



7552 Hummingbird Highway, Belmopan City, Belize



Tel: 501-822-2548/2819



Email: envirodept@environment.gov.bz | Website: www.doe.gov.bz

Ref: PRO/DEV/02/480/24 (6)

Mr. Jose Urbina
Chief Executive Officer
Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy,
Logistics & E-Governance
Second Floor, Toucan Plaza Building
George Price Boulevard
Belmopan

Dear Mr. Urbina,

The Department of the Environment is in receipt of a correspondence regarding the installation of mini grid projects in San Benito Poite, Jalacte, Toledo District and San Carlos Village, Orange Walk District. The mini grid projects consist of the installation of solar panel array along with a battery bank and back-up diesel generators along with 1000-gallon fuel tank.

Accompanying the request for environmental clearance was copies of two consent agreements signed by the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance and the villages of San Benito Poite and Jalacate Villages, Toledo District as part of the Free Prior Informed Consent process. The consent agreement with both communities highlighted that the Ministry of Energy, Logistics & E-Governance was to carry out all such consultations and obtain all necessary approvals, permits and consents in accordance with such customary decision-making processes, or as otherwise provided by any law, as amended from time to time.

Based on the above, personnel from the Department conducted an inspection to the proposed sites in the Toledo District. The project in Jalacte is for the installation of mini grid of 200kWp, while the project in San Benito Poite is for the installation of 105kWp. Both projects include the installation of a 1000-gallon diesel generator for back up and both will have battery backup for the system.

The project site for both showed signs of previous use as the vegetation was secondary growth, paths were observed, the property in San Benito Poite had some portions which were under brushed. The site for Jalacte was approximately 500 feet from the bank of the river, which had a steep ravine. However, the siting for the generator for both facilities would be closer to the roadside to allow for refueling of the tanks. The inspection also revealed that both sites were adequate for the proposed project and the communities had agreed with the location.

Based on the above and considering that all the projects are similar in scope and that the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance has established a criteria for the identification of the sites for its project including the for the San Carlos project, the DOE hereby advises that it is granting Environmental Clearance to the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance for the installation and operation of three mini grid projects.

Environmental Clearance is hereby granted to the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance subject to the following conditions:

1. The Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance shall ensure that the clearing of vegetation is limited only the area needed for the installation of the solar panels; cleared vegetation including branches, twigs, brambles, etc. shall be chipped and used as mulch, if possible. Burning of fallen vegetation may be conducted under strict supervision from the contractor and village leaders.

2. The location for the project sites in San Benito Poite and Jalacte will be as specified in the consent agreement signed with both communities. The Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance, shall submit the particulars of the location for the San Carlos facility once this has been finalized.
3. Should during the clearing, any artifacts of historical importance be found, the articles will not be disturbed, activities in the immediate area will be halted immediately and the Institute of Archaeology will be contacted to determine the potential importance and the recommended action.
4. Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance shall contract the service from local scrap recyclers, who have Environmental Clearance from the DOE for the collection and recycling of waste materials related to the installation, racking, and connectivity of the battery energy storage system facility.
5. All batteries will be properly collected and stored; this includes the proper collection, storage, and disposal of lithium batteries. BEL will submit to the DOE a copy of the disposal plan taking into consideration a recycling program, for the lithium batteries used for this activity.
6. The diesel fuel storage tanks will be housed within a concrete containment area of at least 110% of the total capacity of the largest tank, connected to an adequately designed oil/water separator. All plumbing must be fire resistant and not allowed to pass through the walls of the containment area. This containment area shall be regularly inspected and maintained.
7. Fuel unloading and loading areas will be designed with safety as the primary focus and with a drainage system surrounding this loading area for the containment of spills. Water flowing through these drains must also be allowed to pass through the oil/water separator prior to being discharged into the environment.
8. Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance shall ensure that system is maintained as specified by the manufacturer and that any broken panel, or damaged battery is stored in a dry location where it can later be recycled or taken the Mile 24 Sanitary Landfill.

Note that obtaining environmental clearance does not absolve **the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance**, from obtaining all other required permits and approvals from other relevant agencies.

Non-compliance with any of the terms and conditions stated above may result in the revocation of this ***Environmental Clearance***. Any other expansion will require separate ***Environmental Clearance***.

Thank you for your kind assistance and cooperation in ensuring that Belize's development is environmentally sound.

Regards,



Anthony Mai
Chief Environmental Officer
Department of the Environment

