U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Joint Field Office
FEMA-1603-DR-LA
415 N 15th Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
EMERGENCY TEMPORARY HOUSING PROJECT
GROOM ROAD TEMPORARY HOUSING SITE,
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH, LOUISIANA
FEMA-1603-DR-LA

As a result of damages from Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was authorized under a Presidential disaster declaration (FEMA-1603-DR-LA) to provide Federal assistance to designated disaster areas in Louisiana. Section 408 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Individual Assistance (IA) Program to provide emergency temporary housing for disaster victims whose homes are uninhabitable. There are insufficient rental units available to house displaced disaster victims. The use of hotel rooms, shelters, or staying with family/friends is only appropriate for a very limited time period. In response to this need, FEMA is proposing to build emergency disaster group housing for residents in East Baton Rouge Parish.

In order to implement its IA Program in a timely and effective manner, FEMA proposed an expedited process to assess the potential environmental impacts of building emergency temporary housing for displaced disaster victims. An Environmental Assessment (EA), dated September 17, 2005 was prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and FEMA regulations for NEPA compliance (44 CFR Part 10). The EA's purpose is to analyze and document the proposed alternative's potential environmental impacts, serve as a vehicle to document compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

The proposed site is located south of the Groom Road and Hovey Avenue intersection in Baker, East Baton Rouge, Louisiana and covers approximately 62 acres. FEMA contractors have been tasked with constructing a new travel trailer park (hereafter "Park") of up to 600 units. At this time, Park occupancy is expected to not exceed 18 months. New utilities will be installed, including connecting potable water and electrical service to existing county infrastructure. A sanitary sewer system would be constructed for the Park, including buried piping and self-contained treatment plants. The treatment plants would discharge the treated water to the Baker Canal located along the southern boundary of the site. Two new access roads off Groom Road would be built for residents' ingress and egress. The site would be prepped by mowing the grass and then covering the area with geotechnical grade fabric. Limestone would be laid over the top of the fabric to form the interior roadways and trailer pads. The existing treed areas within the site and along the perimeter would be left to maintain the visual aesthetics of the site. Surface water runoff would follow the natural drainageways of the site which drain to Baker Canal and a creek

located within the site. A safety fence will be installed and maintained around the Park perimeter. The Park management will provide 24-hour security services, maintenance, repair, and grounds keeping. Shuttle bus services will be provided to transport the Park residents to and from grocery stores, places of work, and schools until the City's public transportation system can be expanded to the area. When the temporary housing need has ended, FEMA expects that the trailers will be hauled from the site, to suitable locations elsewhere (to be determined on case-by-case basis). The Park site will then be seeded and restored to previous conditions and/or used by the landowner in a manner consistent with county zoning classification.

The public comment period for the Draft EA was from September 15 to 17, 2005 with notice published in the Baton Rouge Advocate and on FEMA's web site at http://www.fema.gov/ehp/docs.shtm. Approximately 2,200 flyers were distributed to residences within 2 miles of the project site. The flyers notified residents of the proposed project, the availability of the Draft EA, and the opportunity to comment. Phone calls were received from 28 individuals. The majority of comments focused on security issues, the adequacy of existing services for new Park residents, and the site selection process. The Final EA contains a summary of the comments and how they were addressed in the context of the environmental review process.

FINDINGS

FEMA has made the following determinations from the information contained in the Groom Road Temporary Housing Project EA:

The above described action will not result in any significant adverse impacts related to geology and soils; hydrology and floodplains; wetlands and jurisdictional waters of the U.S.; water quality; air quality; vegetation and wildlife; state and federally listed threatened and endangered species; cultural resources; socioeconomics (including minority and low income populations); safety and security; hazardous materials and toxic wastes; and traffic and transportation. The proposed alternative has been reviewed and, to the best of our knowledge, does not have the potential for significant cumulative effects when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in accordance with 44 CFR Part 10.8 (d)(3)(x).

The following summarizes what is outlined in the EA's Mitigation Actions section and are the conditions that must be met as part of implementing this proposed action alternative:

1. Use of best management practices (e.g., installation of silt fences and straw bales) will be required to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation. If fill is stored on site, the contractor is required to appropriately cover it to prevent erosion.
2. Silt fences and construction barriers would be put in place to protect riparian zone through center of site.
3. Construction contractor would be required to apply for and obtain all applicable wastewater permits, including a LAPDES permit or waiver from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

4. In order to convey stormwater runoff, the contractor will be required to design drainage features so that flows will not flood Park residents or surrounding properties during storm events. The drainage system will be required to meet local and Parish requirements, including the acquisition of easements if applicable.
5. Area soils would be covered and/or wetted during construction to minimize dust.
6. If fill is stored on site as part of unit installation or removal, the contractor will be required to appropriately cover it.
7. During Park occupancy, rock cover for roads and housing pads would be periodically wetted and/or treated to minimize dust.
8. In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, if unanticipated historic or cultural materials are discovered during construction, all construction activities shall immediately cease within 100 feet of the materials until their cultural affiliation and ultimate disposition are determined in consultation with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, FEMA Environmental Liaison Officer and other interested parties.
9. If necessary, the following noise reduction measures should be considered: (1) restricting the 24-hour schedule to the first two weeks of construction; (2) using a 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. construction schedule; (3) completing construction closest to adjoining residents first; and (4) completing noisier activities during the day if a 24-hour schedule is used.
10. If any hazardous materials are found between start of construction and final Park closure, all hazardous materials shall be remediated, abated, or disposed of as appropriate, and otherwise handled in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Alternatively, the site could be abandoned in view of finding another site that better meets the identified project purpose and need.
11. The contractor will place fencing around the site perimeter to protect residents from vehicular traffic on Groom Road, Baker Canal, and the surrounding undeveloped property.
12. Contractor to provide for 24-hour security services at the Park.
13. Contractor will coordinate with Parish traffic engineer to ensure traffic infrastructure can service the increased traffic volume. The contractor and Parish will implement traffic control measures, as necessary.
14. To minimize worker and public health and safety risks from project construction and closure, all construction and closure work will be done using qualified personnel trained in the proper use of construction equipment, including all appropriate safety precautions. Additionally, all activities will be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with the standards specified in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OHSA) regulations and the USACE safety manual.

The contractor will post appropriate signage and fencing to minimize potential adverse public safety concerns. Appropriate signage and barriers should be in place prior to construction activities in order to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities and traffic pattern changes.

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the incorporated EA, and in accordance with Presidential Executive Orders 12898 (Environmental Justice), 11988 (Floodplain Management), and 11990 (Wetland Protection), FEMA has determined that the proposed action implemented with the conditions and mitigation measures outlined above and in the EA will not have any significant adverse effects on the quality of the natural and human environment. As a result of this FONSI, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared (44 CFR Part 10.8) and the proposed action alternative as described in the EA may proceed.

APPROVAL:

9/17/05

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