



FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM EXCEPTION STATES OF LOUISIANA AND MISSISSIPPI

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, some individual property owners and communities in the impacted areas of Louisiana and Mississippi proactively engaged in hazard mitigation activities in an effort to recover from the damages and mitigate at-risk properties against future damage. Such activities may have been eligible for funding under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) or could have been used to meet the non-Federal match requirement of the program had they obtained Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approval before the activities started. However, under HMGP requirements, projects initiated or completed prior to FEMA approval are not eligible for funding.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita decimated the capability of local governments in the impacted areas of Louisiana and Mississippi and left communities without resources to assign to the identification, development, and timely application and implementation of hazard mitigation initiatives under the HMGP. Communities in these impacted areas were not in a position to engage in the required HMGP application process until more than two years after the catastrophic hurricanes. These unique circumstances did not occur in any other Gulf Coast States in the aftermath of the hurricanes, and FEMA is not aware of any other situations where virtually all communities affected by a major disaster were impacted to such an extent as to be unable to develop and submit hazard mitigation applications within the established HMGP timeframes.

In light of these nationally unprecedented circumstances, and because of the high national priority, as articulated by the President, members of Congress, Governors of the States, and the public, to accelerate the process of rebuilding on the Gulf Coast without further delay, FEMA has requested and received a waiver from the Executive Office of the President/Office of Management and Budget allowing FEMA to develop a framework for implementing a limited exception to federal program requirements (HMGP Exception) that would allow certain hazard mitigation actions initiated without prior FEMA approval before the effective date of such a HMGP Exception, and implemented in the course of repair activities on structures and facilities (as defined in the Stafford Act) damaged by the Disasters in Louisiana and Mississippi, to become eligible for grant consideration. The costs of such actions, if determined to meet all other federal requirements, could then count towards the State's non-federal match requirements under the HMGP or, in some cases, could be partially reimbursed.

The attached Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) was prepared to address the potential impacts of this program exception in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508) to implement NEPA, and FEMA regulations (44 CFR § 10.9) to implement NEPA.

