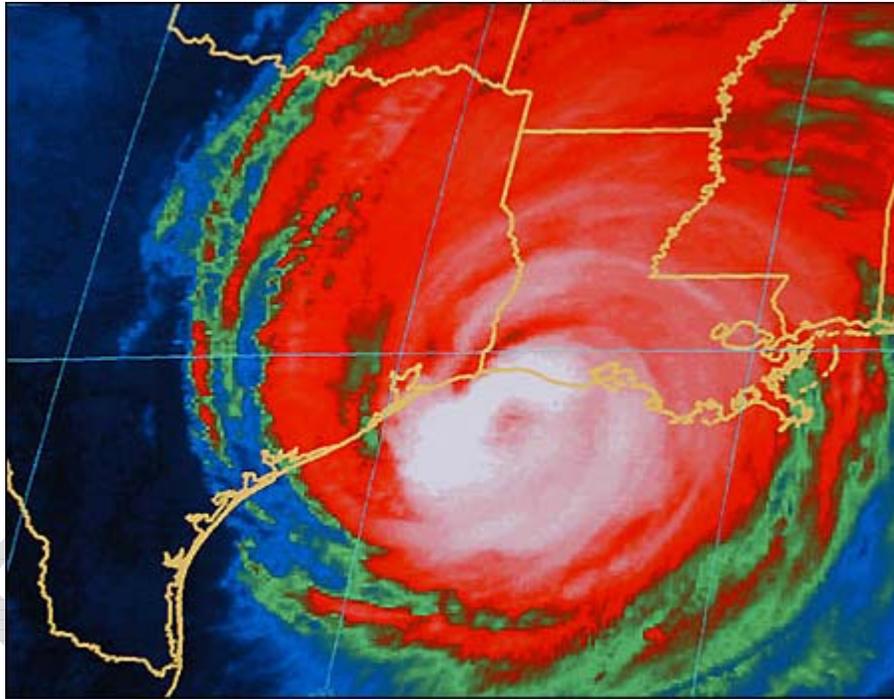


Environmental Assessment
7th Ward Main/Intracoastal City Sub
Fire Station Relocation
Vermilion Parish, Louisiana
FEMA-1607-DR-LA
October 2007



Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office
New Orleans, Louisiana 70114



FEMA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABFE	Advisory Base Flood Elevation
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
BMP	Best Management Practices
CAA	Clean Air Act
CBRA	Coastal Barrier Resources Act
CBRS	Coastal Barrier Resources System
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CUP	Coastal Use Permit
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
GOHSEP	Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness
LDEQ	Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
LDNR	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NGVD	National Geodetic Vertical Datum
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OPA	Otherwise Protected Area
POTW	Publicly Owned Treatment Works
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RFP	Request for Proposal
RHA	Rivers and Harbors Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office/Officer
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VRP	Volunteer Remedial Program
WSRA	Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
7TH WARD MAIN/ INTRACOASTAL CITY SUB FIRE STATION RELOCATION
VERMILION PARISH, LOUISIANA
FEMA-1607-DR-LA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Authority

Hurricane Rita, a Category 3 hurricane with a strong storm surge, made landfall on September 24, 2005, causing catastrophic damage to the western parishes of Louisiana. Maximum sustained winds at landfall were estimated at 120 miles per hour. President Bush declared a major disaster for the State of Louisiana due to damages from Hurricane Rita and signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-1607-DR-LA) on September 24, 2005, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal assistance in designated areas of Louisiana. FEMA administers this disaster assistance pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), PL 93-288, as amended. Section 406 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Public Assistance Program to repair, restore and replace facilities damaged as a result of the declared event.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508); and FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR 10.9). The purpose of this EA is to analyze the alternatives and assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the relocation of two existing fire stations to a proposed new facility to be constructed. FEMA will use the findings in this EA to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

1.2 Background

Hurricane Rita flooded the southern coast of Vermilion Parish on September 24, 2005, with a tidal surge of salt water inundating the 7th Ward Main Fire Station, located at 20321 LA Highway 82 in Abbeville, Louisiana. The Seventh Ward Main Fire Station is owned and operated by the Vermilion Parish Police Jury, servicing the 14th District of Vermilion Parish. It consists a 48-foot by 52-foot pre-engineered steel, one-story shell building, with two fire apparatus bays, equipment storage, restrooms, kitchen, and meeting room, and other finished space totaling 1100 square feet. Due to 24 hours of inundation and prolonged exposure to moisture, damage to the facility included destroyed electrical and mechanical components, floors, ceilings, walls and contents. Additionally, mold and mildew destroyed much of the building's interior finish.

The Intracoastal City Sub Fire Station, located at LA 333, Intracoastal City, Louisiana, is also a part of the Vermilion Parish Fire District 14. It consists of a 40-foot by 30-foot pre-

engineered steel, one-story shell building with one fire apparatus bay, equipment storage, and an elevated restroom and lavatory. Also damaged during the tidal surge was a well, well house and a sewerage treatment and disposal system. The facility was extensively damaged and the cost to repair exceeded 50% of the replacement value.

The police jury is providing fire services to the citizens of Vermilion Parish Fire District 14 from a temporary trailer on the property of the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

As a result of Hurricane Rita, the fire protection operations performed at the Vermilion Parish District 14 were interrupted. The intense tidal surge from Hurricane Rita resulted in extensive damage to the Vermilion Parish Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Sub Fire Station. Therefore, FEMA and the Vermilion Parish Police Jury have determined the need to provide a new fire station to the citizens of Vermilion Parish Fire District 14 to provide adequate fire services protection. The new facility is located within the same geographic area in which the previous fire stations served.

In accordance with federal laws and FEMA regulations, the EA process for a proposed federal action must include an evaluation of alternatives and a discussion of the potential environmental impacts. This EA was prepared in accordance with FEMA's regulations as required under NEPA. As part of this NEPA review, the requirements of other environmental laws and executive orders are addressed.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Alternative 1 - No Action

The No Action alternative would entail no construction of a new fire station for Fire District 14. Consequently, Fire District 14 would be without an adequate facility from which to maintain its fire protection operations.

3.2 Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action)

Vermilion Parish has prepared and submitted an application to FEMA funding under FEMA's Public Assistance Program being administered in response to FEMA-1607-DR-LA. The proposed action is to demolish the existing fire stations and construct a new fire station to serve as the Fire District 14 fire station facility. The location for the proposed new fire station is a parcel of approximately one and half acres, on property owned by the Vermilion Parish Police Jury, on Louisiana Hwy 82, in Abbeville, Louisiana, in Vermilion Parish. The parcel is an open field, covered in grass, with several trees, a fence, and a barn shed.

The proposed location is approximately 2000 feet north of the current Seventh Ward Main Fire Station. Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station is approximately five miles southeast of the proposed new location. (*see Figure 1*).

The proposed action involves the construction of a new fire station with three fire truck apparatus bays, training and meeting rooms, a kitchen, restroom, and storage. A sleep room will also be required, as the fire station will be manned 24 hours a day. The approximate total area of the proposed structure is 3523 square feet. The structure will be wood frame, with prefabricated, galvanized metal wall panels, on a reinforced concrete pad. The applicant proposes to excavate a pond measuring 70 feet long, by 70 feet wide, by 70 feet deep, in order to obtain approximately 1815 cubic yards of earthen material, to be deposited as fill for construction of the proposed structure and driveway. The applicant proposes to elevate the existing contour at the site of the proposed structure from approximately 6 feet above mean sea level to 11.5 feet above mean sea level. Building construction will require excavation for footings and installation of utilities with site grading for drainage. The entire site will be graded to eliminate ponding of water on site and to achieve positive drainage run off. The water service will be provided by the Vermilion Parish Waterworks District No. 1. Electrical utilities are readily available from on-site overhead power lines. A below grade limited use mechanical sewerage treatment plant (on-site) is proposed. Treated effluent from the proposed plant will discharge into the existing drainage ditch running along and parallel to LA Hwy 82. A conceptual layout of the proposed pond, fire station, and apparatus bays is shown in *Figure 3*.

3.3 Alternatives Eliminated From Further Consideration

3.3.1 Reconstruction of the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station

Prior to Hurricane Rita, the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station was located on leased property at 20321 LA Hwy 82, Abbeville, Louisiana 70510. The property owner does not wish to renew the lease. Therefore, this is not a viable alternative.

3.3.2 Reconstruction of the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station

One alternative considered was the reconstruction of the existing Intracoastal City Sub Station to its pre-disaster location, function and capacity. Elevation to the Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) would not be required as a condition of the repairs.

The alternative of rebuilding the fire station at its pre-storm location is not considered a viable alternative to be carried forward for the following reasons:

- Proximity to Vermilion Bay: The current location of the Intracoastal City Sub Station on LA Hwy 333 in Intracoastal City is approximately five miles directly north of Vermilion Bay. During Hurricane Rita, the fire station received ten feet

of storm surge from Vermilion Bay and was heavily damaged. Intracoastal City Sub Station provides emergency services to the Fire District 14 population. In the event of another disaster, the Fire District 14 population could be without full fire protection once again. The Vermilion Parish Police Jury has determined that it is necessary that the Intracoastal City Sub Station and the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station be relocated to higher ground farther from Vermilion Bay.

Because there are feasible alternatives to rebuilding the fire station at the pre-disaster site, which is in close proximity to Vermilion Bay, this alternative is not considered practicable and will not be studied in detail in the EA.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

4.1 Geology and Soils

The geology of the area, which includes the original fire stations as well as the proposed fire station site, is predominantly Pleistocene terraces. Pleistocene terraces consist of sand, gravel, and mud, but underlie raised, flat surfaces with varying degrees of tilt and dissection depending on their relative ages. (www.lgs.lsu.edu)

The proposed site is approximately 1.5 acres in Vermilion Parish, approximately 8.3 miles south from the City of Abbeville, LA. The topography of the area is generally flat. According to the NRCS Web Soil Survey, all the soil at the proposed site is Patoutville silt loam, 0 to 1 percent slopes, which is defined as level, somewhat poorly drained soil, on broad, slightly convex ridges in the uplands. Soybeans are the main crop but sugarcane, sweet potatoes, rice, corn, cotton have historically been the principal crops cultivated in this type of soil. Additional details regarding soil structure may be found in a geotechnical report prepared for the site.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) (7 U.S. Code 4201, et seq.) was enacted in 1981 to minimize the unnecessary conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses as a result of federal actions. The Act requires federal agencies to evaluate the adverse effects of their activities on prime and unique farmland. The Act requires Federal agencies to consult with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding impacts to prime and unique farmland, and farmland of statewide importance.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative would have no impacts on geology or soils and no impacts on prime, unique, statewide, or locally important farmland.[]

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): Under Alternative 2, the construction of the new fire station would affect soils, primarily as part of site preparation and building construction. Construction of the proposed structure would result in substantial compaction of the underlying soil. Such compaction is likely to result in the disappearance of organic material. Such a shift in soil composition would result in conversion from the existing soil type, to some other, less organic soil type. The resultant substrate would likely be unsuitable for agricultural use.

The proposed site is relatively flat. Grading to accommodate the structure would be minimal. Soils may be exposed during grading and trenching for utilities, the facility's concrete foundation, and retention ponds. To minimize disturbance, silt fences and storm water runoff best management practices would be utilized during construction (see Section 4.2).

FEMA initiated consultation with the NRCS on June 16, 2007, regarding potential impacts to prime and unique farmland as defined in 7 CFR § 658.2(a). According to their reply on July 9, 2007, the site is prime and unique farmland. The next step in the evaluation was to determine the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating for the site. That rating was determined to be 107 (see Appendix B for NRCS' Farmland Conversion Impact Rating).

According to 7 CFR § 658.4, sites receiving a total score of less than 160 need not be given further consideration for protection and no additional sites need to be evaluated.

4.2 Water Resources and Water Quality

4.2.1 Surface Water and Groundwater

An inspection of the proposed site was conducted on April 19, 2007. No rivers, creeks, or other defined drainages were observed on the proposed project site. A roadside ditch runs south of the proposed facility, along LA Highway 82. Given the flat nature of the site, it is possible that collection of runoff could occur. Based on topography, storm water runoff is believed to flow to Meaux Canal to Intracoastal Canal and then to Vermilion Bay.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative would have no impacts on surface and groundwater resources.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): As stated under Section 3.2 of this EA, the Vermilion Parish Police Jury proposes to construct a mechanical treatment plant for managing wastewater generated by the fire station on site. This would result in the discharge of treated effluent from the sewerage treatment plant to the drainage ditch south of the proposed facility. If this ditch is connected to a surface water body (waters of the U.S.), then the facility would need a permit from LDEQ's water quality program under the Clean Water Act. The permit would likely set quantitative limits for parameters such as flow, pH, turbidity, and biochemical oxygen demand. These limits would be set such that water quality standards would not be exceeded in receiving waters. Note that depending on the nature of the ditch (lined or unlined), the operation of the wastewater treatment plant has the potential to affect groundwater depth and flow.

Project implementation would result in exposure of bare soil, which has the potential to result in increased erosion, and subsequent sedimentation at and down stream from the project site, during project implementation. Construction of the fire station also has the

potential to increase the amount of sediment discharged to the ditch during storm events. Additionally, long term impacts could result from the conversion of a portion of the site from natural surface to impermeable surface, reducing the amount of groundwater recharge. A storm water pollution prevention plan would be prepared and best management practices for storm water management would be implemented to minimize any detrimental effects to water quality during construction. Impacts to water quality resulting from implementation of alternative 2, are expected to be minor, localized, and short-term in duration.

4.2.2 Wetlands

USACE regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Wetlands are identified as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. The USACE also regulates the building of structures in waters of the U.S. pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (RHA). Additionally, Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, directs federal agencies to take actions to minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the values of wetlands on federal property. The NEPA compliance process requires federal agencies to consider direct and indirect impacts to wetlands, which may result from federally funded actions.

No wetlands were observed during a site inspection conducted on April 19, 2007. According to the National Wetlands Inventory Map provided by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), there are no wetlands and/or other waters of the U.S. on or near the proposed project site, and an aerial photograph of the area confirms that observation. In a letter dated July 20, 2007, USACE stated that the proposed project site is not a wetland, and that a USACE permit would not be required for implementation of the proposed work.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on wetlands or other waters of the U.S. and would not require permits under Section 404 of the CWA or Section 10 of the RHA.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): Construction at the proposed project site would not destroy or modify wetlands, have an adverse effect on the natural values of wetlands, or directly or indirectly support new development on wetlands.

4.2.3 Floodplain

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) requires federal agencies to avoid or minimize development in the floodplain except when there are no practicable alternatives. According to the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) (Vermilion Parish-220221 0425D revised May 15, 1985), the project site is located within the 100-year floodplain and is designated as Zone A8, which has base flood elevations and flood hazard factors determined. The base flood elevation for this area is 10 feet. The proposed project site is also located on Map # LA-Z56 of the Hurricane Rita Surge Inundation and Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) Maps for Vermilion Parish (March 2006) and is within the 100-year floodplain and is designated as Zone AE with an elevation of 11 feet.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would not result in impacts to the 100-year floodplain. It would, however leave the buildings in a damaged, unsafe condition, and would also deprive the community of a vital critical facility.

Alternative B – Construct New Fire Station at a New Location: Construction of the new fire station would take place within the designated 100-year floodplain and should be coordinated with the local floodplain administrator regarding floodplain permit(s). For purposes of this study, there are no practicable alternatives to the proposed action. Elevation should be in compliance with the Vermilion Parish ABFE maps dated March 2006. Elevation information, signed and sealed by a licensed surveyor, engineer, or architect should be obtained and filed for verification of compliance. All permits, certificates, and all coordination pertaining to these permit(s), should be documented and copies provided to the local floodplain administrator and to Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LA GOHSEP) and FEMA as part of the permanent project files. To comply with Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, FEMA is required to follow the procedure outlined in 44 CFR Part 9 to assure that alternatives to the proposed action have been considered. This process, also known as the "Eight Step Planning Process," has been applied to the proposed action and is described in *Appendix C*. A final public notice, satisfying the regulatory requirements, was published by Vermilion Parish and is included in *Appendix C*.

4.3 Coastal Resources

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) regulates development in the designated coastal zone under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972. The Act established a system of Coastal Use Permits (CUP) to regulate uses and activities in the coastal zone. These permits are required for those projects which have a direct impact on coastal waters.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regulates federal funding in Coastal Barrier Resource System (CBRS) Units under the Coastal Barriers Resource Act (CBRA). The Act protects undeveloped coastal barriers and related areas ("Otherwise Protected Areas") by prohibiting direct or indirect federal funding of projects in these

areas that might support development. The purpose is to promote more appropriate use and conservation of coastal barriers along the Gulf of Mexico.

According to Louisiana Coastal Zone and CBRS maps, the proposed site is not located in the coastal zone or a CBRS.

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on the coastal zone since the function of the fire station does not have a direct impact on coastal waters. The No Action alternative would have no effect on the CBRS as regulated under CBRA.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): The proposed project site is not located within the Louisiana Coastal Management Zone. In a letter dated July 18, 2007 for the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Office of Coastal Restoration and Management, this proposed project may require a CUP from LDNR and/or a Corps of Engineers Section 404/ Section 10 Permit(s). However, in an electronic mail message dated August 16, 2007, LDNR stated that the project is outside of the Louisiana coastal zone and no permit is required from the Coastal Management Division.

4.4 Biological Resources

4.4.1 Flora and Fauna

The proposed site has several trees and is overgrown with native and ornamental grasses. The trees are identified as live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), and pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) trees. Vegetation on the proposed site also includes grasses (Family Poaceae). Typical fauna in this area includes white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), Eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), Eastern gray squirrels (*Spermophilus carolinensis*), and various non-endangered snake species.

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on flora and fauna.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): The construction of a new fire station would result in clearing of trees and vegetation and disturbance of any wildlife species in the immediate area. Wildlife using the project site for nesting, feeding, or breeding habitat would likely emigrate to other nearby areas of suitable habitat, resulting in increased competition for resources.

Effects to wildlife are expected to be minor, localized, and short-term in duration.

4.4.2 Threatened and Endangered Species

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 prohibits the taking of all listed threatened and endangered species unless specifically authorized by permit from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service. "Take" is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct." Harm is further defined by the ESA regulations to include significant habitat modification or degradation that results in death or injury to listed species by significantly impairing behavioral patterns such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

According to a summary list of federal threatened and endangered species from the USFWS, nine threatened and endangered species occur in Vermilion Parish. These species are the brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Piper plover (*Charadrius melodus*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*).

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on federal threatened or endangered species.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): A site inspection conducted on April 19, 2007 did not indicate the presence of habitat suitable for the federal threatened and endangered species listed for Vermilion Parish. In a facsimile message dated June 26, 2007, USFWS stated that the proposed project would have no effect on Federal trust resources currently protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973. (See Appendix B).

4.5 Cultural Resources

4.5.1 Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency funding for the construction of the proposed Seventh Ward Main Fire Station would either directly or indirectly involve three separate properties, under two different alternatives. FEMA's Section 106 responsibilities under these two alternatives are discussed below.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative would not affect cultural resources in the area.

The original Seventh Ward Main Fire Station, 20321 LA Highway 82, Abbeville, suffered extensive damage caused by an intense tidal surge resulted in floodwater damage from Hurricane Rita on September 24, 2005. The property does not meet the 50- year criterion, nor does it possess the level of exceptional significance to be considered eligible for the National Register. Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(1), the proposed undertaking does not have potential to cause effects to historic properties.

The Intracoastal City Fire Sub-Station, LA 333, Intracoastal City, suffered extensive damage caused by an intense tidal surge resulted in floodwater damage from Hurricane Rita on September 24, 2005. The property does not meet the 50-year criterion, nor does it possess the level of exceptional significance to be considered eligible for the National Register. Pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(1), the proposed undertaking does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action):

The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the proposed undertaking consists of a 1.5 acre heavily vegetated field, located immediately west of SR 82, and approximately one mile northwest of the intersection of SR 82 and SR 333, near the town of Esther, LA. To determine the presence of recorded archaeological sites in the project area, and to assess the potential or likelihood for unrecorded sites occurring in the project area, FEMA conducted a site inspection of the APE and a database search for archaeological sites within a one-mile radius of the APE on file in the Louisiana Division of Archaeology. Review of the database revealed that no cultural resources are located in the project area or within a two-mile radius of the project area. Based on this information including the results of the site inspection, FEMA has determined that as proposed the undertaking will have no effect on cultural resources.

In a letter dated February 1, 2007 an engineering firm (Sellers & Associates) contracted by the Vermilion Parish Police Jury initiated consultation with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer requesting an evaluation of the proposed project in accordance with Section 106; to determine whether or not the proposed project would affect previously recorded sites and/or resources (Appendix B). On March 1, 2007, the SHPO determined pursuant 36 CFR Part 800.3(1), the proposed undertaking does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties. As a result, no further work is necessary and the project can proceed as planned. Should design plans change however, the applicant will be required to submit such modifications to the SHPO for re-evaluation of the project.

The following stipulation applies to unanticipated archaeological discoveries. If during the course of work, archaeological artifacts (prehistoric or historic) or human remains are discovered, the applicant shall stop work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. The applicant shall inform their Public Assistance (PA) contacts at FEMA, who will in turn contact FEMA Historic

Preservation (HP) staff. The applicant will not proceed with work until FEMA HP completes consultation with the SHPO. In addition, if unmarked graves are present, compliance with the Louisiana Unmarked Human Burial Sites Preservation Act (R.S. 8:671 et seq.) is required. The applicant shall notify the law enforcement agency of the jurisdiction where the remains are located within twenty-four hours of the discovery.

4.5.2 Tribal Consultations

On November 6, 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order (EO) 13175, entitled, “Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments”. The EO 13175 directs federal agencies, “to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have tribal implications, to strengthen the United States government-to-government relationships with Indian tribes, and to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes.

Requests for evaluation of the presence or absence of known archaeological and Indian Religious sites within the proposed project areas were submitted to the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana on August 29, 2007, in accordance with the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act. Vermilion Parish is part of the aboriginal Chitimacha homeland. This homeland contains many village sites, religious/sacred sites and burial sites, which must be taken into account in all alternatives considered for the proposed project.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative would have no affect on the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): In a letter dated October 4, 2007, the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana stated their records and oral traditions do not indicate that a specific Chitimacha archaeological site or Traditional Cultural Property is in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site and therefore do not have an objection to the proposed action.

4.6 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA) provides for federal protection of air quality by regulating air pollutant sources and setting emissions standards for certain air pollutants. Under the CAA, states adopt ambient air quality standards in order to protect the public from potentially harmful amounts of pollutants. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated specific areas as National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) attainment or non-attainment areas. Non-attainment areas are any areas that do not meet the quality standard for a pollutant and attainment areas meet ambient air quality standards. According to the EPA, Vermilion Parish is an attainment area (EPA 2006).

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on air quality.

Alternative 2 – Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): Particulate emissions from the generation of fugitive dust during project construction would be increased temporarily in the immediate project area as a result of this alternative. Other emission sources on site would be diesel engines and other heavy construction equipment. These effects would be localized and of short duration.

To reduce potential short term effects to air quality from construction related activities, the contractor would be responsible for using best management practices to reduce fugitive dust generation and diesel emissions.

Long-term emissions, such as those generated by small engines used for lawn maintenance offsite generation of electrical power, and emissions from the routine and emergency use of firefighting equipment are expected to be comparable to emissions generated by the previously existing fire stations. In general, these impacts are expected to be minor and localized.

4.7 Noise

Noise is generally described as undesirable sound. The city of Abbeville local noise ordinance states that the erection (including excavating), demolition, alteration or repair of any building in any residential district or section other than between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Monday thru Friday. In case of urgent necessity and the interest of public health and safety, a permit may be obtained from the mayor.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on noise in the associated areas.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): Construction of the new fire station would result in a slight increase in noise as a result of the utilization of construction equipment and vehicular activity. There are no noise sensitive receptors (i.e. hospitals, schools, churches), in, or adjacent to the project area. Although the proposed action would result in increased noise during construction, this noise is expected to be minor and short term. The contractor would be required to follow the local noise ordinances for the city of Abbeville as stated above.

4.8 Traffic

The proposed site is located on LA Highway 82, where the speed limit on the highway is at 35 mph.

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on traffic.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): Construction at the proposed project site would have a temporary effect on traffic by increasing the number of heavy machinery vehicles on La Hwy 82. Construction traffic would be closely monitored and controlled as appropriate. All construction activities would be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requirements.

Project implementation is expected to result in no long-term impact to existing traffic patterns at or around the project vicinity.

4.9 Safety

The safety issues that were considered in this EA include the health and safety of area residents, the public at-large, the staff of the new fire station, and the protection of personnel involved in activities related to the implementation of the proposed project.

Alternative 1 - No Action: The No Action alternative could have a negative effect on the general safety of area residents of Vermilion Parish Fire District 14. The lack of a fire station will result in limited fire protection for the area.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): Construction of the new fire station would allow District 14 to continue, and expand if necessary, their fire protection operation. This operation is critical to the health and safety of residents throughout District 14.

The safety of workers involved with project implementation will be dependent on the policies of the contraction firms and the experience of the workers and supervisors. Contractors should insure compliance with all state and federal occupational safety regulations.

4.10 Hazardous Materials

The management of hazardous materials is regulated under various federal and state environmental and transportation laws and regulations, including the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA); the Comprehensive Environmental Response,

Compensation, and Liability Act; the Emergency Response and Community Right-to-Know Act; the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act; and the Louisiana Voluntary Investigation and Remedial Action statute. The purpose of the regulatory requirements set forth under these laws is to ensure the protection of human health and the environment through proper management (identification, use, storage, treatment, transport, and disposal) of these materials. Some of these laws provide for the investigation and cleanup of sites that have already been contaminated by releases of hazardous materials, wastes, or substances.

This section describes the potential for prior releases of hazardous materials to the environment on the proposed site or close enough to the proposed site to have affected its surface soils or subsurface media (soils and groundwater). This EA also evaluates the potential for the proposed project to use hazardous materials, generate hazardous wastes, and release hazardous substances.

There were no obvious existing or potential hazardous materials, substances, or conditions at the project site, based on site observations and the April 19, 2007 Environmental Site Assessment. A database search prepared for the environmental site assessment for the proposed project site revealed that there are no Louisiana Volunteer Remedial Program (VRP) or Brownfield sites located within 0.5 mile of the proposed site. No sites of concern were found during a review of other hazardous waste management and disposal, solid waste disposal, storage tank, enforcement, and other databases for various distances from the site. There are no recorded oil and gas wells on the proposed project site, and the nearest recorded well site is 0.25 miles.

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would not disturb any hazardous materials or create any potential hazard to human health.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): The environmental site assessment and project observations indicate that no hazardous materials, wastes, or substances (including contaminated soil or groundwater) are present at the proposed site. If hazardous constituents are unexpectedly encountered in the project area during the proposed construction operations, appropriate measures for the proper assessment, remediation and management of the contamination would be initiated in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Project construction will involve the use of hazardous materials (e.g., petroleum products, cement, caustics, acids, solvents, paint, electronic components, pesticides/herbicides and fertilizers, treated timber) and may result in the generation of small volumes of hazardous wastes. Appropriate measures to prevent, minimize, and control spills of hazardous materials must be taken, and any hazardous and non-hazardous wastes generated must be disposed of in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

4.11 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898, entitled “Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low- Income Populations,” mandates that federal agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of programs on minority and low-income populations.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 82.7 percent of the population of Vermilion Parish is Caucasian, 14.2 percent is African American, and 1.8 percent is Asian. The median family income in 1999 was \$36,093, and 17.4 percent of families earn below the poverty level.

Alternative 1- No Action: The No Action alternative would not have disproportionate impacts on minority or low-income populations.

Alternative 2 – Construction of a New Seventh Ward Main Fire Station Relocating the Seventh Ward Main Fire Station and the Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station (Proposed Action): The proposed action is not expected to have adverse or disproportionate impacts on minority or low-income populations.

5.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are those effects on the environment that result from the incremental effect of the action when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or nonfederal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. There are no other known projects that, when added to the proposed project, would be expected to have a cumulative impact on the human and natural environment.

6.0 CONDITIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Based upon the studies and consultations undertaken in this EA, several conditions must be met and mitigation measures must be taken by the applicant prior to and during project implementation.

- The Vermilion Parish Police Jury proposes to construct a mechanical treatment plant for managing wastewater generated by the fire station on site. This would result in the discharge of treated effluent from the sewerage treatment plant to the drainage ditch south of the proposed facility. If this ditch is connected to a surface water body (waters of the U.S.), then the facility will require a permit from LDEQ’s water quality program under the Clean Water Act.

- A storm water pollution prevention plan must be prepared and best management practices for storm water management must be implemented to minimize any detrimental effects to water quality during construction.
- To reduce potential short term effects to air quality from construction related activities, the contractor is responsible for using best management practices to reduce fugitive dust generation and diesel emissions.
- The contractor is required to follow the local noise ordinances for the city of Abbeville as stated above.
- All construction activities must be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requirements.
- If during the course of construction, unanticipated archaeological artifacts (prehistoric or historic) or human remains are discovered, the applicant must stop all construction activities and notify FEMA and the Louisiana Division of Archaeology at 225-342-8170 within seventy-two hours of the discovery. Failure to comply with these stipulations may jeopardize receipt of FEMA funding.
- Hazardous materials used in construction of the new facility must be managed (stored, used, transported, and disposed of) in accordance with federal, state, and local hazardous waste, hazardous material, and hazardous substance requirements. If hazardous substances are released to the project area during construction, these federal, state, and local requirements must be followed in response and cleanup.

7.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

FEMA is inviting the public to comment on the proposed action during a 15-day comment period. A public notice has been published in the local newspaper, *The Abbeville Meridional*, announcing the availability of this Draft EA for review at the Vermilion Parish Library and the Vermilion Parish School Board building in Abbeville.

8.0 AGENCY COORDINATION

As part of the development of early interagency coordination related to the proposed action (i.e. construction of a new fire station in a new, undeveloped location), state and federal resource protection agencies were contacted. These agencies include State Historic Preservation Officer, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, US Environmental Protection Agency, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Town of Abbeville, and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Based upon the studies and consultations undertaken in this EA, and given the precautionary and mitigating measures, there do not appear to be any significant environmental impacts associated with the construction of a new fire station in the proposed location.

10.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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Tiffany Spann – Environmental Team Lead, FEMA Louisiana TRO

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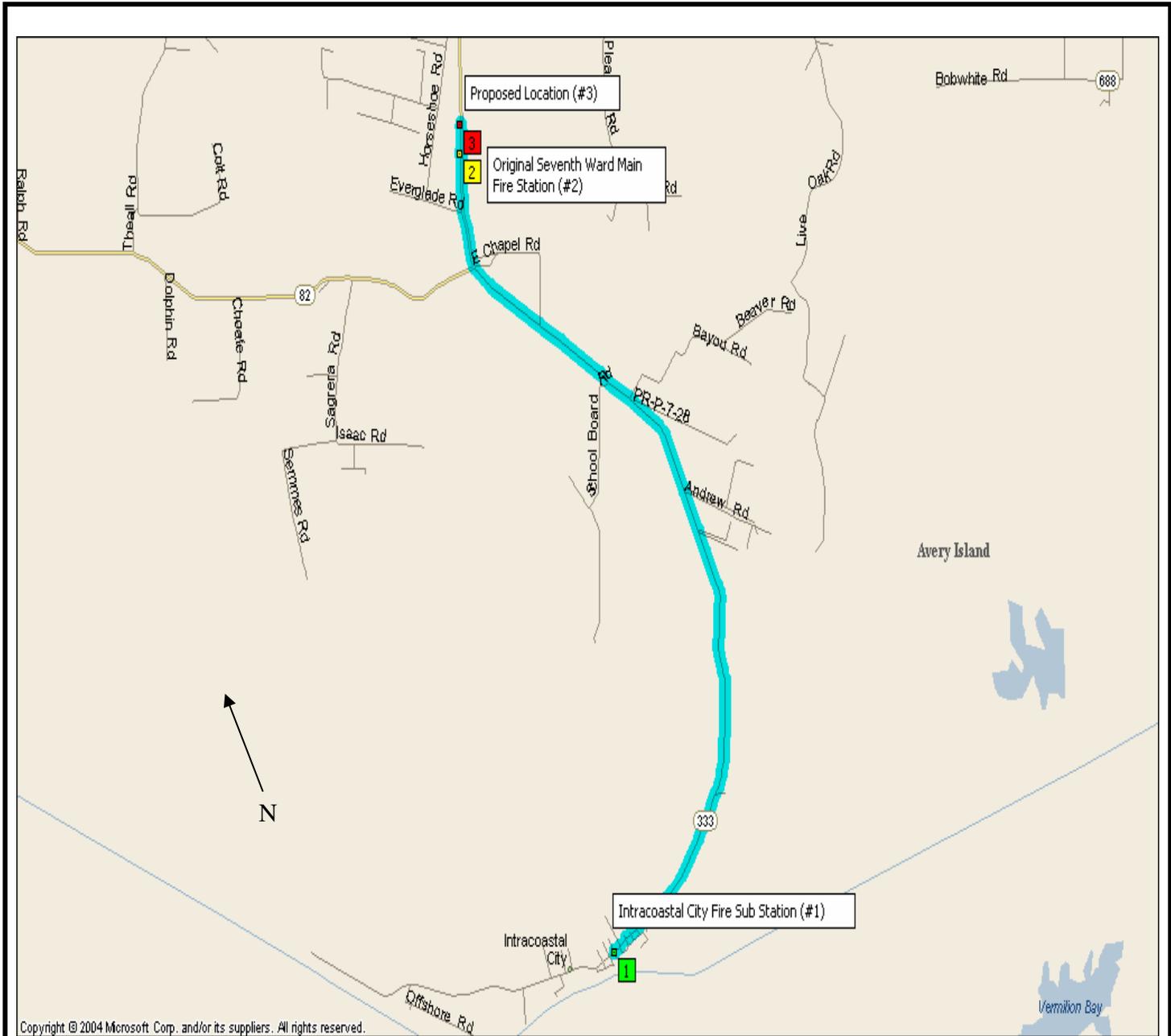


Figure 1: Seventh Main Fire Station, Intracoastal City Fire Sub Station, Proposed New Location, Vermilion Parish, Louisiana (Unincorporated Areas)

Federal Emergency Management Agency

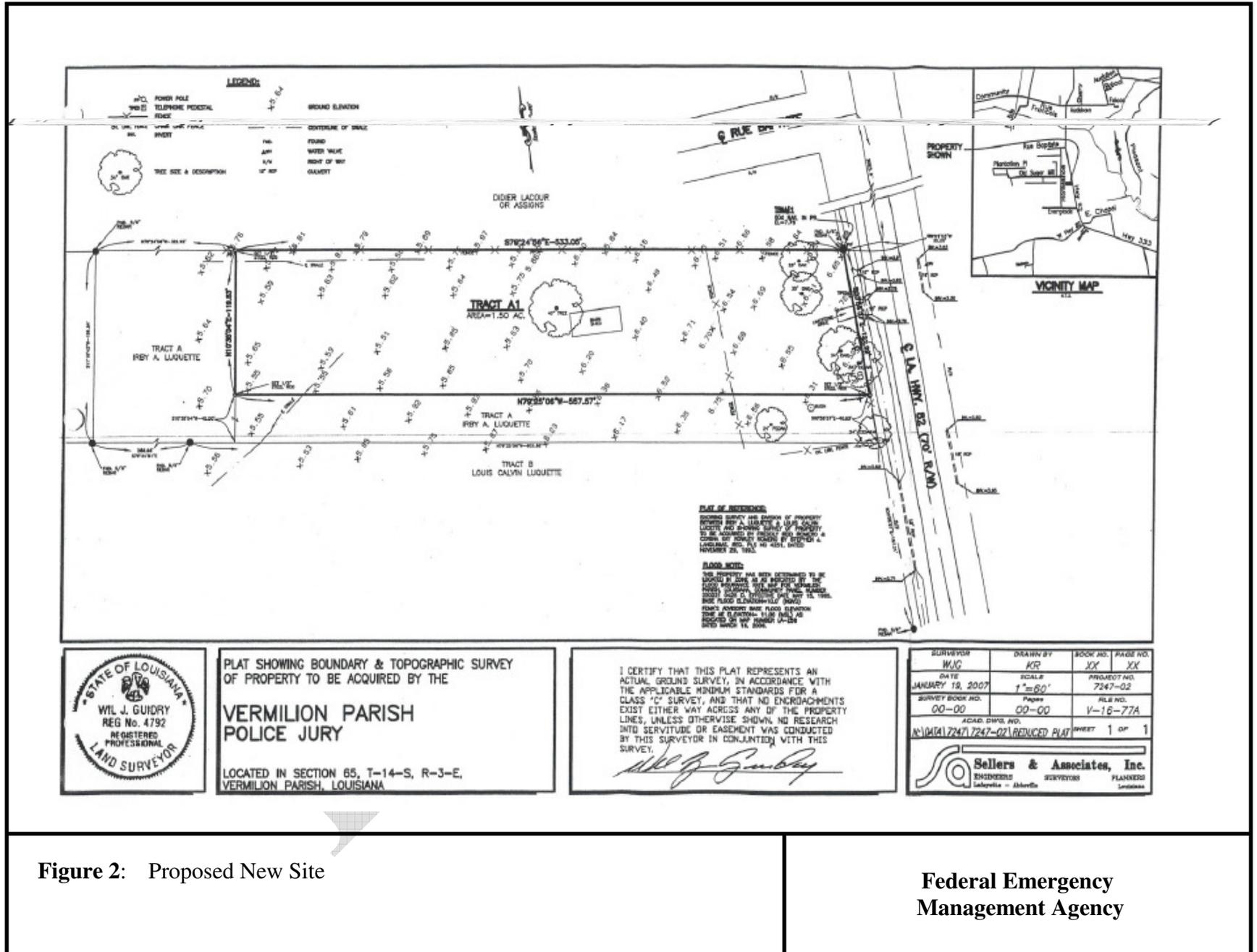


Figure 2: Proposed New Site

Federal Emergency Management Agency

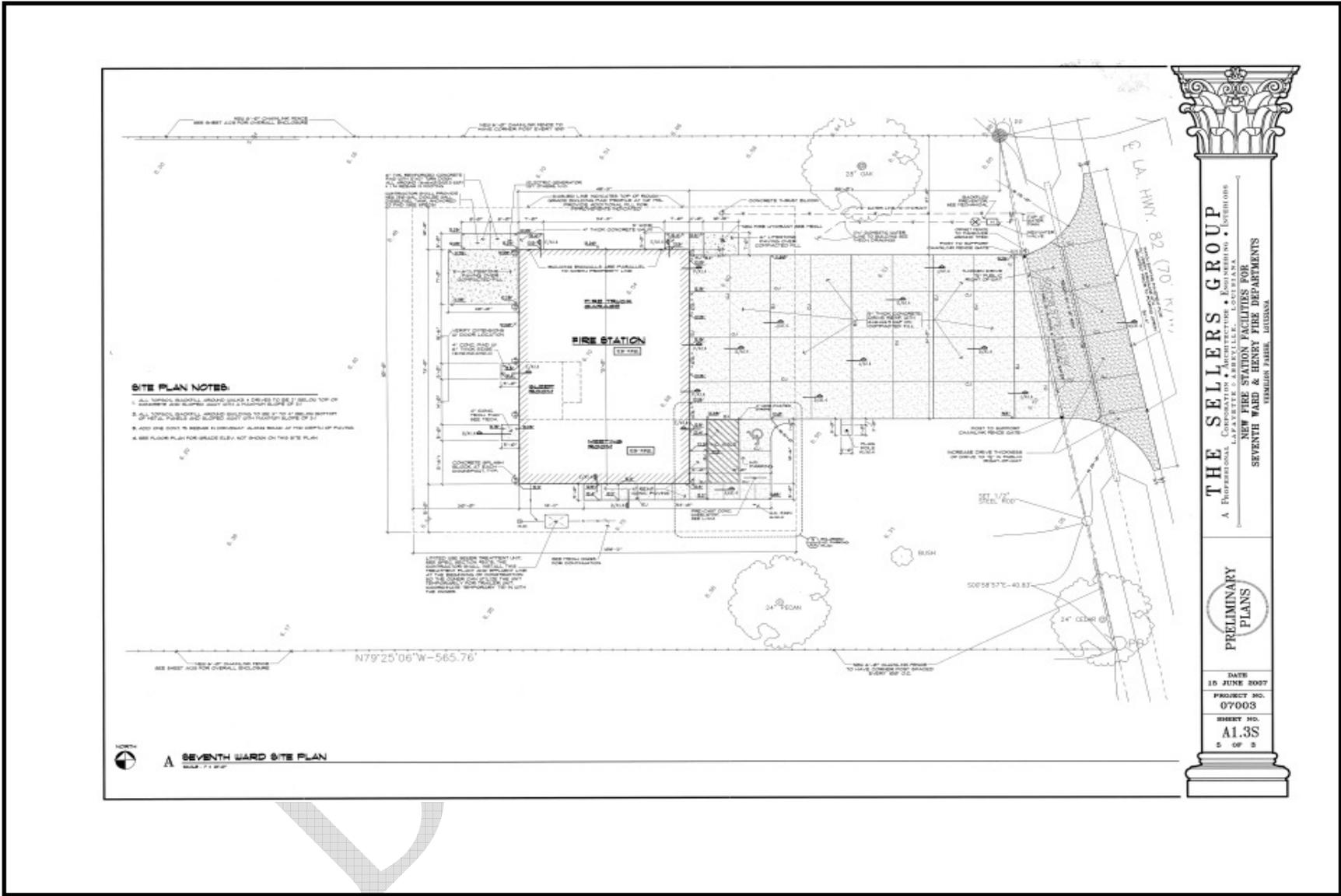


Figure 3: Proposed New Site Plan

Federal Emergency Management Agency

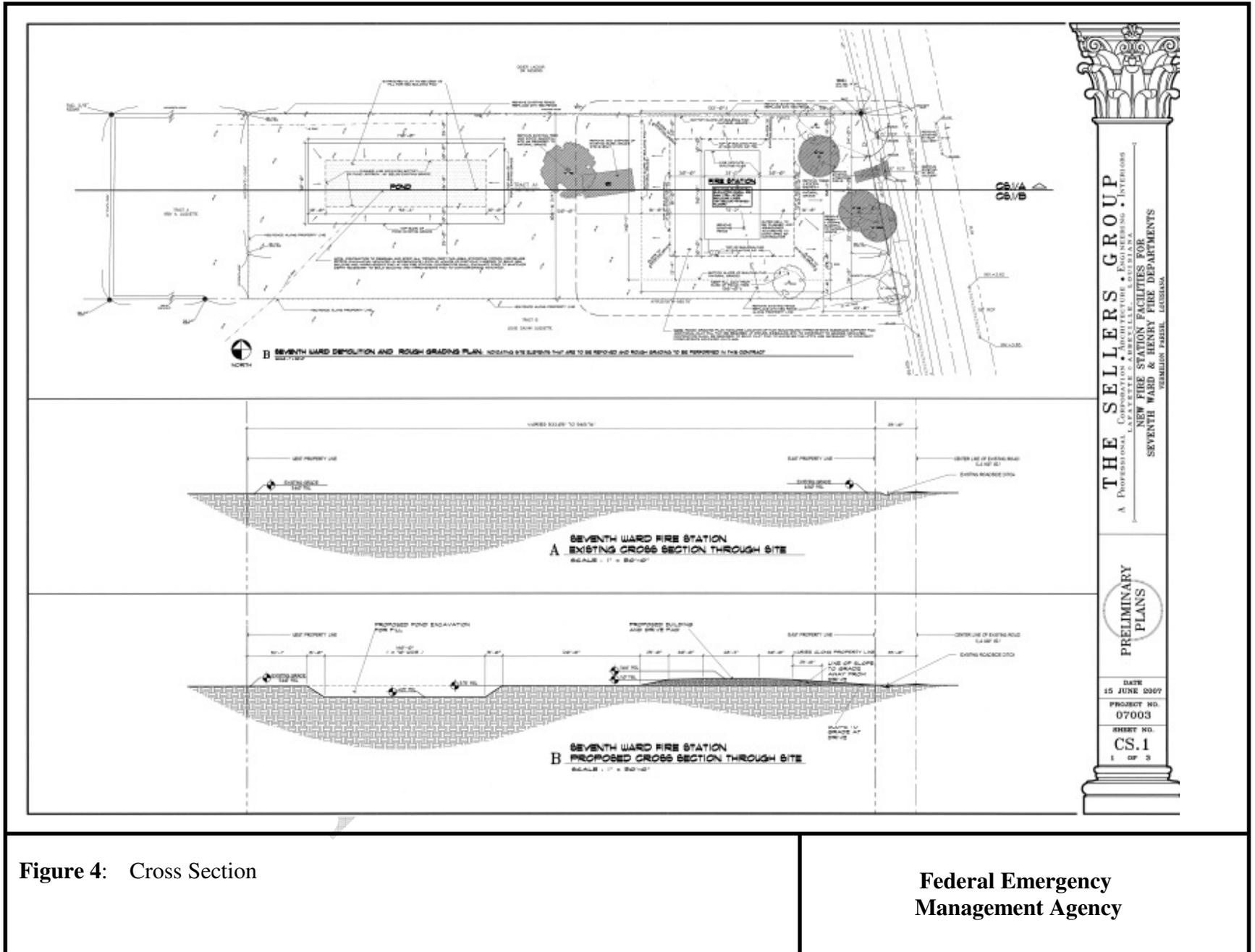


Figure 4: Cross Section

Federal Emergency
Management Agency

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