



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Great Plains Regional Office
115 Fourth Avenue S.E., Suite 400
Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401

IN REPLY REFER TO:
DECRM
MC-208

JUN -7 2016

MEMORANDUM

To: **ACTING** Superintendent, Pine Ridge Agency
From: Regional Director, Great Plains Region *Caulatt, Clark*
Subject: Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

In compliance with the regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been completed and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been issued. The EA authorizes administrative approvals for the construction, operation and maintenance of the proposed Lookout Solar Farm, located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

All the necessary requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act have been completed. Attached for your files is a copy of the Addendum, FONSI and Notice of Availability. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations require that there be a public notice of availability of the FONSI (40 C.F.R. Section 1506.6(b)). Please post the attached notice of availability at the Agency and Tribal buildings for 30 days.

Please do not hesitate to contact Marilyn Bercier, Regional Environmental Scientist, Division of Environment and Cultural Resources Management, at (605) 226-7656 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Attachment

cc: John Yellow Bird Steele, President, Oglala Sioux Tribe (with attachment)
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (with attachment)

SOLAR FARM ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION OGLALA LAKOTA COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA

DECISION RECORD AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BIA Decision:

The United States (U.S.) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has received a proposal to construct, operate, and maintain an approximately 840-acre (specifically mapped as approximately 792 acres) photovoltaic (PV) solar farm and an information and office center (cumulatively the Lookout Solar Farm; hereon referred to as the Proposed Action). Details of this Proposed Action are described below.

The proposed Lookout Solar Farm would be comprised of approximately 662 acres of solar arrays (including battery storage) and the following additional components: the Lookout Solar Farm Information and Office Center, which includes the office building, a warehouse, an equipment shed, a parking lot, and a substation; overhead and buried transmission lines and associated rights-of-way (ROWs); haul roads; and the addition of sheep for vegetation control. The proposed Lookout Solar Farm would produce up to an average maximum of 50 megawatts of PV power on an average annual basis. The Proposed Action would occur on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in Oglala Lakota County, South Dakota, within Township 41 North, Range 48 West, Section 36 and the southern portion of Section 35. All environmental commitments contained in the environmental assessment (EA) would be implemented by the project proponent.

BIA Finding of No Significant Impact:

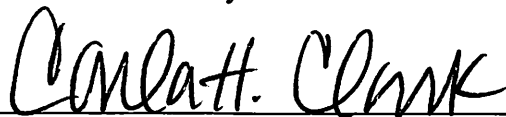
The potential of the Proposed Action to impact the human and natural environment is analyzed in the following EA, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Based on the EA, I have determined that the proposed project will not significantly affect the quality of the human or natural environment. No environmental impact statement is required for any portion of the proposed activities.

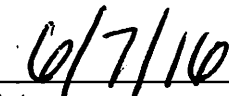
BIA's Rationale for Decision:

This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Agency and public involvement solicited for the following NEPA document was sufficient to ascertain potential environmental concerns associated with the Proposed Action.
2. Protective and prudent measures were designed to minimize impacts to air, water, soil, vegetation, wetlands, public health and safety, roads and traffic, paleontological resources, and cultural resources. The remaining potential for impacts was disclosed for both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

3. The BIA has determined that there would be no effect to threatened or endangered species and migratory birds and eagles, in consideration of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 703 et seq.), the NEPA of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d, 54 Stat. 250), Executive Order 13186 "Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds," and the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).
4. The Proposed Action is designed to avoid adverse effects to historic, archaeological, cultural, and traditional properties, sites, and practices. Compliance with the procedures of the National Historic Preservation Act is complete.
5. Environmental Justice was fully considered.
6. Cumulative effects to the environment are either mitigated or minimal.
7. No regulatory requirements have been waived or require compensatory mitigation measures.
8. The proposed project will improve the socioeconomic condition of the affected Indian community.


ACTING Regional Director


Date

Notice of Availability

Lookout Solar Farm

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is planning to issue administrative approvals related to the Lookout Solar Farm located on the Pine Ridge Reservation as shown on the attached map. Construction is expected to begin in 2016.

An environmental assessment (EA) determined that proposed activities will not cause significant impacts to the human environment. An environmental impact statement is not required. Contact the Agency Superintendent at 605-867-5125 for more information and/or copies of the EA and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The FONSI is only a finding on environmental impacts – it is not a decision to proceed with an action and *cannot* be appealed.

