PMC-EF2a

(2.04.02)

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

RECIPIENT: Ruby Mountain Inc for El Paso County **STATE:** TX

PROJECT TITLE: El Paso County Geothermal Project at Fort Bliss - Phase 2-B and Phase 3

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number	Procurement Instrument Number	NEPA Control Number	CID Number
DE-FOA-0000109	DE-EE0002827	GFO-0002827-004	

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:

B3.6 Siting, construction (or modification), operation, and decommissioning of facilities for indoor bench-scale research projects and conventional laboratory operations (for example, preparation of chemical standards and sample analysis); small-scale research and development projects; and small-scale pilot projects (generally less than two years) conducted to verify a concept before demonstration actions. Construction (or modification) will be within or contiguous to an already developed area (where active utilities and currently used roads are readily accessible).

Rational for determination:

El Paso County (EPC) would evaluate the commercial viability of low temperature geothermal resources in the McGregor test area (or other less known sites) on the Fort Bliss Military Reservation (Fort Bliss) to determine if those resources have adequate temperatures, flow rates and volume to justify commercial development at any scale with an eye toward 20 MW as a target. If the resource is adequate EPC would determine where production facilities could be located for the production of power, as well as if, and how, such facilities could be used to power the McGregor Range installation and how such power could be returned to the grid for use by Fort Bliss.

This project was previously approved by GFO-10-277 on April 21, 2010. Subsequent to that approval, the recipient discovered there were existing slim-holes that were still open and available for testing. The existence of these wells negated the need for the proposed slim-holes in Phase 2 of the original project. Therefore, the project was revised from its original scope to include Phase 2-A, 2-B, and slight changes were made to Phase 3. This change in project scope necessitated another NEPA review and determination of the newly revised project and subsequently Phase 1 (all tasks) and Phase 2-A (all tasks) were approved by GFO-0002827-002 on February 17, 2011. Phase 2-B (Tasks 1 and 2) were approved by GFO-0002827-003 on June 30, 2011. This NEPA determination is specific to the remaining tasks within the project (Phase 2-B, Tasks 3 through 6; and Phase 3, all tasks).

Phase 2-B – Resource Confirmation Well Drilling & Heli-Lite Drill Rig Testing
3.0 Resource Confirmation Well Drilling
4.0 Core Collection and Data Package
5.0 Core/Cuttings Sampling and Logging
6.0 Data Integration and Reporting of Results
Phase 3 – Resource Testing and Assessment
1.0 Well Testing – includes logging, water chemistry analysis, and flow testing
2.0 Evaluation by an Expert
3.0 Chemostratigraphic-Chronostratigraphic Assessment – laboratory analysis
4.0 Final Project Assessment
5.0 Phase 3 Reporting and Technology Transfer

Remaining project field work would take place within McGregor Range, Fort Bliss, New Mexico, which has been legislatively withdrawn by Congress from the Public domain for military use by the Military Lands Withdrawal Act of 1999 with no reservation of water or mineral rights for Army use. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the land

management agency responsible for administration of McGregor Range lands for work not classified as military use. Fort Bliss informed the BLM that the well to be drilled would be a water well potentially to be used for firefighting purposes and therefore the appropriate permitting would be through the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE) which handles all permits for water well drilling within the state regardless of land status. The BLM agreed that for a water well, the permitting should be handled by the State of New Mexico and therefore required no further action by the BLM. Fort Bliss submitted an Artesian Well Plan of Operations to NMOSE for the drilling of the water well. NMOSE reviewed the plan and issued a Permit to Drill an Exploratory Well (T-5863) for the exploration and monitoring of groundwater resources on June 20, 2012. As part of the permit, NMOSE supplied multiple Conditions of Approval that must be followed (see uploaded documents in the PMC for further details).

Fort Bliss completed an Environmental Screening Document and Record of Environmental Consideration (REC) and issued a CX in October 2011 for Phase 2-B (Tasks 3 through 6) and Phase 3 (all tasks) activities. Results of the REC did not indicate the presence of any resources or project impacts that would preclude the issuance of the CX. Additionally, it was determined that project activities fell within the scope of impacts addressed programmatically in a previous Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the Record of Decision (ROD) for which was signed September 20, 2001; supplemented by an EIS dated April 30, 2007. DOE is in agreement with the Fort Bliss REC that there are no resources or project impacts that would preclude the issuance of a CX.

Total Project Funding: $5,000,000 (DOE)
Funds previously released: $1,849,590 (DOE)
Funds associated with this NEPA determination: $3,150,410 (DOE)

Remaining project activities are composed of information gathering, data analysis, and document preparation; onsite site characterization activities; and laboratory operations; therefore the DOE has categorized this proposal into Categorical Exclusions A9, B3.1, and B3.6.

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:
All Conditions of Approval as outlined in the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer Permit to Drill Exploratory Well (T-5863) must be followed.

Note to Specialist :

EF2a prepared by Casey Strickland

SIGNATURE OF THIS MEMORANDUM CONSTITUTES A RECORD OF THIS DECISION.

NEPA Compliance Officer Signature: _____ Date: 7/3/2012
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