoring.

B3.1 Onsite and offsite site characterization and environmental monitoring, including siting, construction (or modification), operation, and dismantlement or closing (abandonment) 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. Activities covered include, but are not limited to, site characterization and environmental monitoring under CERCLA and RCRA. Specific activities include, but are not limited to:

Rational for determination:

This proposed project is for the installation and operation of a meteorological (met) tower at the Los Tomates, Texas Land Port of Entry (LPOE) operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and owned by the General Services Administration (GSA). The Los Tomates LPOE is south of Brownsville, Cameron County, State of Texas. The coordinates for the proposed met tower is 25.89069°N, -97.47024° W. The West Texas A&M's Alternative Energy Institute (AEI) would install a 50-meter tall meteorological (met) tower and supporting guy wires. Data collected from the met tower's anemometers, vanes and temperature sensors would be used to provide a feasibility study for wind potential at the site for a subsequent commercial-scale wind turbine installation.

The proposed met tower location at the Los Tomates LPOE is previously disturbed, but currently vacant field adjacent to the LPOE complex. Site access would be provided by existing roads. The met tower would be assembled onsite then lifted via a truck-mounted gin pole and winch. The tower would be positioned on a 4' x 4' steel base plate, and anchored with 4 sets of guy wires and anchors. Data would be collected for an 18 to 24 month period after which AEI would dismantle the met tower and return it to NREL at the project completion.

A Categorical Exclusion (CX) determination by GSA was signed on January 6, 2011 by Ms. Karla Carmichael, Regional Environmental Quality Advisor, GSA Region 7. The determination concluded that the project falls under a CX, and requires no further environmental review. The specific CX used was 5.3(q) - Studies that involve no commitment of resources other than manpower and funding.

Two federally listed threatened or endangered avian species are known to occur in Cameron County Texas, the Northern Aplomado Falcon, and the Piping plover. An informal consult was conducted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service per Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as well as compliance under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The consultation concluded with a No Effect concurrence determination issued by USFWS on January 14, 2011 (Consultation No. 21410-2011-I-0118). A copy of the concurrence letter is provided in the PMC database. Potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles would be mitigated by the installation of bird diverters or similar strike detergent measures on the guy wires.

There are no wetlands present at the proposed site per site reconnaissance and records review of the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (see PMC). There is a designated wetland approximately 800 feet to the east of the proposed met tower site on the opposite side of the service road that borders the field where the proposed met tower would be installed. Per FEMA FIRM Panel No. FM4801010225B (see PMC), the site is not within the 100-yr floodplain, but immediately adjacent to an area rated Zone A (within the floodplain). This action is not anticipated to impact, alter, or impede the floodway.

The met tower would be a tilt-up tower positioned on a 4' x 4' steel base plate, and assembled onsite using a truck-mounted winch. It is anticipated that screw-in anchors or arrowhead anchors would be used, which would require no excavation or trenching. If site-specific conditions warrant the use of deadman anchors, the total disturbed area would be approximately 80 SQFT, the excavated soil would be placed back into the holes to hold the anchors in place, and the excavated area revegetated following disturbance.

Per the GSA CX determination, there are no cultural resource issues associated with project site. A follow up email with Mr. Steve Kline, Regional Historic Preservation and Fine Arts Officer, GSA Region 7, on January 27, 2011 (see PMC) states "Since the towers are temporary, located in non-historic border stations with no historic eligible resources that would be affected, GSA determined that the project would have no effect as respects cultural resources. This is also based on the very minimal and non-invasive ground disturbance."

The tower height is less than 200 feet, and obstruction lighting is not required by the FAA. This proposed project would not result in the utilization of hazardous materials, or generation of hazardous waste or air emissions.

Based on the information above and the GSA CX determination, this project's impacts to the human and natural environment can be deemed less than significant and this project would qualify for Categorical Exclusions A9 and B3.1(h).

NEPA PROVISION

DOE has made a final NEPA determination for this award

Insert the following language in the award:

Insert the following language in the award:

You are required to:
AEI shall install bird diverters or other equivalent strike deterrence measures on the guy wires of the met tower to minimize impacts to migratory birds and raptors.

Note to Specialist :

EF2a prepared by Rob Smith on 01/28/11

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: Lori Plummer Date: 1/28/2011
NEPA Compliance Officer

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER DETERMINATION

☐ Field Office Manager review required

NCO REQUESTS THE FIELD OFFICE MANAGER REVIEW FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:

☐ Proposed action fits within a categorical exclusion but involves a high profile or controversial issue that warrants Field Office Manager's attention.
☐ Proposed action falls within an EA or EIS category and therefore requires Field Office Manager's review and determination.

BASED ON MY REVIEW I CONCUR WITH THE DETERMINATION OF THE NCO :

Field Office Manager's Signature: _____ Date: _____
Field Office Manager