U.S. Department of Energy
Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

Submit by E-mail

Proposed Action Title: Solicitation on Topics Informing New Program Areas Targeted Topic U: SF6-Free Routes for Electrical Equipment (S-FREE) (FOA No. DE-FOA-0001953)

Program or Field Office: Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy

Location(s) (City/County/State): CT, GA, MS, NY, PA

Proposed Action Description:

The S-FREE Program seeks to develop technologies aimed at reducing Sulfur Hexafluoride (SF6) emissions from the electric transmission and distribution sector. S-FREE teams will (1) identify new alternative gases or gas mixtures with comparable performance to SF6 but with much lower global warming potential (GWP); (2) accelerate development and testing of vacuum-dry air or vacuum-solid dielectric technologies for high voltage (at or above 245kV) applications; (3) design cost-effective sensors enabling early and continuous SF6 and alternative gas leak detection; and (4) design new pathways for the permanent fixation or destruction of SF6 for end-of-life disposal. If successful, S-FREE technologies may reduce, regulate, or eliminate SF6 emissions from electrical grids.

The S-FREE Program is composed of 4 small-scale research and development projects that will be conducted by universities, a non-profit entity, for-profit entities, and federal laboratories. This Determination covers 3 of the 4 projects (listed in Attachment A). These 3 projects fit within the class of actions identified under the DOE Categorical Exclusion identified below and do not involve any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the projects. This assessment was based on a review of the proposed scope of work and the potential environmental impacts of each project. All project tasks will be conducted in accordance with established safety and materials/waste management protocols and pursuant to applicable Federal, State, and Local regulatory requirements.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

A9 - Information gathering, analysis, and dissemination

B3.6 - Small-scale research and development, laboratory operations, and pilot projects

B3.15 - Small-scale indoor research and development projects using nanoscale materials

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of 10 CFR Part 1021.

Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410(b): (See full text in regulation)

☑ The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, 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 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (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 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

☑ There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

☑ The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Based on my review of the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA Compliance Officer: GEOFFREY GOODE Digitally signed by GEOFFREY GOODE Date: 2022.01.11 17:38:32 -05'00' Date Determined:

(This form will be locked for editing upon signature)