SUBJECT: Notice of Scoping – BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy Project, Fulton, Itawamba County, Mississippi (DOE/EA 1704)

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide federal funding to BlueFire Ethanol for the BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy Project. BlueFire Ethanol is proposing to design, construct and operate a cellulosic biorefinery that would produce more than 18 million gallons per year of ethanol from approximately 700 metric tons per day of cellulosic material. Pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and DOE’s implementing procedures for compliance with NEPA (10 CFR Part 1021), DOE is preparing a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to:

- Identify any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should this proposed action be implemented.
- Evaluate viable alternatives to the proposed action, including a no action alternative.
- Describe the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity.
- Characterize any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved should this proposed action be implemented.

The EA will describe and analyze any potential impacts on the environment that would be caused by the project and will identify possible mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate those impacts. The EA will describe the potentially affected environment and the impacts that may result to:

- Air Quality and Meteorology
- Geology/Soils
- Biological Resources
- Water Resources
- Waste Management and Hazardous Materials
- Cultural and Historical Resources
- Land Use
- Noise
- Infrastructure
- Transportation and Traffic
- Aesthetics
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
DOE will make this letter available to all interested federal, state and local agencies to provide input on issues to be addressed in the EA. Agencies are invited to identify the issues, within their statutory responsibilities that should be considered in the EA. The general public is also invited to submit comments on the scope of the EA.

No formal public scoping meeting is currently planned for this project. The proposed project is described in detail in the attachment to this letter. This letter as well as the draft EA, when it is available, will be posted in the DOE Golden Field Office online reading room: http://www.eere.energy.gov/golden/reading_room.aspx.

The DOE Golden Field Office welcomes your input throughout our NEPA process. Please provide any comments on this scoping letter on or before November 25, 2009 to:

Kristin Kerwin
NEPA Document Manger
Department of Energy
1617 Cole Boulevard
Golden, Colorado 80401
kristin.kerwin@go.doe.gov

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Steve Blazek
NEPA Compliance Officer

Enclosure
The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide federal funding of up to $88 million to BlueFire Ethanol for the BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy Project ("The Project"). The Project, as proposed by BlueFire Ethanol, would include the final design, construction and operation of a cellulosic biorefinery that would utilize a concentrated acid hydrolysis process to convert locally available, non-food, cellulosic waste materials into ethanol. Based on a preliminary construction cost estimate, the total project cost is approximately $270 million. The Project would produce in excess of 18 million gallons per year of denatured ethanol from approximately 700 metric dry tons per day of cellulosic materials consisting primarily of wood wastes. Co-products would include lignin to be used in a solid-fuel boiler to generate the plant’s thermal needs, gypsum for sale in the agricultural or cement industries, and yeast sold as animal feed.

The proposed biorefinery would be located on an approximately 40-acre site in the City of Fulton, within the Port Itawamba Industrial Park, Itawamba County, Mississippi. Fulton is located approximately 19 miles east of Tupelo, Mississippi on US Highway 78. The proposed site is within ½ mile of I-22 with access to rail and the Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway, a navigable waterway that serves mid-America.

The proposed site is currently vacant and relatively flat, although surface leveling and grading would be needed to prepare for equipment foundation construction, drainage control and paving activities. The site is zoned commercial/industrial and is adjacent to existing industries, including a wood chip mill, copper tubing manufacturing, steel fabrication shop and other commercial facilities. The site is accessed by an existing paved road connecting within ½ mile to Interstate-22. Rail and deep water port access are also adjacent to the site.

The proposed site is a predominantly forested tract with open fallow fields located in the southern portion of the site. The eastern portion of the property can be characterized as uplands while the western portion of the property lies within the historical floodplain of the Tombigbee River. A wetland delineation of the site revealed the presence of jurisdictional waters of the United States requiring a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Project would use treated surface water for plant operations. Wastewater planned for discharge to the City wastewater system would consist of primarily non-process contact cooling water blow-down. There are existing gas lines on the site that would deliver the natural gas required for boiler start-up and building heating. The facility’s thermal requirements would be supplied by a boiler fueled with the lignin that would be produced as a co-product in the concentrated acid hydrolysis process. Electricity would be supplied from an existing substation owned by the Tombigbee Electric Power Association located about ½ mile from the site.

Attachment

BlueFire Ethanol Proposed Project Description

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide federal funding of up to $88 million to BlueFire Ethanol for the BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy Project ("The Project"). The Project, as proposed by BlueFire Ethanol, would include the final design, construction and operation of a cellulosic biorefinery that would utilize a concentrated acid hydrolysis process to convert locally available, non-food, cellulosic waste materials into ethanol. Based on a preliminary construction cost estimate, the total project cost is approximately $270 million. The Project would produce in excess of 18 million gallons per year of denatured ethanol from approximately 700 metric dry tons per day of cellulosic materials consisting primarily of wood wastes. Co-products would include lignin to be used in a solid-fuel boiler to generate the plant’s thermal needs, gypsum for sale in the agricultural or cement industries, and yeast sold as animal feed.

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The feedstock for the facility would consist of unmerchantable timber, logging residues and/or merchantable volumes of both softwood and hardwood within the Mississippi counties located within a 75-100 mile radius area of the site. Unmerchantable timber consists of trees that cannot be used for commercial purposes. Logging residues consist of tree tops, branches, stumps, and bark associated with timber harvesting activities. Feedstock would be purchased through local timber suppliers under contract to BlueFire or from additional commercially viable sources as available. The exact mix and origin of the feedstock at any given time would vary, based on market conditions. Feedstock may be delivered to the site by trucks or conveyed directly from the chipping facility located immediately south of the site. Should commercial opportunities exist, the proximity of the site to rail and barge access would provide additional flexibility for receipt of feedstock. As the production process can accommodate mixed streams of cellulose, post-sorted cellulosic municipal solid waste, if available in sufficient volumes, may also be accepted for processing.

In the concentrated acid hydrolysis process that would be used to produce ethanol, the feedstock is mixed with sulfuric acid in enclosed hydrolysis units producing a liquor made up of insolubles (e.g., lignin, inorganics) and solubles (e.g., sugars, acid). A solid/liquid separation takes place to remove the insolubles, the lignin-cake. This lignin-cake is ejected from a conventional filter press and used in a boiler to generate steam for the process. The liquids, consisting of acid and sugar, move to a separations process. The acid is separated from the sugar, recovered and re-concentrated by evaporating the water and reused in the process. The sugar stream which is slightly acidic is neutralized with lime to produce gypsum. The neutralized sugar stream, consisting primarily of glucose and xylose, is converted into ethanol through fermentation using non-GMO (genetically modified organism) yeasts. The ethanol is distilled, purified and denatured with gasoline to produce fuel grade ethanol for shipment off-site by rail or trucks. The yeast residues from the fermentation process, primarily protein, are removed and sold as animal feed.

Project location maps and an aerial photo of the proposed site location are attached.

Figure 1 – Project Location Map
Figure 2 – USGS 7.5 minute topographic map
Figure 3 – Aerial Photo
FIGURE 3
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY MAP
BLUEFIRE ETHANOL FULTON
MISSISSIPPI FACILITY
FULTON, MISSISSIPPI
09180109.01

Legend
- Project Area
- River/Stream
- Railroad

Source: Map adapted from information provided by the Mississippi Geographic Information System and USGS National Geophysical Data Center.
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<td>Federal Agency</td>
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<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>Mobile District, Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 2298</td>
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<td>Regional Administrator</td>
<td>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4</td>
<td>Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center 61 Forsyth Street, SW</td>
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<td>Interested Party</td>
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<td>Principal</td>
<td>Mendrop Wages</td>
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<td>Ridgeland</td>
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<td>Larry Homan</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Tri-State Lumber Co.</td>
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<td>Larry Homan</td>
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<td>American Cellulose</td>
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<td>Dannie Honnoll</td>
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<td>Mike Goff</td>
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<td>Wildlife Technical Services, Inc.</td>
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<td>Gary Franks</td>
<td>Partner</td>
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<td>Joey Roberts</td>
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<td>Wayne Tucker</td>
<td>District Engineer</td>
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<td>Jim Woodrick</td>
<td>Review and Compliance Officer</td>
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<td>P.O. Box 571</td>
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<td>Itawamba County-Pratt Memorial Library</td>
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<td>State NEPA Point of Contact</td>
<td>Mr. James C. Hardeman</td>
<td>Manager, Environmental Radiation Program</td>
<td>Georgia Department of Natural Resources</td>
<td>4220 International Parkway, Suite 100</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
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The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) / Notice of Wetlands Involvement (NOWI) to analyze and describe the potential environmental impacts associated with the:

Construction & Operation of a Proposed Cellulosic Biorefinery
BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy, LLC
Fulton, Mississippi
DOE/EA 1704

DOE’s Golden Field Office has prepared an EA / NOWI in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). DOE is proposing to fund BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy, LLC for the Construction and Operation of a Cellulosic Biorefinery in Fulton, Mississippi.

The draft EA/NOWI is available for review on the DOE Golden Field Office website: http://www.eere.energy.gov/golden/Reading_Room.aspx.

Public comments on the results of the environmental impacts of implementing the proposed action will be accepted until May 10, 2010. Please mail comments to the DOE Golden Field Office, c/o Kristin Kerwin, 1617 Cole Boulevard, Golden, CO 80401, or by email to kristin.kerwin@go.doe.gov.
Mr. Steve Blazek  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1617 Cole Boulevard  
Golden, Colorado 80401-3393

Dear Mr. Blazek:

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed your letter dated October 27, 2009, requesting information regarding the potential presence of federally listed species on a property in Itawamba County, Mississippi. Bluefire Ethanol is proposing to construct a bio-refinery near the City of Fulton along the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway (TTWW). Our comments are submitted in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667e).

The following species or their habitats could be found on or near the subject property:

Critical Habitat has been designated for seven federally listed mussel species within top bank of East Fork Creek and Bull Mountain Creek. The endangered heavy pigtoe mussel (*Pleurobema taitianum*), the endangered southern combshell mussel (*Epioblasma penita*), the endangered southern clubshell mussel (*Pleurobema decisum*), the endangered ovate clubshell mussel (*Pleurobema perovatum*), and the endangered black clubshell mussel (*Pleurobema curtum*), the threatened Alabama moccasinshell (*Medionidus acutissimus*), and the threatened orange-nacre mucket (*Lampsilis perovalis*) require clean, swiftly moving waters with pools and riffles.

Although the proposed work activities are not within the channels of these waterbodies, work activities that increase sedimentation and water turbidity in these watersheds could have adverse impacts on these species. Therefore, be advised that top bank and in-stream activities can affect aquatic habitats for several miles up and downstream.

In addition, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is known to nest along the TTWW. Although the bald eagle was officially removed from the List of Endangered and
Threatened Species as of August 8, 2007, it continues to be protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA).

Bald eagles nest in Mississippi from December through mid-May in mature trees (e.g., bald cypress, sycamore, willow, etc.) near fresh to intermediate marshes or open water. Nest sites typically include at least one perch with a clear view of the water or area where the eagles usually forage. Bald eagles are vulnerable to disturbance during courtship, nest building, egg laying, incubation, and brooding.

The Service developed the National Bald Eagle Management (NBEM) Guidelines to provide landowners, land managers, and others with information and recommendations regarding how to minimize potential project impacts to bald eagles, particularly where such impacts may constitute “disturbance,” which is prohibited by the BGEPA. A copy of the NBEM Guidelines is available at http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/issues/BaldEagle/NationalBaldEagleManagementGuidelines.pdf.

If any presence of the bald eagle is found near the project site, further consultation with the Service may be necessary.

To protect these and other aquatic resources in the TTWW, we recommend that no discharges from the site be made into the river channel. In addition, we recommend that an emergency management plan be designed to address protocols for spill response and potential impacts to aquatic resources in the TTWW.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the planning and development of this project. If you have any questions, please contact this office (601) 321-1132.

Sincerely,

Kathy W. Lunceford
Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Cc: FWS, Atlanta, GA
   Attn: Jerry Ziewitz
July 22, 2009

Mr. Walt Dinkelacker
Wildlife Technical Services, Inc.
P.O. Box 3658
Tupelo, Mississippi 38803-3658

RE: Cultural Resources Survey of the Project Bluefire Location, MDAH Project Log #07-041-09, Itawamba County

Dear Walt:

We have reviewed the cultural resources survey report by Dr. Jay K. Johnson, Archaeologist, received on June 8, 2009, for the above referenced undertaking, pursuant to our responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR Part 800. After review, we concur that sites 22lt709 and 22lt710 are ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and concur that no other known cultural resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are likely to be affected. Therefore, we have no concerns with the proposed undertaking.

There remains the possibility that unrecorded cultural resources may be encountered during the project. Should this occur, we would appreciate your contacting this office immediately in order that we may offer appropriate comments under 36 CFR 800.13.

Please provide a copy of this letter to Dr. Johnson. If you need further information, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Jim Woodrick
Review and Compliance Officer

FOR: H.T. Holmes
State Historic Preservation Officer

c: Clearinghouse for Federal Programs
May 06, 2010

Miko Beasley Denson
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
101 Industrial Road
Choctaw, MS USA 39350

Dear Mr. Denson:

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is proposing to provide federal funding to BlueFire Ethanol for the BlueFire Fulton Renewable Energy Project. BlueFire Ethanol is proposing to design, construct and operate a cellulosic biorefinery that would produce more than 18 million gallons per year of ethanol from approximately 700 metric tons per day of cellulosic material. Pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and DOE’s implementing procedures for compliance with NEPA (10 CFR Part 1021), DOE has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) that:

- Identifies any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should this proposed action be implemented.
- Evaluates viable alternatives to the proposed action, including a no action alternative.
- Describes the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity.
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- Occupational Health and Safety
- Air Quality and Meteorology
- Geology and Soils
- Biological Resources
- Water Resources
- Waste Management and Hazardous Materials
- Infrastructure
- Cultural Resources
- Land Use
- Noise
- Aesthetics
- Traffic
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

Figure 1 shows the location of the proposed project site. Figure 2 shows the proposed site plan.

DOE does not have any reason to believe the project would cause any effects to tribal resources at the project site in Fulton, Mississippi. The subject property in its current condition can be described as a predominant forested tract with open fallow fields located in the southern portion of the site. The eastern portion of the property can be characterized as uplands while the western portion of the property lies within the historical floodplain of the Tombigbee River. The land use of the subject property appears to have been utilized for row crop and cattle production through time until the construction of the Tenn-Tom Waterway. Currently, J&J Appliance and Furniture is the only structure found on the property.

DOE is initiating consultation and requesting information your tribe may have on properties of traditional religious and cultural significance within the vicinity of the proposed BlueFire Ethanol Biorefinery and any comments or concerns you have on the potential for this proposed project to affect those properties. This information is being requested to meet our obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. If you have any such information, require additional information, or have any questions or comments about that project, please contact Ms. Kristin Kerwin before May 28, 2010, at the following:

Kristin Kerwin  
NEPA Document Manager  
Department of Energy  
1617 Cole Boulevard  
Golden, Colorado 80401  
kristin.kerwin@go.doe.gov

DOE will include correspondence with your office in an appendix to the Final EA. DOE is sending a copy of the draft EA to your office and will respond to any specific comments you may have.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Steve Blazek  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Enclosures
FIGURE 1
PROJECT LOCATION MAP
BLUEFIRE ETHANOL FULTON
MISSISSIPPI FACILITY
FULTON, MISSISSIPPI
SEPT. 2009