The MSU Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, or FRIB, project was issued a Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI, status by the U.S. Department of Energy on Thursday.

With approval, university officials can continue to construct the facility toward its 2017 completion at a total cost of about $615 million, FRIB’s project communications manager Alex Parsons said.

In November 2009, the DOE initiated the environmental study of the project by accepting community input, said Brian Quirke, spokesperson for the DOE office in Chicago.

Addressing common concerns, such as whether a construction worker would be hurt or if work on the project would result in significant noise or dust, were all points of impact to make clear before the project moved forward, he said.

During a March meeting with university officials, DOE officials presented a document about the previous meeting in an attempt to minimize any potential impacts on the environment and surrounding people, Quirke said.

Approval from the DOE and a declaration of no significant impact gives yet another green light to the project after critical design 1 approval was given earlier in the month, establishing the design of the building to house the facility and the next phase’s cost.

“All U.S. Department of Energy projects of this size — and some smaller — are required to go through a process that is designed to identify any significant environmental impacts that construction of the project might cause,” Quirke said.

When construction is complete, about 1,500 scientists from across the globe will work with atomic nuclei and possibly could make discoveries on from where matter in the universe might have originated.

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