

Draft Environmental Assessment

McPherson Pier Relocation

Ocean Springs, Mississippi

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Transition Recovery Office – Biloxi, MS



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
APE	Area of Potential Effects
BMP	Best Management Practice
CAA	Clean Air Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CFS	Cubic Feet Per Second
CO	Carbon Monoxide
db	Decibels
EA	Environmental Assessment
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EO	Executive Order
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
MDAH	Mississippi Department of Archives and History
MDEQ	Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
MDMR	Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
MSL	Mean Sea Level
MLW	Mean Low Water
MSNHP	Mississippi Natural Heritage Program
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NO ₂	Oxides of Nitrogen
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
O ₃	Ozone
pb	Lead
PL	Public Law
PM	Particulate Matter
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
SHPO	Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
SO ₂	Sulfur Dioxide
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
USC	United States Code
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina, which has been described as one of the nation's largest natural disasters, struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005. Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damage to property, infrastructure, and the natural environment along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and a Presidential Disaster Declaration (FEMA-1604-DR-MS) was signed into place.

The City of Ocean Springs has submitted an application for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding under FEMA's Public Assistance Program being administered in response to FEMA-1604-DR-MS to relocate and replace an existing public pier that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina (See Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix A).

In accordance with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 93-288, as amended, and implementing regulations at 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 206, FEMA is required to review the environmental effects of the proposed action prior to making a funding decision. This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with FEMA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations found in 44 CFR Part 10.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to provide a new public fishing pier for the residents and visitors of Ocean Springs, Mississippi. The pier will replace the former public fishing pier that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

The western margin of the City of Ocean Springs, south of U.S. Highway 90, borders on Biloxi Bay. This shoreline area provides public recreational opportunities; however, public fishing piers with handicap accessibility and adequate space for parking are limited. The pier is needed to provide general public access. The pier will be utilized for angling, outdoor recreation, sightseeing, tourism, picnicking, and as a gathering place.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the project and the alternatives considered in addressing the project purpose and needs. The City of Ocean Springs considered a number of alternative locations and alternative designs to achieve the purpose of this project. Alternative locations along the beach and within the city limits were considered and alternative designs that involved various types of construction materials were evaluated before selecting the Proposed Action Alternative. Based on this evaluation two alternatives were selected for detailed evaluation: The Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative. These alternatives are described below.

Alternative 1: Relocation of the Public Pier (Proposed Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the former public fishing pier located at the foot of Martin Street would be relocated to an area along Front Beach Drive east of Jackson Avenue. The proposed project involves the construction of a pier with a fishing platform and two covered pavilions. The pier will be 530 feet long by 10 feet wide with a 90 foot long by 10 foot wide fishing platform. The pier will also include one 50 foot long by 30 foot wide pavilion and one 30 foot long by 10 foot wide pavilion.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the City of Ocean Springs would not rebuild the pier or they would rebuild the pier in the former location. There would be a reduction in the number and type of public access opportunities along the front beach area of Ocean Springs, or in the case of rebuilding the pier in its former location, the lack of parking and limited handicap accessibility would continue to limit its use.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

This section describes the existing environment and discusses the potential impacts associated with the Proposed Action and No-Action Alternative. Also included in this section is a table which summarizes the potential impacts and any mitigation measures proposed to offset those impacts.

4.1 Environmental Setting

The environmental setting for this project is the southwestern portion of Jackson County, Mississippi along the eastern shore of Biloxi Bay. Jackson County is within the physiographic region generally described as the Gulf Coast Flatwoods. The Gulf Coast Flatwoods region is characterized as land with very little slope and poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained, acidic soils. Some of the major plant community types within this area of the Gulf Coast Flatwoods typically include pine savannahs, pine flatwoods, mixed pine-cypress-hardwood forests, and live oak/magnolia forests. The project is also located within the city limits of Ocean Springs, in an area of Ocean Springs that has historically been used for residential, recreational, and waterfront commercial uses.

4.2 Air Quality

Under the Clean Air Act (CAA), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) established primary and secondary air quality standards to protect the general public and public welfare. The USEPA has set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) that limit the concentration levels of pollutants allowed to occur in ambient air (generally defined as the outdoor atmosphere nearest to ground level). Six criteria pollutants were established: Ground Level Ozone (O₃; smog), Particulate Matter (of 2.5 microns or less; PM_{2.5}), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Sulfur Dioxides (SO₂), Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Lead (pb). O₃ does not occur directly from any source, but results from a series of reactions between oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in sunlight. All areas within the state are designated with respect to each of these six criteria pollutants as in “attainment” (in compliance with the standards) or “non-attainment” (not in compliance with the standards), or “unclassifiable” (insufficient data to classify). The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) 2006 Air Quality Data Summary shows all counties are in attainment.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action Alternative should not have any long term adverse impacts on the ambient air quality within Jackson County. Implementation of the Proposed Action may create minor impacts to local air quality during the construction phase of the project. The Proposed Action may generate fugitive dust emission and some criteria pollutants such as CO, NO_x, O₃, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ from construction equipment operating in the area. There may also be some minor amounts of PM generated by the construction materials and construction activities during fabrication of the pier components. The Proposed Action should not increase air emissions from vehicular traffic or other activities beyond the limits of this project.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to air quality are anticipated.

4.3 Earth Resources

4.3.1 Physiography and Geology

The proposed site is located on the eastern shoreline of the Biloxi Bay. Elevations range from sea level to 4 feet above MSL along the Back Bay of Biloxi. This region of Mississippi is located within the Coastal Meadows and Southern Pine Hills topographic unit of the Gulf Coastal Plain province. The coastal area of Mississippi is underlain by a series of unconsolidated estuarine and deltaic sediments ranging in age from Miocene to recent. These sediments are not easily separated into rock type layers. As a basis of differentiation, consideration is given first to paleontological evidence and second to lithology. The significant geologic units present in coastal Mississippi include the Pleistocene and Holocene coastal and terrace deposits and alluvium, which are underlain in turn by the Citronelle Formation (Pliocene), Graham Ferry Formation (Pliocene), Pascagoula Formation (Miocene), Hattiesburg Formation (Miocene), and the Catahoula Sandstone (Miocene).

4.3.2 Soils

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey for Jackson County, the primary soil types for project area are Benndale fine sandy loam, Smithton loam, and Beach. Benndale fine sandy loam is well drained soil found on low ridges and side slopes. Smithton loam is a poorly drained soil found on flats, swales and drainageways. Beach soils are very well drained soils that formed in the tide-washed area of the beach.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

Implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative may potentially increase soil compactions and possibly soil erosion within the limits of the construction area during construction. This impact will be minimal and is not likely to negatively impact the majority of the soils in the project area. The City of Ocean Springs will implement Best Management Practices (BMP's) to reduce soil compaction and soil erosion during construction and the construction area will be restored to pre-project conditions after the pier is completed.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to earth resources are anticipated.

4.4 Noise

Noise is generally described as unwanted sound and is measured in decibels (db). The USEPA has release a guideline entitled "Information of Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Public Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety". This guideline is designed to assist state and local governments in setting standards. The USEPA lists a level of 55 db outdoors as preventing activity interference and annoyance. In both indoor and outdoor areas, a level of 70 db is identified as preventing hearing loss.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in intermittent increased noise levels during construction activities. This level of noise would be temporary and would occur only during daylight hours. Because of the temporary and limited time periods of construction, only short-term, minor noise impacts are anticipated for areas in the immediate vicinity of the site. Following construction no significant alterations in noise is anticipated.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to noise levels are anticipated.

4.5 Land Use and Farmland

The proposed site is situated on a sandy beach and over the Back Bay of Biloxi/Mississippi Sound in the city of Ocean Springs, Mississippi. The land is unimproved and/or undeveloped. The land use is presently categorized as water front recreation areas on the water side of Front Beach Boulevard and residential uses and public park areas on the land side of Front Beach Boulevard. The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) was created to ensure that federal programs and/or federally funded activities do not contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. The NRCS regulations at 7 CFR Part 658, *Farmland Protection Policy Act*, are designed to implement the FPPA policies. The proposed project area is not located on or adjacent to farmland.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action would change the existing land use for the site. The most obvious change will be the change from undeveloped recreational public beach with limited public access to recreational beach area with a handicap accessible public pier and beach area. The proposed project area is not located on or adjacent to farmland and impacts to farmland is not anticipated.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to existing land use and farm land are anticipated.

4.6 Infrastructure and Utilities

4.6.1 Water

Ocean Springs obtains its drinking water from existing groundwater wells. These wells reach into unconfined aquifers located in the Miocene and Pliocene system, a geological formation that runs along most of the Mississippi coast. The City of Ocean Springs has received a perfect score of "5" from the Mississippi Department of Health, Bureau of Public Water Supply for the past six years. Mississippi Department of Health, Bureau of Public Water Supply performs bi-annual inspections of all water systems throughout the state. In 2007 Ocean Springs was approved by the MDEQ for improvements to the water transmission system. The grant is part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater plan obtained through disaster recovery funds earmarked to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure.

4.6.2 Wastewater

The Public Works Department of Ocean Springs handles the wastewater for the city of Ocean Springs. In 2007 the MDEQ approved grants to Ocean Springs for improvements to the wastewater system. The grant is part of the Gulf Region Water and Wastewater plan obtained through disaster recovery funds earmarked to enhance water and wastewater infrastructure.

4.6.3 Energy

Electricity is available from Mississippi Power Company. Natural gas is supplied by Centerpoint Energy.

4.6.4 Transportation

Front Beach Boulevard is the primary road along the beach area in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Traffic along Front Beach Boulevard is often heavy during the weekends and special events, but is generally consistent with similar other city streets in Ocean Springs. According to the Gulf Regional Planning Commission, the Annual Average Daily Traffic Count for the segment of Front Beach Drive near the project site is 1,800 cars per day.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action should not have any adverse impacts on water, wastewater and energy usage in the project area. The pier will be lighted, however, it is not anticipated that the energy usage will be any greater than other public facilities in Ocean Springs. The project should not increase the volume of traffic in the project area to a greater extent than is already present. This area of the beach front is heavily utilized by the public and the presence of the pier will not significantly increase the traffic along Beach Front Drive.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to water, wastewater, energy or transportation are anticipated.

4.7 Water Resources

4.7.1 Surface Water

The surface water hydrology at the proposed site consists of the Biloxi Bay and the Mississippi Sound coastline. The portion of Biloxi Bay at the proposed site is influenced by fresh water runoff from the river and bayous that discharge into the bay as well as stormwater drainage from the surrounding land.

4.7.2 Groundwater

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) lists four (4) aquifer systems for coastal Mississippi. The Citronelle Aquifer is the shallowest significant source of groundwater in much of southern Mississippi. Composed of the Citronelle Formation (Pliocene), this unit comprises many discontinuous and hydrogeologically independent aquifers and consists principally of sand and gravel with lenses and layers of clay; however, the extent of the Citronelle formation is unclear in the immediate vicinity of the site.

The Graham Ferry Formation (Pliocene), Pascagoula Formation (Miocene), Hattiesburg Formation (Miocene), and the Catahoula Sandstone (Miocene) are collectively identified as the Miocene aquifer system. These sand beds range in thickness from a few feet to several hundred feet and are separated by shale or clay beds. Groundwater serves as the principal source of drinking water for the City of Ocean Springs.

4.7.3 Floodplains

The proposed site for the new pier is located within the 100-year floodplain (FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map 2852590006E, 1992).

4.7.4 Waters of the US Including Wetlands

While there are extensive marsh and wetlands ecosystems in the vicinity of the site, there are no wetlands within Proposed Action Alternative site.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action Alternative will not negatively impact surface waters, groundwater, floodplains or wetlands. There may be a temporary decrease in surface water quality during construction of the pier, however, the surface water should return to background conditions once the pier construction is complete. The City of Ocean Springs obtained a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) that authorizes construction of the pier. The pier is a pile supported structure that should not impact water flow or floodplain conditions.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to surface water, groundwater, floodplains, or wetlands are anticipated.

4.8 Biological Resources

4.8.1 Wildlife and Vegetation

Much of this portion of Ocean Springs, including the project site, has been developed by residential construction, streets, utilities, and drainage. This development and the high level of human activity have limited wildlife species in both numbers and diversity. Vegetation in the vicinity of the project site consists of mixed pine and live oak/magnolia forests.

Common birds include shore and wading birds such as herons, egrets, terns, gulls, and black skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*), and perching birds such as the Northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), and mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*). Mammals potentially occurring in the vicinity of the site include the armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensus*), eastern cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and the opossum (*Didelphus virginiana*).

Marine mammals typically found in the nearshore waters of Biloxi Bay and the Mississippi Sound include the Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) and the Atlantic Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella plagiodon*). A number of whales are also known to occur offshore and occasionally within the Mississippi Sound, and a Florida Manatee (*Tricheucus manatus latirostris*) has been recorded from the estuarine waters of Mississippi on several occasions. Although marine turtles occasionally enter estuaries, they generally prefer higher salinity waters such as those of the Gulf of Mexico. Five species of turtles, including the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill (*Etmochelys imbricata*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and the Atlantic ridley (*Lepidochelys kempi*) have been reported for the Mississippi Sound. Reptile and Amphibian species that occur on the project site include the five-lined skink (*Eumeces inexpectatus*), green anole (*Anolis carolinensis*), southern black racer (*Coluber constrictor priapus*), Florida cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus cananti*), water snake (*Nerodia sp.*), green treefrog (*Hyla cinerea*), southern toad (*Bufo terrestris*), and the bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*).

4.8.2 Aquatic Resources

Shallow estuarine water bottoms dominate the areas in the immediate vicinity of the project. These areas range in depth from less than 1 foot at MLW to 10 feet at MLW, and contain a variety of aquatic species. The intertidal and subtidal bottoms are populated with benthic organisms commonly found on muddy-sand bottoms. There are no known oyster reefs in the vicinity of the site. The major fisheries of the study area include menhaden, mullet, croakers, shrimp, crab and oysters. Jackson County is the leading shellfish producing area in the state. These fish species and others common to the area are generally described as estuarine dependent species because they spend all or part of their lives in estuaries such as the Mississippi Sound.

4.8.3 Essential Fish Habitat

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as “those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity”. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council identifies and describes EFH based on areas where various life stages of selected managed species commonly occur. Because these species collectively occur in all estuarine and marine habitats of the Gulf of Mexico, the entire Gulf is considered to be EFH. The selected managed species known to commonly occur in the Mississippi Sound are brown shrimp, white shrimp, pink shrimp, and red drum.

4.8.4 Critical Habitat

The Mississippi Sound is listed as one of fourteen areas or units designated as critical habitat for the Gulf sturgeon (68 FR 13370, March 19, 2003). The Mississippi Sound is listed in Unit 8 of the Critical Habitat designation which includes Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Catherine, Little Lake, the Rigolets and Lake Borgne in Louisiana, and the Pascagoula Bay and Mississippi Sound system in Louisiana and Mississippi. Critical habitat is generally defined as the specific areas within the geographic area occupied by a species, at the time it is listed in accordance with the Endangered Species Act, on which are found those physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species and that may require special management considerations or protection. Critical habitat also includes those specific areas outside the geographic area occupied by a species at the time it is listed; upon a determination that such areas are essential for the conservation of the species.

4.8.5 Threatened, Endangered, and Special-Status Species

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) maintains a list of state or federally listed threatened and endangered species on a county and statewide basis. The following is a list of threatened or endangered species that could potentially occur in the vicinity of the site.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Louisiana black bear	<i>Ursus americanus luteolus</i>	Threatened
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Threatened
Brown pelican	<i>Pelicanus occidentalis</i>	Endangered
Mississippi sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis pulla</i>	Endangered
Snowy plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	--
Piping plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	Threatened
Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	Endangered
Bewick's wren	<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	--
Gulf sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrhynchus desotoi</i>	Threatened
Manatee	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	Endangered
Green sea turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Endangered
Loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Threatened
Kemp's Ridley sea turtle	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	Endangered
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Threatened
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	Threatened
Southern hognose snake	<i>Heterodon simus</i>	--
Black pine snake	<i>Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi</i>	--

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action Alternative will not have a long term impact on biological resources within the project area. No impacts to vegetation or wildlife are anticipated. Birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians should be able to avoid the area during construction of the pier and are expected to return to the area after construction is completed. Mobile marine organisms such as fish, crabs, and shrimp will also be able to avoid the area and should return once the project is completed. Benthic organisms will not be able to avoid the area and the construction activities may destroy benthic organisms in the area where the pilings are driven. This impact is not considered significant and the benthic population should recover within six months of the completion of this project. The project will not negatively impact endangered species or critical habitat. The City of Ocean Springs coordinated with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding essential fish and critical habitat via the USACE permit process and had no objections to the project. The USFWS was also consulted regarding endangered species and had no objections to the project. Copies of the correspondence are shown in Appendix B.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to wildlife, vegetation, aquatic resources or endangered species are anticipated.

4.9 Cultural Resources

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, and implemented by 36 CFR Part 800, requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties and provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) an opportunity to comment on Federal projects that will have an effect on historic properties prior to implementation. Historic properties are defined as archeological sites, standing structures, or other historic resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In February of 2008, a FEMA archeologist consulted with the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) regarding the project's potential to affect historic and archeological resources within the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The APE is the geographic area within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause changes in the character or use of historic properties, if such properties exist. For above-ground historic properties, the APE extends out to a 0.5-mile radius around the proposed project site; for underwater archeological resources, the APE consists of the area within the footprint of the pier and pavilions. This APE was previously established through FEMA coordination with the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Due to the high probability geographical location of the APE and the fact that it is situated in an area of long-term historic activity, FEMA determined that the construction of the proposed facility could potentially affect National Register eligible archeological resources, if any are present. FEMA recommended that a Phase I archeological investigation of that include both the land and water within the APE be performed to determine the existence of any unknown resources prior to construction activities (see Appendix B).

In correspondence dated February 12, 2008, the SHPO concurred with FEMA's recommendation for a Phase I survey (see Appendix B). A Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment report was prepared in April of 2008 and submitted to the SHPO for review. This report documents the Phase I survey findings, concludes that project activities will not impact known cultural resources, and recommends no further archeological survey work for the proposed project site. On April 22, 2008, the SHPO concurred with the findings and advised that they had no objections to the proposed undertaking.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action Alternative should not negatively impact archeological or cultural resources within the APE. During the construction period if archeological artifacts or human remains are inadvertently discovered, the applicant shall stop work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize further harm to the finds.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to archeological or cultural resources are anticipated.

4.10 Socioeconomic Resources

The population of Ocean Springs as of 2005 was approximately 17,225 with a median household income of approximately \$22,923.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action Alternative should not negatively impact the socioeconomic conditions within the city of Ocean Springs.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated.

4.11 Environmental Justice

Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, encourages federal facilities to achieve “environmental justice” by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. According to U.S. Census Bureau data for the 2000 Census, the total population of Ocean Springs, Mississippi is 17,225. Of that total, 15,347 or 87.7% of the population is white, 1,211 or 7.% are Black or African American, 69 or 0.4% are American Indian and Alaska Native, 453 or 2.6% are Asian, 13 or 0.1% are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacifica Islander, and 108 or 0.6% are Other Race.

The project is located within Census Tract 405 which has a total population of 4,241. Of that total, 3,792 or 89.4% of the population is white, 379 or 8.9.% are Black or African American, 14 or 0.3% are American Indian and Alaska Native, 37 or 0.9% are Asian, 4 or 0.1% are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacifica Islander, and 15 or 0.4% are Other Race.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action Alternative

The Proposed Action would not negatively impact a disproportionately high number of minority or low-income residents. The project area is located within Census Tract 405, a tract that is not considered to have a disproportionately high percentage of minority populations. The minority populations in Jackson County comprise 12.3% of the total population, and the minority population for Census Tract 405 is 10.6%. Based on a comparison of the County and Census Tract minority populations, the Proposed Action would not negatively impact a disproportionately high number of minority or low-income residents as the proposed project area is uninhabited and undeveloped.

Alternative 2: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, environmental justice issues are anticipated.

4.12 Affected Environment Summary Matrix

The table on the following page provides a summary of the affected environment for the project, the anticipated impacts, and any mitigation proposed.

Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
Air Quality	Short-term increase in dust, particulate matter and some criteria pollutants are anticipated during construction; however, during normal daily operation no adverse affects to air quality are anticipated. No long-term impacts to air quality are anticipated.	No mitigation for air quality impacts is required.
Earth Resources	No negative impacts to physiography, geology, or soils are anticipated. There may be some minor disturbance to soils during construction.	Implementation of BMPs would minimize impacts to soils in the project area.
Noise	Short-term increase in noise during construction is anticipated. Once construction is complete the noise levels should be at the same level as pre-project conditions.	No mitigation for noise impacts is required.
Infrastructure and Transportation	Demand on water, wastewater, and infrastructures would remain the same. The project should not cause an increase in the usage of energy for the City of Ocean Springs. No impacts to local traffic patterns are anticipated.	No mitigation for infrastructure and transportation impacts is required.
Water Resources	Minor short-term affect to surface water resources are anticipated during construction of the pier. This impact will occur during construction and the area should recover after construction is completed.	Implementation of BMPs would minimize impacts to surface water and no mitigation will be required for groundwater, floodplains or wetlands.
Biological Resources	The Proposed Action may cause some short term negative impacts to wildlife and aquatic resources. Most wildlife and mobile aquatic species will be able to avoid the area during construction of the pier and they should return once construction is completed. Benthic organisms in the area of the pier will be impacted during construction, but should recover once the construction is completed. No impacts to threatened, endangered, or special-status species are anticipated.	Implementation of BMPs would minimize impacts to biological resources.
Cultural Resource	The Proposed Action should not negatively impact to any cultural resources.	No mitigation for cultural resource impacts is required.
Environmental Justice	The Proposed Action would not have an adverse impact to minority or low-income populations.	No mitigation for environmental justice issues is required.

5.0 CUMMULATIVE IMPACTS

According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, cumulative impacts represent the “impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).” In accordance with NEPA and to the extent reasonable and practical, this EA considered the combined effect of the Proposed Action Alternative and other actions occurring or proposed in the vicinity of the proposed project site.

The City of Ocean Springs has proposed to replace an existing public fishing pier that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina with a new pier to be located at a new site east of its original location. The relocation and construction of the former fishing pier should not cause any cumulative or secondary impacts.

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

FEMA is the lead Federal agency for conducting the NEPA compliance process for the construction of the proposed fishing pier in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. It is the goal of the lead agency to expedite the preparation and review of NEPA documents and to be responsive to the needs of the community and the purpose and need of the proposed action while meeting the intent of NEPA and complying with all NEPA provisions.

The City of Ocean Springs will notify the public of the availability of the draft EA through publication of a public notice in a local newspaper. FEMA will conduct an expedited public comment period commencing on the initial date of publication of the public notice.

7.0 AGENCY COORDINATION

The following agencies and organizations were contacted by letter requesting project review during the preparation of this EA. Responses received to date are included in Appendix B.

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, Water Management Division
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson Field Office
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Bureau of Wetlands Permitting
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Pollution Control

In accordance with applicable local, state, and Federal regulations, the applicant would be responsible for acquiring any necessary permits prior to commencing construction at the proposed project site.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

No impacts to geology, floodplains, waters of the United States including wetlands, public health and safety, hazardous materials, socioeconomic resources, environmental justice, or cultural resources are anticipated with the Proposed Action Alternative. During the construction period, minor, short-term impacts to soils, transportation, surface water, air quality, and noise are anticipated. All short-term and minor impacts will require conditions to minimize and mitigate

9.0 LIST OF REFERENCES

The following is a list of references used in the preparation of this EA.

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Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. 2007. <http://deq.state.ms.us/MDEQ.nsf/page/AirAirQualityPlanningandEmissionStandards?OpenDocument>. Accessed April 9, 2008.

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