

BILOXI COMMUNITY CENTER, LIBRARY, AND MIXED-USE FACILITY PROJECT

FEMA DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROJECT NO.
7319.001

MARCH 2009



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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BILOXI COMMUNITY CENTER, LIBRARY AND MULTI-USE FACILITY HARRISON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI FEMA-1604-DR-MS

The City of Biloxi has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance with a construction project for the proposed Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility in Biloxi, Harrison County, Mississippi.

The proposed project is intended to replace the following buildings which were heavily damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005:

- Biloxi Library/ George Ohr Center; PW 10501
- Hubert Mullins Senior Citizen Center; PW 6541
- O'Hanlon Recreational Center; PW 6961
- Point Cadet Hanger; PW 8928
- Point Cadet Boxing Club; PW 9269

FEMA proposes to provide assistance for this project through the Public Assistance Program (PA) under the Presidential Disaster Declaration FEMA-1604-DR-MS.

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 construction 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.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the City of Biloxi proposes to construct the new Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility to replace five municipal buildings destroyed by Hurricane Katrina (Biloxi Library/George Ohr Center, Hubert Mullins Senior Citizen Center, O'Hanlon Recreational Center, Point Cadet Hanger, Point Cadet Boxing Club). The project site consists of approximately 5.0 acres located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Bellman Street and Howard Avenue (580 Howard Avenue) in Biloxi, Mississippi.

The 5.0-acre proposed project location is currently not located in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). According to the new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (D-FIRMS) released by FEMA which will become effective later this year, the project lies within an AE 17 and a shaded X zone. The proposed facility will be constructed with a finished floor elevation of 22' amsl.

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|-----------------|--|
| ABFE | Advisory Base Flood Elevation |
| ACHP | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation |
| amsl | above mean sea level |
| APE | Area of Potential Effects |
| BMP | Best Management Practice |
| BFE | Base Flood Elevation |
| CAA | Clean Air Act |
| CDBG | Community Development Block Grant |
| 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 |
| ESA | Environmental Site Assessment |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| FIRM | Flood Insurance Rate Map |
| FPPA | Farmland Protection Policy Act |
| MDAH | Mississippi Department of Archives and History |
| MDEQ | Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality |
| MDMR | Mississippi Department of Marine Resources |
| NAAQS | National Ambient Air Quality Standards |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| NFIP | National Flood Insurance Program |
| NHPA | National Historic Preservation Act |
| NISTAC | Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NO ₂ | nitrogen dioxide |
| NPDES | National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System |
| NRCS | National 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 mater less than 10 microns |
| RCPs | reinforced concrete pipes |
| SFHA | Special Flood Hazard Area |
| SHPO | State Historic Preservation Office |
| SO ₂ | sulfur dioxide |
| SWPPP | Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan |
| THPO | Tribal Historic Preservation Office |
| USACE | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| USDA | U.S. Department of Agriculture |
| USFWS | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| VOC | Volatile Organic Compound |

DRAFT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the southeastern coast of Louisiana and the southwestern coast of Mississippi on August 29, 2005, with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph. Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 105 miles from the center of the storm. Coastal storm surge flooding of 20 to 30 feet above normal tide levels, along with large and dangerous battering waves, occurred near and to the east of where the center of the storm made landfall. Widespread damage occurred, including beach erosion and damage and/or destruction of homes and infrastructure. A Presidential Disaster Declaration, FEMA-1604-DR-MS, was subsequently signed for Hurricane Katrina, making 81 Mississippi counties (including Harrison County) eligible for FEMA Public Assistance.

The City of Biloxi 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 for the proposed Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility.

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 following five Biloxi municipal facilities were severely damaged or completely destroyed by Hurricane Katrina: Biloxi Library/ George Ohr Center, Hubert Mullins Senior Citizen Center, O'Hanlon Recreational Center, Point Cadet Hanger, and Point Cadet Boxing Club. Damages to the buildings exceeded the 50% repair/replacement ratio, meeting FEMA's criteria for demolition and replacement.

The former Biloxi Library/ George Ohr Center was a 31,394 gross square-foot building with 22,651 gross square feet on the first level and 8743 gross square feet on the mezzanine level. This building functioned as both library and museum exhibit space. The building was a stucco finished concrete masonry unit and wood frame building on a shallow footing foundation with a non-uniform and steep sloping roof with skylights. The interior finishes were carpet, wood floor and gypsum board walls and ceilings. The capacity of the Biloxi Library/ George Ohr Center was calculated to be 550 occupants.

The former Hubert Mullins Senior Citizen Center was a 14,208 square-foot load bearing concrete masonry unit building used as a recreational and meeting facility for seniors with kitchen facilities and offices as part of its support space. The total capacity of the Hubert Mullins Senior Citizen Center was 514 occupants.

The O’Hanlon Recreational Center was a 12,000 square-foot pre-engineered, concrete masonry unit building used as a recreational facility for the community. The total capacity of the O’Hanlon Recreational Center was 676 occupants.

Point Cadet Hangar was a large steel frame outdoor assembly space including 12,000 square feet of covered open air assembly space and 4,100 square feet of support spaces. The roof was metal and support space walls were concrete masonry units with a stucco finish and poured in place concrete columns. This facility was used by the city for festivals, farmers markets, concerts, etc. The total capacity of the support spaces was 99 occupants. The total capacity of the covered assembly space was 1786 occupants for a total of 1885 occupants.

Point Cadet Boxing Club was a 1,680 square-foot steel frame building with a metal roof and wall panels and a 121 square foot concrete masonry unit bathroom and shower attachment to the building. The building was used as a recreational facility for the Biloxi Boxing Club. The total capacity of the facility was 101 occupants.

The assembly, recreation, kitchen, library and exhibit functions of these five facilities will be combined into new facilities on one site that is located outside of the velocity zone for this “Improved Project”. The new facility will have a total capacity of 2,927 occupants for both the library and multi-use facility and will be connected by a courtyard. The total capacity of the destroyed facilities was 3,726 occupants.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the City of Biloxi would not build the proposed Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility to replace the five municipal buildings destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The East Biloxi Library would continue to remain in a temporary building at 150 Bellman Street in Biloxi, and the residents of Biloxi would not enjoy the assembly and recreation functions previously provided by these facilities.

Alternative 2: Construct the Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility (Proposed Action)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the City of Biloxi proposes to construct Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility. The new 83,629 square foot facility will have a total capacity of 2,927 occupants for both the library and multi-use facility and will be connected by a courtyard. The main functions of the new facility are to provide a new library and new recreational and assembly facilities for the City of Biloxi.

Construction of New Facility

The project location consists of approximately 5.0 acres located at 580 Howard Avenue at latitude 30°23’53.088” North, longitude 88°52’47.5314” West. The Tax Assessor’s Parcel Numbers for the site are 1410J-06-039.000 and the southern part of Parcel 1410J-06-069.000.

The location of the project is depicted on Figure 1, Appendix A, and an aerial photograph is provided as Figure 2, Appendix A.

The site is bounded on the north by Peyton Drive, across which are located residences at 566, 572, 578, 580, and 584 Peyton Drive and a commercial municipal building at 591 Esters Boulevard; on the east by residences at 161, 165, 167, and 171 Lee Street, and residences at 566 and 568 Howard Avenue; on the south by Howard Avenue, across which are located residences at 571, 575, 579, 583 Howard Avenue and the old Biloxi Community Center at 591 Howard Avenue; and on the west by Bellman Street, across which are located Gruich Pharmacy at 608 Howard Avenue and residences at 155 and 163 Bellman Street and at 602 and 607 Copp Street.

The proposed new 83,629 square foot Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility will combine the functions of the five destroyed municipal facilities into a new facility to be built outside of the velocity zone. The project site is located in a Special Flood Hazard Area AE Zone, with a base flood elevation of 17 feet above mean sea level (amsl), and in a shaded X zone. To comply with federal floodplain elevations, the finished floor elevation of the new facility will be 22 feet amsl, approximately 4 feet above existing grade at the front of the building.

The new facility will be designed in accordance with the International Building Code, 2003. The library and the multi-use space are separated by an outdoor courtyard at finish floor level, but they share mechanical and electrical rooms. The foundation will be shallow footings on structural fill in a concrete retaining wall. The assembly area of the multi-use facility has a publicly accessible mezzanine. The exterior walls will be load bearing reinforced concrete masonry units and the interior columns will be steel. The exterior finish of the building will be stucco. The windows will be curtain wall glazed with impact glass. The pitched roofs will be standing seam metal and the flat roofs will be modified bitumen and will support mechanical equipment. Parking will be constructed to the north and northeast of the facility, with ingress and egress from Peyton Drive, Bellman Street, and the Copp Street Extension. Overflow parking will be located north of Peyton Drive, on the southern portion of Parcel 1410J-06-069.000

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.

Table 1: Summary of Site Reconnaissance Observations

| Affected Environment | Impacts | Mitigation |
|--|---|---|
| Geology and Soils | No impacts to geology. Short-term impacts to soil during the construction period. | Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils immediately upon completion of construction to stabilize soils. No Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form (AD-1006) is required since the project is located within city limits. |
| Surface Water | . Short-term impacts to surface water would occur during the construction period due to soil erosion | 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. |
| Floodplains | Project site is located in a shaded X zone, and in Special Flood Hazard Area AE zone, with base flood elevation of 17'amsl. | Finished floor elevation of the proposed structure will be built at an elevation of 22' amsl to comply with new federal floodplain regulations. |
| Waters of the U.S. Including Wetlands | No waters of the United States or wetlands occur on the proposed project site. | None |

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| Transportation | Minor short-term increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site. Minor long-term impacts to traffic levels in the vicinity of the project site as a result of re-development and revitalization of the neighborhood. | 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 alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities. |
| Hazardous Materials | No adverse impacts to hazardous materials or wastes are anticipated. This site was previously occupied by Central High School prior to Hurricane Katrina. | Excavation activities could expose or otherwise affect subsurface hazardous wastes or materials; any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during construction would be handled and disposed of in accordance with all applicable local, state and federal regulations. |
| Socioeconomic Resources | No adverse socioeconomic impacts are anticipated. | None |
| Environmental Justice | No disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income populations is anticipated. | None |
| Air Quality | Short-term impacts to air quality would occur during the construction period; no adverse long-term impacts are anticipated. | 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. |

| | | |
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| Noise | Short-term impacts to noise would occur at the proposed project site during the construction period. | Construction would take place during normal business hours. Equipment would be maintained to meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations. |
| Biological Resources | There are no listed species or their habitats found on the project site. | Trees would only be removed as necessary for the project design, in accordance with the Biloxi Land Development Ordinance. All trees would be protected during construction. |
| Cultural Resources | The site is not located in a National Register Historic District or a local designated Historic District. The development site is within 300 feet of four locally designated landmarks (168 Lee Street, 566 Howard Avenue, 567 Howard Avenue, and 579 Howard Avenue) which required Architectural and Historical Review Commission (AHRC) review and approval. | None |

4.1 Geology and Soils

According to the 1969 “Geologic Map of Mississippi”, published by the Mississippi Geological Survey, geologic units at the site have been mapped as undifferentiated Holocene coastal deposits, consisting of sand, loam, gravel and clay.

The proposed project site contains soil consisting predominantly of Latonia loamy sand (Lt), with a small percentage of the western edge of the site covered by Eustis loamy sand, 0 to 5 % slopes.

The Latonia series consists of deep, well drained, moderately rapidly permeable soils. They formed in marine or alluvial sediments that are loamy in the upper part and sandy in the lower part. They are on marine or stream terraces of the Southern Coastal Plain and Gulf Coast Flatwoods. Slopes range from 0 to 5 percent. The Eustis series consists of deep, somewhat excessively drained soils that formed in coarse-textured marine or fluvial sediments on smooth to strongly dissected parts of the Coastal Plain.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) states Federal agencies must “minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses.” A Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form (AD-1006) is not required

(USDA/NRCS, 2007b) because the project location is within the city limits of Biloxi in an urban area.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to geology or soils are anticipated because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to geology are anticipated; short-term impacts to soils are anticipated during the construction period. Appropriate best management practices (BMPs) would be used, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils immediately upon completion of construction to stabilize soils.

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.

According to a survey of the proposed project site (see Appendix A), the project site elevation ranges from 16 feet amsl to 19 feet amsl, with a general slope from southwest to northeast. Surface water within the proposed project site drains by infiltration and by overland flow towards existing storm water inlets on adjacent municipal streets.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to surface water are anticipated because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to the Mississippi Sound may occur during the construction period due to soil erosion. Stormwater inlets and associated underground reinforced construction pipes will be installed on the proposed project site to provide improved drainage and accommodate the proposed construction plans. The southern portion of the project site will drain toward the Howard Avenue storm drainage system, and the northern part of the site (parking areas south and north of Peyton Drive) will drain towards the north. The applicant would be required to obtain an approved Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit prior to start of construction. To reduce impacts to the municipal storm drain system, the applicant would implement appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils.

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 (NFIP).

Based on information provided by Mr. Richard Stickler, CFM, Floodplain Administrator for the City of Biloxi, the 5.0-acre proposed project location is currently not located in a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). According to the new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (D-FIRMS) released by FEMA which will become effective later this year, the project lies within a Special Flood Hazard Area AE Zone, with a base flood elevation of 17 feet above mean sea level (amsl), and in a shaded X zone. To comply with federal floodplain elevations, the finished floor elevation of the facility will be 22 feet amsl, approximately 4 feet above existing grade at the front of the building. This correspondence from Mr. Stickler is included in Appendix B.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to the floodplain are anticipated because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the project will be constructed within SFHA AE 17 and Shaded X Zone. The Biloxi Community Center, Library and Multi-Use building would be constructed with a floor elevation of 22’ amsl to comply with proposed federal floodplain regulations.

4.2.3 Waters of the U.S. Including Wetlands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or filled material into water of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Additionally, EO 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) required Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impact of wetlands.

The USACE was contacted by letter of October 31, 2008, regarding this project. By letter of November 5, 2008, Mr. John McFadyen of the USACE indicated that the project location is upland, no wetlands are present, and that no permit would be required for this project. Documentation is enclosed in Appendix B of this report.

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 Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the proposed project site is located within the Mississippi Coastal Zone (NOAA, 2007). The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) is the lead coastal management agency.

On November 11, 2008, Ms. Willa Brantley, Bureau Chief of the MDMR Wetlands Permitting Program provided correspondence (attached in Appendix B) stating no objections to the project, provided there are no direct or indirect impacts to coastal wetlands and no coastal program agency objects to the proposal.

4.3 Transportation

The proposed project site is bounded by Peyton Drive on the north, (with the overflow parking north of Peyton Drive), Bellman Street on the west, and Howard Avenue on the south. An extension of Copp Street provides the site with ingress and egress to Lee Street to the east. Peyton Drive, Lee Street, Copp Street, Howard Avenue, and Bellman Street are all two-lane urban roadways.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no construction would occur and there would be no impacts to transportation.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, minor short-term impacts to transportation, site access, or traffic levels would occur during the construction period. Construction will take place during normal business hours. To mitigate potential delays, construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on-site during project construction, appropriate signage would be posed on affected roadways and barriers would be in place prior to construction activities to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities. Parking areas to the north and northeast of the facility will be constructed with the capacity to accommodate the

increased number of vehicles, and an overflow parking lot will be constructed north of Peyton Drive.

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. As indicated by the other sections of this environmental assessment, the proposed project would have no significant adverse environmental impacts. The proposed project would therefore have no significant disproportionate adverse environmental impacts on minority and low-income people in the area.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income populations.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be no disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.

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). The MDEQ monitors all of these except lead and carbon monoxide. These were monitored in the past; however, because the concentrations were so much lower than the air quality standard, it was determined by EPA and MDEQ that lead and carbon monoxide no longer needed to be monitored. According to MDEQ, the entire state of Mississippi is classified as in attainment with all Federal ambient air quality standards, meaning that criteria air pollutants do not exceed the NAAQS (MDEQ, 2008).

The MDEQ Air Toxics Branch was contacted by letter of October 31, 2008, regarding this project. By letter of November 5, 2008, Ms. Laura Burt stated that the project will cause no significant adverse air quality impact. Documentation is enclosed in Appendix B of this report.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to air quality are anticipated since no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to air quality would occur. Short-term impacts to air quality would occur during the construction period but would not be substantial enough to affect the attainment status of the six priority pollutants. To mitigate short-term impacts to air quality, construction contractors would be

required to water down construction areas when necessary. Emissions from fuel-burning internal combustion engines (heavy equipment) could temporarily increase the levels of the criteria pollutants, including CO, NO₂, O₃, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, as well as non-criteria pollutants such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs). 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 noise level over a 24-hour period. 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 such as residences, schools, or hospitals.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to noise are anticipated since no construction would occur.

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

4.7 Biological Resources

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists the following federally endangered (E) and threatened (T) species for Harrison County. Additional designations are as follows: (P) indicates Potential to occur; (C) indicates Candidate, CH indicates listed with critical habitat, and (DPS) indicates Distinct Vertebrate Population.

(source:<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/es/Countylists.htm>)

E – West Indian manatee Trichechus manatus (P)

E – Red-cockaded woodpecker Picoides borealis

T – Bald eagle Haliaeetus leucophalus (Proposed to be delisted)

T – Eastern indigo snake Drymarchon corais couperi (P)

E – Brown pelican Pelecanus occidentalis

T – Gopher tortoise Gopherus polyphemus

T – Louisiana black bear Ursus a. luteolus

TCH – Piping Plover Charadrius melodus

E – Kemp’s ridley Lepidochelys kempii

T – Green turtle Chelodania mydas (P)

T – Loggerhead turtle Caretta caretta

E – Louisiana quillwort Isoetes louisianensis

E – Mississippi gopher frog Rana capito sevosa (DPS)

C – Black pine snake Pituophis mealanoleucus ssp. Lodingi

TCH- Gulf sturgeon, Acipenser oxyrhynchus desotoi

E- Alabama red-bellied turtle Psuedemys Alabamensis

By letter of November 4, 2008, Ms. Sabrina Chandler, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, stated that there are no listed species or their habitats found on the project site. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to biological resources because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – The proposed project site is disturbed, having been previously developed, and most of the surface was covered by pavement or gravel surfacing prior to commencement of this project. Impacts to biological resources would be minimal. No listed threatened or endangered species were determined to occur on the project site.

However, three live oaks (two of which are 12 inches in diameter and one which is 16” in diameter) will be removed due to the location of the proposed facility. According to the Section 23-16-11 (a) of the City of Biloxi Code of Ordinances (Adopted July 29, 2003, Effective September 3, 2003, and Amendments through July 6, 2005), “Any tree in or upon the streets, sidewalks or other publicly owned property of the City” is a protected tree. Therefore, the City of Biloxi would obtain a Tree Permit before removing the trees and would adhere to the tree replacement requirements. Other on-site trees would be protected during construction in accordance with Section 23-16-11 (f).

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).

The project site is not located in a National Register Historic District or a local designated Historic District. The development site is within 300 feet of four locally designated landmarks (168 Lee Street, 566 Howard Avenue, 567 Howard Avenue, and 579 Howard Avenue) which required Architectural and Historical Review Commission (AHRC) review and approval, according to Mr. Bill Raymond, Executive Planner/ Historical Administrator for the City of Biloxi.

On September 28, 2007, Ms Michelle Moore (Associate Consultant, Jimmy B. Gouras Company) submitted a request for a determination of effect from the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the proposed construction of the Community Center, Library and Multi-Use Facility at 580 Howard Avenue, Biloxi. On May 21, 2008, SHPo responded, stating that they had determined that no properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places were likely to be affected by the proposed project. Because this concurrence was given before any specific plans were completed, FEMA Historic Specialists, Claudia

Watson and Elrhei Thibodeaux, conducted site visits on April 15 and 16, 2009, and confirmed that it was also FEMA's determination that the project would have No Adverse Effect on Historic Properties. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B.

By letter of October 31, 2008, Mr. Kenneth H. Carleton, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, was contacted for comments on the proposed project. By letter of February 10, 2009, Mr. Terry Cole, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, was contacted for comments on the proposed project. No response was received from Mr. Carleton or from Mr. Cole. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to archaeological or cultural resources are anticipated because no site construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to archaeological or cultural resources are anticipated. If archeological artifacts or human remains were to be inadvertently discovered during the construction period, the applicant would stop work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize further harm to the finds. Work would not proceed until FEMA Historic Preservation staff complete consultation with the SHPO and the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO).

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.

The City of Biloxi and the entire Mississippi Gulf coast continue the recovery efforts after the extensive property damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. The recovery efforts in Biloxi include reconstruction of infrastructure, commercial and municipal buildings, and homes. These projects in combination with the proposed project may have a cumulative temporary impact on air quality and surface water in the Mississippi Sound by increasing criteria pollutants and increasing erosion potential 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 construction of the Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center in Biloxi, 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 Biloxi notified the public of the availability of the draft EA through publication of a public notice in a local newspaper. The public notice was published on April 25, 2009 and May 2, 2009 in *The Sun Herald* (see Appendix C). FEMA conducted an expedited public comment period on the initial date of publication of the public notice and ending on May 10, 2009. No Comments from the public were received.

7.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PERMITS

The following agencies and organizations were contacted by letter requesting project review during the preparation of this EA.

- City of Biloxi Floodplain Administrator
- City of Biloxi Executive Planner / Historical Administrator
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, Water Management Division
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson Field Office
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Bureau of Wetlands Permitting
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Pollution Control
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Air Toxics Branch

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, floodplains, water of the United States including wetlands, public health and safety, hazardous materials, socioeconomic resources, environmental justice, or cultural resources are anticipated with the Proposed Action Alternative. During the construction period, minor, short-term impacts to soils, transportation, surface water, air quality, and noise are anticipated. All short-term and minor impacts will require conditions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the proposed project site and surrounding areas. Long-term, minor impacts to biological resources (removal of several trees) and transportation (minor increase in traffic levels) are anticipated with the Proposed Action Alternative.

REFERENCES

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