



# FEMA

## **DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **Alternate Housing Pilot Program, Lake Charles Fields 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue Group Housing Site Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana**

#### Background

Under the authority of Section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the Individual Assistance Program to provide temporary housing for disaster victims in affected areas whose homes are uninhabitable or destroyed. Although FEMA's traditional temporary housing options are sufficient to address the unmet housing needs of residents in most disasters; the catastrophic dimensions of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita challenged the efficacy of these traditional methods. Recognizing the extensive and complex housing challenges facing victims and communities as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and acknowledging the limitations on FEMA's ordinary statutory authority to provide non-temporary housing solutions, Congress appropriated funds to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to support alternative housing pilot programs (Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2006, Public Law 109-234).

The Alternative Housing Pilot Program (AHPP) represents a one-time exception to FEMA's existing authority under the Stafford Act. The Stafford Act legally binds FEMA to a temporary housing mission, by providing an opportunity to explore, implement, and evaluate innovative approaches to housing solutions, and to address ongoing housing challenges created by the 2005 hurricane season in the states of the Gulf Coast region, including the State of Louisiana, especially the southernmost parishes such as Calcasieu Parish. The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) has applied for FEMA funding under the AHPP to provide both temporary and permanent housing solutions for eligible applicant families displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for FEMA, Subpart B, Agency Implementing Procedures, Part 10.9, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as

implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). The purpose of the EA is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed group housing project, and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In the EA process, FEMA considered two alternatives, the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action Alternative.

The Proposed Action Alternative consists of the land acquisition and construction of 34 permanent AHPP units on an approximate 5.0-acre parcel of previously developed land located in the eastern portion of Lake Charles, Louisiana bordered on the west by 6th Avenue and on the north by Broad Street (Highway 90). The proposed group housing site would consist of single family dwellings (Louisiana Cottages), with living areas ranging from 888 square feet to 1,112 square feet. The Louisiana Cottages would be built on piers to raise them to the required elevation, as necessary. The project site would be cleared of all vegetation and debris and then grubbed. Although contouring and grading has already been done additional contouring and grading would be done, if necessary. Driveways would be constructed to facilitate access and parking for the AHPP cottages. A fence would partially enclose the project area. The houses would tie into existing water, and sewer infrastructure currently located near each lot site and utilities would then be installed to each individual cottage.

The LRA notified the public of the availability of the draft EA through the publication of a public notice in *The American Press* on February 20, 2009 and March 6, 2009. The draft EA is also available for public viewing at the Carnegie Memorial Library, 411 Pujoe Street, Lake Charles, Louisiana 70605. Written comments on the draft EA can be faxed to FEMA at (504) 762-2527. In addition, the draft EA can be viewed and downloaded during the 15-day public comment period on FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/ea-region6.shtm>.

### Findings

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, as described in the EA, impacts to geology, wetlands, cultural resources, and biological resources, hazardous materials or wastes are not anticipated. Positive impacts to socioeconomics are expected. During the construction period, short-term impacts to soils, water quality, transportation, air quality,

and noise are anticipated. Minor, but insignificant, transportation impacts would occur during occupation of the AHPP cottages and minor, but insignificant floodplain impacts would occur with the construction of the cottages. All short-term minor, and indirect impacts require conditions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the proposed project site and surrounding areas. In addition, consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will be required to minimize the program's potential to affect cultural resources.

### Conditions

The LRA shall comply with all prescribed conditions set forth in the draft EA, including but not limited to the following conditions. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize the receipt of Federal funding.

Any changes to this approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by FEMA prior to initiation of any work, for compliance with NEPA. The applicant is required to obtain and comply with all local, state, and Federal permits and requirements. Non-compliance with the requirements noted above may jeopardize the receipt of Federal funding.

1. In the event that archaeological deposits, including but not limited to any Native American pottery, stone tools, historic artifacts or human remains, are uncovered, project activities will be halted. The contractor would stop all work immediately in the vicinity of the discovery and take reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. All archaeological findings would be secured and access to the sensitive area restricted. The contractor would inform FEMA immediately and FEMA would consult with the SHPO or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and interested tribes. Work in sensitive areas would not resume until consultation is completed and appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that the project is in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. As a result no impacts to cultural resources would be expected.
2. The AHPP cottages would be constructed on piers and should the previously elevated homesites not be at the base flood elevation (BFE), then the cottages would be constructed so that the first floor would be above the BFE. FEMA has gone through the Eight-Step Planning Process to ensure that its actions are consistent

with EO 11988 within Lake Charles and Calcasieu Parish. An initial notice for the building of AHPP units within the State has been previously publicized. A final notice will be publicly circulated during the public comment period for this Proposed Action for 15 days explaining the various FEMA actions and included alternatives and the reasons for siting in the floodplain.

3. To minimize noise impacts to nearby sensitive noise receptors, construction activity would be limited to daylight hours during the work week, between 7:30 am to 5:30 pm on Monday through Friday.

Conclusion

Based upon the information contained in the EA, the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed action, and in accordance with FEMA's regulations in 44 CFR Part 10, a FONSI is concluded. Therefore, an EIS process will not be required, based on the fact that there would be no long-term adverse direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on the natural environment resulting from FEMA actions, as identified in the EA, taken to establish permanent housing under the AHPP.

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Date

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