

Draft Environmental Assessment

Charles Walker Community Center Relocation Project

Harrison County, Mississippi

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FEMA

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABFE	advisory base flood elevation
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
APE	Area of Potential Effects
BMP	Best Management Practice
CAA	Clean Air Act
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	carbon monoxide
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
dB	decibel
DNL	Day-Night Average Sound Level
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
MDEQ	Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
MDMR	Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NISTAC	Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
O ₃	ozone
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Pb	lead
PM _{2.5}	particulate matter less than 2.5 microns
PM ₁₀	particulate matter less than 10 microns
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



1.0 INTRODUCTION

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast, causing extensive damage. Subsequently, a Presidential Disaster Declaration, FEMA-1604-DR-MS, was signed for Katrina.

The City of Gulfport, Mississippi, 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. 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 former Charles Walker Community Center, located at 4010 West Beach Boulevard in Gulfport. (Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix A) provided community programs and services to Gulfport area residents. The Center was originally constructed in 1952, with renovations performed in 1982 as a result of tornado damage. The Center had a capacity to serve 180 people, and was comprised of three buildings (community center, pavilion and Boy Scout storage building), as well as a tennis court. The entire facility totaled 19,827 square feet.

As a result of the 25- to 30-foot storm surges from Hurricane Katrina, only the slabs and foundations remained of the buildings comprising Charles Walker Community Center. Therefore, damages exceed the 50% repair replacement ratio, meeting FEMA's criteria for replacement. The remains of the Center will be demolished. In accordance with FEMA's policy for FEMA-1604-DR-MS, the site will be returned to grade and revegetated.

Since the events of August 29, 2005, the City of Gulfport has been providing community programs and services at a reduced capacity, utilizing community centers that were not destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. This is not an acceptable long-term solution. Consequently, there is a need to provide the City of Gulfport with a facility located in a less floodprone area in order to restore programs and services to the community.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the alternatives that were considered in addressing the purpose and need stated in Section 2. One alternative, rebuilding the community center at its original location, was dismissed. Two alternatives were evaluated further: the No Action Alternative, and the Proposed Action Alternative, which is the relocation of the community center to a less flood-prone area.

3.1 Alternatives Considered and Dismissed

Reconstruction of the Charles Walker Community Center at Existing Location



FEMA considered an alternative to rebuild the facility on the predisaster footprint, incorporating all upgrades to current codes and standards. However, the current location is within the 100-year floodplain as well as the advisory base flood elevation (ABFE) and is susceptible to future flooding and storm damage. Therefore, this alternative is not considered to be feasible and was dismissed from further consideration.

3.2 Alternatives Evaluated

Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the Charles Walker Community Center would not be replaced, and the City of Gulfport would continue providing community programs and services at a reduced capacity, utilizing community centers not destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

Alternative 2: Relocation of Charles Walker Community Center (Proposed Action)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the City of Gulfport would relocate the community center out of the floodplain and ABFE, protecting it from future storm damages and interrupted service. The community center would be relocated to a 6.64-acre undeveloped, wooded lot off Dedeaux Road, north of Gulfport (Lat/Long: N30.4497, W-89.08224) (Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix A). The proposed project site is approximately 6.4 miles northeast of the existing Center location. The proposed project site is bound on the north by a wooded area, on the east by a subdivision, on the south by Dedeaux Road, and on the west by a partially cleared and vacant parcel of land. The proposed project site is located outside both the 100- and 500-year floodplain (Flood Zone X) and ABFE.

The proposed project site would be completely cleared for the construction of the new center. The proposed facility will contain a community center, pavilion, storage building, and tennis court to replace the damaged facilities. The preliminary site plan for the proposed structure is shown in Figure 3 in Appendix A. Access to the proposed project site would be from the south via Dedeaux Road. The new community center would utilize municipal water, electricity, sewerage and telephone facilities, with tie-ins from existing lines running parallel to Dedeaux Road.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

The following table summarizes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action Alternative and conditions or mitigation measures to offset those impacts. Following the summary table, any areas where potential impacts were identified will be discussed in greater detail.

Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
Geology and Soils	No impacts to geology are anticipated. Long-term minor impacts to soils may occur.	Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils immediately upon completion of construction to stabilize soils



Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
Surface Water	Temporary short-term impacts to adjacent surface waters are possible during construction activities.	A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit must be obtained prior to construction. Appropriate BMPs, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils, would minimize runoff. A General Permit from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) will be required for control of erosion and sediment.
Groundwater	No impacts to groundwater are anticipated.	None.
Floodplains	No impacts to the floodplain are anticipated.	None.
Waters of the U.S. including Wetlands	Temporary short-term impacts to adjacent waters of the U.S. are possible during construction activities. Approximately 0.08 acre of nontidal, forested and emergent wetland would be impacted by the proposed project	Appropriate BMPs, such as installing silt fences and stabilizing soils would minimize runoff into adjacent waters of the U.S. A permit will be required for wetland impacts; no mitigation is required.
Transportation	A minor temporary increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site is anticipated.	Construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on site during project construction and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways.
Public Health and Safety	No impacts to public health and safety are anticipated.	All construction activities would be performed using qualified personnel and in accordance with the standards specified in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. Appropriate signage and barriers would be in place prior to construction activities to



Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
		alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities.
Hazardous Materials	No hazardous materials or waste impacts are anticipated.	Any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during construction would be disposed of and handled in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.
Socioeconomic Resources	No impacts to socioeconomic resources would occur.	None.
Environmental Justice	<p>No disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income populations would occur.</p> <p>All populations would benefit from the community center's programs and services.</p>	None.
Air Quality	Short-term impacts to air quality would occur during the construction period.	Construction contractors would be required to water down construction areas when necessary; fuel-burning equipment running times would be kept to a minimum; engines would be properly maintained.
Noise	Short-term noise impacts would occur at the proposed project site during the construction period. The vicinity of the proposed project site would experience long-term minor noise impacts from the recreational uses of the community center. Noise levels in the vicinity of the community center would be similar to the noise levels in adjacent residential communities.	Construction would occur during normal business hours and equipment would meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations.
Biological Resources	Approximately 6.64 acres of wooded wildlife habitat would be cleared for construction of the community center.	None



Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
Cultural Resources	No impacts to archeological or cultural resources are anticipated.	None

4.1 Geology and Soils

The proposed project site contains soils classified as the Poarch Series, a fine sandy loam. This very deep, moderately well-drained soil is on broad ridgetops of high stream terraces. Slopes are generally long and smooth. Typically, the surface layer is brown fine sandy loam about 4 inches thick. The natural fertility of this soil is low with low organic matter content. The permeability of Poarch soils is moderately slow with a moderate available water capacity.

Typically, these soils have a seasonably high water table 2.5 to 5.0 feet below ground surface (USDA, 2007a). The Poarch Series is not listed as a hydric soil (USDA/NRCS, 2007).

The proposed project site slants gently south toward storm drains on Dedeaux Road, with elevations ranging from 50 to 55 feet above mean sea level. The area surrounding the proposed project site slopes gently southeast toward a small unnamed tributary to Bernard Bayou (Figure 1 in Appendix A).

The Farmland Protection Policy Act states that federal agencies must “minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses...” According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Survey for Hamilton County, the proposed project site does not contain soils classified as prime or unique farmland (USDA, 2007a).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to geology or soils would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to geology would occur. Under the Proposed Action Alternative, soils on the project site would be disturbed to develop the property. The applicant would be required to submit a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP). Implementation of appropriate BMPs would be required at the construction location including the installation of silt fences and the revegetation of soils to minimize the potential for erosion.

On June 1, 2007, a letter was sent to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) requesting information regarding soils at the proposed project site (Appendix B). To date, no response has been received.

4.2 Water Resources

4.2.1 Surface Water

The Clean Water Act (CWA), as amended in 1977, established the basic framework for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States. The proposed project site slants gently southeast toward storm drains on Dedeaux Road. Although there are no streams on



or adjacent to the proposed project site, there are several small streams, including the Bernard Bayou, located southeast and down-gradient of it (Figure 1 in Appendix A).

On June 1, 2007, a letter requesting project review was sent to MDEQ, Office of Pollution Control, Environmental Permits Division, regarding the proposed project.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, soil erosion from the proposed project site may impact downstream surface waters, including the Bernard Bayou, because some of the soils are currently exposed and not stabilized.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, some temporary impacts to downgradient streams, including the Bernard Bayou, could occur during the construction period from erosion of soils. The applicant would be required to submit a SWPPP and NPDES permit application prior to construction. To reduce impacts to surface water, the applicant would implement appropriate soil erosion and sediment control BMPs, such as installing silt fences and stabilizing soils.

In a letter dated June 5, 2007, MDEQ stated that, if the project will disturb 1 acre or more of land, coverage under a General Permit for control of erosion and sediment will be required (see Appendix B). Under the Proposed Action Alternative, more than 1 acre of land will be disturbed for construction of the new center; therefore, the applicant will be required to obtain a General Permit for control of erosion and sediment.

4.2.2 Floodplains

Executive Order (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management) requires federal agencies to avoid direct or indirect support of development within the 100-year floodplain whenever there is a practicable alternative. FEMA uses Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) to identify the regulatory 100-year floodplain for the National Flood Insurance Program. Consistent with EO 11988, FIRMs were examined during the preparation of this EA. The proposed project site is located outside both the 100- and 500-year floodplain (Flood Zone X) and ABFE (FEMA, 2002; Community Panel Number 285253 0038 D).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, the Charles Walker Community Center would not be rebuilt and there would be no impacts to floodplains.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the Charles Walker Community Center would be rebuilt on a site located outside both the 100- and 500-year floodplain (Flood Zone X) and ABFE. No impacts to the floodplain are anticipated.

4.2.3 Waters of the U.S. including Wetlands

The USACE regulates the discharge of dredged or filled material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA. Additionally, EO 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) requires federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impact of wetlands.

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) enables coastal states, including Mississippi, to designate state coastal zone boundaries and develop coastal management programs to improve protection of sensitive shoreline resources and guide sustainable use of coastal areas. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the proposed project site is located within the Mississippi Coastal Zone (NOAA, 2004).



A review of the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Map for the project area shows no wetland areas located on or immediately adjacent to the proposed project site (USFWS, 2007a). During a site visit conducted by Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants (NISTAC) biologists on February 22, 2007, potential wetland areas were observed on the proposed project site. Therefore, on April 2 and 27, 2007, a wetland delineation was conducted by NISTAC wetland biologists. Using guidance manuals and procedures set forth by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, one nontidal forested and emergent wetland area and a drainage ditch were delineated within the property boundary (see Figure 4). The methods and procedures used for this wetland delineation are in accordance with the 1987 *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual*. The Corps manual requires the presence of all three parameters (greater than 50% dominance of hydrophytic vegetation, evidence of hydric soils, and presence of hydrologic indicators) for an area to be considered a wetland.

Portions of the project site exhibit a dominance of hydrophytic vegetation, the parameters for hydric soils, and hydrologic indicators; therefore, the proposed project site contains wetlands. Within the proposed project site boundaries there is a 0.075-acre nontidal, forested and emergent wetland in the central south portion of the property and a drainage ditch which comprises approximately 75 linear feet (0.005 acre). Plants within the wetland area include common rush (*Juncus effusus*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), Long's sedge (*Carex longii*), spikerush (*Eleocharis* sp.), and southern cutgrass (*Leersia hexandra*).

This wetland area has a standing water ditch that empties into a large drain adjacent to the east side of the parcel. This man-made drain historically was a natural flowing creek which flows from north to south and has a direct connection to the Bernard Bayou. There is another drain adjacent to the northern portion of the site that flows from west to east into the north to south drain. It has a direct connection to the Flat Branch, which in turn connects to the Bernard Bayou. Both of the drains are considered waters of the U.S., although both are located outside of the proposed project site boundaries.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to waters of the U.S. including wetlands would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, temporary impacts to adjacent waters of the U.S., including Bernard Bayou, may occur during construction at the proposed project site. To mitigate potential impacts, appropriate BMPs would be required at the construction site. BMPs include, but are not limited to, the installation of silt fences and the stabilization of exposed soils.

Wetlands on the proposed project site are nontidal; therefore, no impacts to coastal wetlands would occur. Approximately 0.08 acre of nontidal, forested and emergent wetland would be impacted by the proposed project. This impact will require a permit through the USACE and Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR); however, because the impact does not meet the minimum acreage of 0.50 acre, no mitigation will be required.

In an electronic mail dated June 7, 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) noted that coordination regarding wetland protection should be conducted with the USACE and MDEQ (see Appendix B). On June 1, 2007, a letter requesting project review was sent to MDMR, Bureau of Wetlands Permitting, regarding the proposed project and potential impacts on the



coastal zone and wetlands (Appendix B); to date, no response has been received. A letter requesting project review was not sent to the USACE Mobile District, because the District has a moratorium on conducting jurisdictional wetland determinations and would not be able to review the proposed project (Zedryk, pers. comm.).

4.3 Transportation

The proposed project site for the Charles Walker Community Center is currently undeveloped land located off Dedeaux Road, north of Gulfport. Access to the site would be provided via Dedeaux Road (Figure 3 in Appendix A).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to transportation would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, some short-term impacts to transportation and site access are anticipated during construction. There would be a minor temporary increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site that could potentially result in a slower traffic flow for the duration of the construction phase. To mitigate potential delays, construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on site during project construction and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways.

Post construction, the facility will generate some increase in local traffic. Dedeaux Road is an arterial roadway which can accommodate the increased traffic.

On June 1, 2007, a letter requesting project review was sent to the Mississippi Department of Transportation (Appendix B). To date, no response has been received.

4.4 Environmental Justice

EO 12898 (Federal Actions 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 their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Socioeconomic and demographic data for the project area were analyzed to determine if a disproportionate number of minority or low-income persons have the potential to be adversely affected by the proposed project.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income populations. All populations would be adversely impacted by the City of Gulfport's continued reduced capacity to provide community services and programs.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority or low-income populations. Implementation of the Proposed Action would benefit all populations within the City of Gulfport by providing a community center with continuing programs and services to the community with no reduction in services during storm periods.



4.5 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires that states adopt ambient air quality standards. The standards have been established in order to protect the public from potentially harmful amounts of pollutants. Under the CAA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes primary and secondary air quality standards. Primary air quality standards protect the public health, including the health of “sensitive populations, such as people with asthma, children, and older adults.” Secondary air quality standards protect public welfare by promoting ecosystems health, and preventing decreased visibility and damage to crops and buildings. EPA has set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for the following six criteria pollutants: ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM_{2.5}, PM₁₀), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and lead (Pb). According to MDEQ, the entire state of Mississippi is classified as in attainment, meaning that criteria air pollutants do not exceed the NAAQS (MDEQ, 2002).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no short- or long-term impacts to air quality because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to air quality could occur during construction of the new community center. To reduce temporary impacts to air quality, the construction contractors would be required to water down construction areas when necessary. Emissions from fuel-burning internal combustion engines (e.g., heavy equipment and earthmoving machinery) could temporarily increase the levels of some of the criteria pollutants, including CO, NO₂, O₃, PM₁₀, and non-criteria pollutants such as volatile organic compounds. To reduce the emission of criteria pollutants, fuel-burning equipment running times would be kept to a minimum and engines would be properly maintained.

4.6 Noise

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound. Sound is most commonly measured in decibels (dB) on the A-weighted scale, which is the scale most similar to the range of sounds that the human ear can hear. The Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) is an average measure of sound. The DNL descriptor is accepted by federal agencies as a standard for estimating sound impacts and establishing guidelines for compatible land uses. EPA guidelines, and those of many other federal agencies, state that outdoor sound levels in excess of 55 dB DNL are “normally unacceptable” for noise-sensitive land uses including residences, schools, or hospitals (EPA, 1974). A noise ordinance exists for the City of Gulfport, which describes three noise exposure districts surrounding the Gulfport-Biloxi Airport (GBIA, 2007). The proposed project site is outside of all noise-exposure districts.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no noise impacts.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term increases in noise levels are anticipated during the construction period. To reduce noise levels, construction activities would take place during normal business hours. Equipment and machinery utilized at the proposed project site would meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations.

There are noise-sensitive areas within a 4-mile radius of the proposed project site seven schools, ten churches, and two hospitals. The vicinity of the proposed project site would experience long-term minor noise impacts from the recreational uses of the community center. Noise levels in



the vicinity of the community center would be similar to the noise levels in adjacent residential communities.

4.7 Biological Resources

The proposed project site is an undeveloped wooded site with an overgrown shrub layer and is comprised mostly of upland plant species. Plants identified on the project site include water oak (*Quercus nigra*), yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), fackleberry (*Vaccinium arboretum*), Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), poison-ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), greenbrier (*Smilax* spp.), southern dewberry (*Rubus trivialis*), wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), blackgum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and southern arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*). The southeastern corner of the proposed project site contains a small wetland area with a ditch that runs into a drain along the east side of the parcel. The proposed project site supports wildlife common to undeveloped suburban areas in Mississippi, including songbirds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists the following federally endangered (E) and threatened (T) animal species for Harrison County (USFWS, 2007b):

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Louisiana black bear	<i>Ursus americanus luteolus</i>	T
West Indian manatee	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	E (P)
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	T
Brown pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	E
Piping plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	T (CH)
Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	E
Eastern indigo snake	<i>Drymarchon corais couperi</i>	T (P)
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	T
Green turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	T (P)
Kemp's Ridley	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	E
Loggerhead turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	T
Mississippi gopher frog	<i>Rana capito sevosa</i>	E
Gulf sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrhynchus desotoi</i>	T (CH)
Louisiana quillwort	<i>Isoetes louisianensis</i>	E
Alabama red-bellied turtle	<i>Psuedemys alabamensis</i>	E
(P) = potential to occur; (CH) = listed with critical habitat		

A site visit conducted by NISTAC biologists on April 19, 2007, confirmed that the proposed project site does not contain habitat for any federally listed flora and fauna species; therefore, it



is unlikely that any threatened and endangered species are present. On June 1, 2007, a letter requesting project review was sent to USFWS; no response has been received to date.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to biological resources.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, approximately 6.64 acres of wooded wildlife habitat would be cleared of vegetation, graded, and converted to the Charles Walker Community Center use.

4.8 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).

A FEMA Archeologist and Architectural Historian, both qualified in their respective disciplines under *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards* (36 CFR Part 61), conducted an assessment of the project's potential to affect historic properties 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 archeological resources, the APE consists of the entire 6.64-acre proposed site; for above-ground historic properties, the APE is extended out to a 0.5-mile radius around the proposed project site. This APE was previously established through FEMA consultation with the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

On April 18, 2007, a FEMA Archeologist and Architectural Historian visited the APE to determine if any historic buildings/structures or archeological sites listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were visibly present within the APE. The USGS Topographic Map (Gulfport North, 7.5 Min) shows that the APE sits atop the terrace of a natural drainage area that terminates at Bernard Bayou to the south. The area is wooded, relatively level terrain and contains a variety of old growth and new growth trees. Vegetation is thick and consists of pines with low shrubs and brush. Many trees have been toppled or broken due to Hurricane Katrina. The ground was covered by a thick layer of pine needles and thick vegetative debris. No signs of past human occupation were visible from surface observations with the exception of the house mentioned below.

The proposed site is located in a suburban residential-commercial area in North Gulfport. A pedestrian survey conducted by FEMA Archeologist Paul Drummond and Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants (NISTAC) Architectural Historian Claudia Watson on April 18, 2007, revealed that the only building located on the site is a small, one-story frame house, constructed between 1940-1950. This three-bay-wide, side-gable house has been altered, and is clad in aluminum siding and has replacement windows. A side porch and carport have been attached to the east end of the house. Because of the significant loss of integrity, FEMA has determined that this building is not eligible for listing in the NRHP.



This house faces Dedeaux Road, a major east-west thoroughfare which borders the site on the south. This streetscape is composed primarily of recently constructed one-story commercial buildings; some vacant land remains awaiting development. The 0.5-mile APE for above-ground historic properties consists of the Dedeaux Road commercial strip, as well as subdivisions of one-story ranch houses that surround the site to the east, west and north. Based on an analysis of the APE and the fact that this building is ineligible for listing in the NRHP, FEMA has made a determination of “No Historic Properties Present.”

A review of the Mississippi site maps reveal that several archeological surveys have been conducted within a 2-mile radius of the APE (notably, 00-214, 98-143, 02-051, 97-270, 94-493). A review of archaeological site files was undertaken at the Historic Preservation Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) in Jackson, Mississippi. This review revealed that there were no previously recorded archeological sites within the proposed project site. Furthermore, there were no recorded archaeological sites within a 1-mile radius, despite the fact that 14 cultural resources surveys have been conducted within this area (Bogges and Bogges 1998; Gibbens and Moorehead 1983; Gray 1994; Jackson 1995; Lauro 2000, 2002; Mann 1986, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 2003; Reams 2005; Scott and Jackson 2003; Stowe and Lumpkin 1992). There are, however, two recorded archaeological sites within a 2-mile radius (22HR897 and 22HR908).

A Phase I cultural resources survey of the proposed project site was conducted by NISTAC and FEMA archeologists on June 18, 2007. This work consisted of a pedestrian survey and the excavation of shovel test pits (STPs) within the project’s APE, which encompasses the entire 6.64-acre site. The pedestrian survey revealed the presence of an abandoned house and an associated, recently overgrown yard in the southern portion of the site. An older pine forest that was heavily damaged by wind, presumably during Hurricane Katrina, was located to the north. Poarch fine sandy loam soils covered the entire site (USDA, SCS 1975). A total of 26 STPs were excavated within the project’s APE. Two pieces of unidentified, rusted metal and a shard of machine-made bottle glass were the only cultural resources encountered during the survey. These modern artifacts were noted and discarded in the field.

A draft report for the Phase I archaeological survey is currently being prepared for submission to MDAH and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) for review. This report documents the Phase I survey findings and recommends no further work for the proposed project site (Lockard and Banguilan, 2007).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, no construction would occur and there would be no impacts to archeological or cultural resources.

Proposed Action Alternative – In letters to the MDAH and THPO dated June 5, 2007 (see Appendix B), FEMA determined made a determination of “No Historic Properties Present.” The Proposed Action will have no adverse effect on National Register-eligible standing structures.

Due to the geographical location of the APE and the fact that it appears to be undisturbed, FEMA has determined that the construction of the proposed facility could potentially affect National Register eligible archeological resources, if any are present. A Phase I archeological investigation has been conducted and no further work is recommended. The Proposed Action will have no adverse effect on archeological resources. Responses from MDAH and THPO on the draft Phase I report have not been received to date.



5.0 CUMULATIVE 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.

Gulfport and the entire Mississippi Gulf coast are undergoing recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damages. The recovery efforts in Gulfport include demolition, reconstruction, and new construction. These projects and the proposed project may have a cumulative temporary impact on air quality in Gulfport by increasing criteria pollutants during construction activities. No other cumulative effects are anticipated.

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

FEMA is the lead federal agency for conducting the NEPA compliance process for the proposed project in Gulfport, 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 Gulfport 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 AND PERMITS

The following agencies and organizations were contacted by letter requesting project review during the preparation of this EA. If required for NEPA documentation, agencies (marked with *) were asked to submit a formal response. 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*
- Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History*
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Pollution Control, Environmental Permits Division*
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Bureau of Wetlands Permitting
- Mississippi Department of Transportation, Environmental Division



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- Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission

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, groundwater, floodplains, public health and safety, hazardous materials, socioeconomic resources, environmental justice, or cultural resources are anticipated under the Proposed Action Alternative.

During the construction period, short-term impacts to soils, surface water, transportation, air quality, and noise are anticipated. All short-term impacts will be mitigated utilizing BMPs, such as silt fences, proper equipment maintenance, and appropriate signage.

Minor, long-term impacts to nontidal wetlands, noise, traffic, and biological resources are anticipated. These impacts are not anticipated to be significant.

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Appendix A

Figures

Appendix B

Agency Coordination