

Draft Environmental Assessment

# Gulfport Library Relocation/Consolidation Project

Harrison County, Mississippi

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**FEMA**

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**  
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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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ABFE	advisory base flood elevation
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
amsl	above mean sea level
APE	Area of Potential Effect
BMP	Best Management Practice
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
DFIRM	Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
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
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
HABS	Historic American Building Survey
HCBS	Harrison County Board of Supervisors
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
MDAH	Mississippi Department of Archives and History
MDEQ	Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
MDMR	Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
MDOT	Mississippi Department of Transportation
MEMA	Mississippi Emergency Management Agency
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NESHAP	National Emission Standards of Hazardous Air Pollutants
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NISTAC	Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants
NO <sub>2</sub>	nitrogen dioxide
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
O <sub>3</sub>	ozone
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Pb	lead
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	particulate matter less than 2.5 microns
PM <sub>10</sub>	particulate matter less than 10 microns
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SO <sub>2</sub>	sulfur dioxide
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
TMP	Traffic Management Plan
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



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## **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.

Harrison County, 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 for the proposed Gulfport Library Relocation/Consolidation Project in the City of Gulfport. The project consists of relocating the Gulfport Library outside of the 100-year floodplain and Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE). Harrison County also proposes to relocate the services from the existing Orange Grove Public Library to the new building. The consolidation of both libraries would create the new Harrison County Public Library.

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 Gulfport Public Library, which is part of the Harrison County Library System, is located at 1300 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Gulfport, Harrison County, Mississippi. The Gulfport Public Library serves as the main library for Harrison County and consists of a 43,664-square-foot, two-story building located on a 1.6-acre site (Figures 1 and 2, Appendix A). The building, constructed in 1966, is listed as a Mississippi Landmark by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH). In October 2008, the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) determined that the building was eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The pre-Katrina Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM; FEMA, 2002a) depicts the Gulfport Public Library site outside of the 100-year floodplain. However, the post-Katrina Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) shows that the property is located within 100-year floodplain (FEMA, 2009a). Additionally, the property is located within the Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE; FEMA, 2006a). The southern boundary of the Gulfport Public Library property is formed by Beach Boulevard, which is immediately adjacent to the Mississippi Sound. Katrina's storm surge inundated the building with up to 4 feet of water, causing extensive damage that exceeded the 50% repair/replacement ratio, meeting FEMA's criteria for demolition and replacement.

Services formerly provided by the Gulfport Public Library are currently being provided at a temporary trailer unit located at 47 Maples Drive in Gulfport and at the existing Orange Grove Public Library located at 12031 Mobile Avenue in Gulfport (Figure 1, Appendix A). These facilities are not able to fully replace the services that the Gulfport Public Library provided, and

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the trailer unit is only intended for temporary use; therefore, there is a need to provide Harrison County with a suitable replacement facility for the damaged Gulfport Public Library.

### **3.0 ALTERNATIVES**

This section describes the alternatives that were considered to address the purpose and need stated in Section 2. Two alternatives were evaluated: the No Action Alternative, and the Proposed Action Alternative.

#### Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the damaged Gulfport Public Library building would not be replaced. Services formerly provided by the Gulfport Public Library would continue to be provided at a reduced capacity by the temporary trailer unit and the existing Orange Grove Public Library. Due to public health and safety concerns, the damaged Gulfport Public Library building would be demolished and the 1.6-acre site returned to grade and vegetated.

Because the damaged Gulfport Public Library building is listed as a Mississippi Landmark, FEMA has been coordinating with MDAH regarding the proposed demolition of the structure under the No Action Alternative. In addition, the proposed demolition of the Gulfport Public Library building has created a significant amount of public interest in preserving the library (We the People is the main opponent of its demolition). FEMA has initiated several public meetings with participation from MDAH and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). FEMA and ACHP have been consulting with the applicant to identify alternatives to demolition in efforts to preserve the structure; however, the applicant has expressed no interest in funding any restoration activities for the structure. Alternatives considered to date include finding a third party to purchase or lease the facility in an effort to involve private funding sources in the restoration of the library building. Subsequently, FEMA determined that the proposed demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library would result in an adverse effect to the historic property. The adverse effect has been resolved through the execution in May 2009 of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among FEMA, the ACHP, MDAH, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and the Harrison County Board of Supervisors (HCBS) (see Section 4.8).

#### Alternative 2: Gulfport Library Relocation/Consolidation (Proposed Action)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, Harrison County would construct a new facility and would consolidate the function and services of the damaged Gulfport Public Library with the existing Orange Grove Public Library to create a new Harrison County Public Library. The damaged Gulfport Public Library building would be demolished and the site returned to grade and vegetated. Harrison County's plan for the existing Orange Grove Public Library building, which was built in 1978, is to sell the property, with the stipulation that the facility continue to be used for library services until construction of the new Harrison County Public Library is completed.

The new Harrison County Public Library building would be constructed on a 4.5-acre lot located northwest of the intersection of Old Highway 49 and Kenwood Drive in Gulfport (Figure 3, Appendix A). The proposed relocation site is located approximately 6 miles north of the damaged Gulfport Public Library, and consists of a residential lot containing a vacant single-family home and a detached garage. The remainder of the proposed relocation site consists of a

concrete driveway and landscaping, including many mature live oak trees (Site Photographs, Appendix B). The proposed relocation site is bounded to the south by Kenwood Drive and residential properties; to the west by residential properties; to the north by Edward Lane, residential properties, and a church; and to the east by Old Highway 49, railroad tracks, and commercial property. Photographs of the proposed Gulfport Public Library site and vicinity are included in Appendix B.

The proposed relocation site is located outside of both the 100- and 500-year floodplains according to the FIRM (FEMA, 2002b; Map 2852530030D) and DFIRM (FEMA, 2009b; Map 28047C0255G), and is also outside of the ABFE (FEMA, 2006b; Map MS-K18). The proposed site plan shows that the project would include the construction of a new library building and an associated parking lot (Figure 4, Appendix A). The proposed project would require the demolition of an unoccupied house and garage located on the site; however, many of the large live oak trees would be retained.

Because the original Gulfport Public Library building is listed as a Mississippi Landmark, FEMA has been coordinating with MDAH regarding the proposed demolition of the structure under the Proposed Action Alternative. FEMA determined that the proposed demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library would result in an adverse effect to the historic property. The adverse effect has been resolved through the execution in May 2009 of an MOA among FEMA, the ACHP, MDAH, MEMA, and the HCBS (see Section 4.8).

#### 4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

The following table summarizes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action Alternative and mitigation measures to offset those impacts. Following the summary table, any resource areas for which potential impacts were identified, as well as high priority resources including floodplains, waters of the U.S., environmental justice, biological resources, and cultural resources, will be discussed in greater detail.

Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
<b>Geology and Soils</b>	No impacts to geology are anticipated. Short-term minor impacts to soils will occur.	Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils immediately after completion of construction, would be used to stabilize soils.
<b>Surface Water</b>	Short-term impacts to adjacent surface waters are possible during demolition and construction activities.	The applicant will need a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the project. Appropriate BMPs, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils, would minimize runoff.
<b>Groundwater</b>	No impacts to groundwater are anticipated.	None.

<b>Affected Environment</b>	<b>Impacts</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<b>Floodplains</b>	No impacts to the floodplain are anticipated.	None.
<b>Waters of the U.S., Including Wetlands</b>	No impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands, are anticipated.	None
<b>Transportation</b>	A minor temporary increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the demolition and construction sites is anticipated.	Construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on site during project construction, and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways.
<b>Public Health and Safety</b>	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. A Traffic Management Plan (TMP) would be prepared to inform the public and emergency service providers of delays and detours.
<b>Hazardous Materials</b>	No impacts to hazardous materials or wastes are anticipated.	If any asbestos-containing materials, lead-based paint or other hazardous materials are found during demolition or other construction activities, the applicant would comply with all Federal, State, and local abatement and disposal requirements under the National Emission Standards of Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) program.
<b>Socioeconomic Resources</b>	No impacts to socioeconomic resources would occur.	None.
<b>Environmental Justice</b>	All citizens living in the downtown area, including low-income and minority populations, would be adversely affected by the relocation of the library outside of the downtown area since they would not be able to easily access library services. This adverse effect would be mitigated by a separate Harrison County project to use	None.

Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to construct a new multipurpose government building and library in downtown Gulfport.	
<b>Air Quality</b>	Short-term impacts to air quality would occur at the project sites during demolition and construction activities.	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.
<b>Noise</b>	Short-term noise impacts would occur at the project sites during demolition and construction activities.	Construction would occur during normal business hours and equipment would meet all local, State, and Federal noise regulations.
<b>Biological Resources</b>	The project sites are previously disturbed and developed; no impacts to biological resources, including federally listed species, are anticipated.	None.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	No impacts to archaeological resources are anticipated. The proposed demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library would result in an adverse effect to the historic property. The adverse effect has been resolved through the execution in May 2009 of an MOA.	The MOA stipulates that for a period of one year the HCBS will seek to identify viable re-use proposals for the Gulfport Public Library building. If a qualified lessee emerges, rehabilitation of the library will be carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Should HCBS efforts to market the building fail to identify a qualified lessee, the county will proceed with demolition. Mitigation includes the preparation of Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation and a completed MDAH Historic Resources Inventory Form.

#### 4.1 Geology and Soils

The project sites are located within the East Gulf Coastal Plain physiographic province. This broad physiographic designation extends from the Gulf of Mexico to northern Tennessee and from eastern Louisiana to western Florida (USGS, 2007). Within the East Gulf Coastal Plain province are several distinct ecological subdivisions. The proposed relocation site is located within the Coastal Flatwoods ecological region, an area approximately 10 to 15 miles wide that parallels the Gulf Coast. Coastal Flatwoods are characterized by level terraces and clays, sands, and gravels deposited during the late Quaternary age (Stewart, 2003).



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The Gulfport Public Library property contains soils mapped as Eustis loamy sand (0 to 5 percent slopes) on the northern side of the site and Sulfaquepts sand on the southern side of the site (USDA/NRCS, 2008). The Eustis series consists of deep, somewhat excessively drained, moderately rapid to rapidly permeable soils that are formed in coarse-textured marine or fluvial sediments (USDA/NRCS, 2001). Eustis loamy sand soils are not listed as hydric soils, but are considered farmland of statewide importance (USDA/NRCS, 2008). The Sulfaquepts series consists of poorly drained soils with high to very high water movement in the most restrictive layer (USDA/NRCS, 2008). Sulfaquepts sand soils have hydric inclusions found in depressions; however, there are no depressions on the property and therefore no hydric soils. Sulfaquepts sand soils are not listed as farmland of statewide importance or prime farmland (USDA/NRCS, 2008).

The soils at the proposed relocation site consist of Poarch fine sandy loam (0 to 2 percent slopes) on most of the site, with Harleston fine sandy loam (0 to 2 percent slopes) on the southern side of the site, and Escambia loam (0 to 2 percent slopes) in the northeastern corner of the site (USDA/NRCS, 2008). The Escambia series consists of very deep, somewhat poorly drained, moderately to slowly permeable soils that formed in sandy and loamy marine sediments (USDA/NRCS, 2002). Escambia soils are not listed as hydric, but are considered to be prime farmland (USDA/NRCS, 2008).

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) states that Federal agencies must “minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses...” Poarch fine sandy loam, Harleston fine sandy loam, and Escambia very fine sandy loam are classified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as prime farmland and Eustis loamy sand is classified as farmland of statewide importance. However, according to the FPPA, farmland does not include land that is already in or committed to urban development. The project sites meet the definition of farmland already in urban development because they are located within the Gulfport urbanized area on the Census 2000 urbanized area outline map (USCB, 2000). Therefore the FPPA does not apply and a farmland conversion impact rating form is not required. On July 22, 2009, a letter requesting project review was sent to the NRCS. In a response letter dated July 30, 2009, NRCS stated that all of the project sites are within city limits and therefore do not require an FPPA determination (Appendix C).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to geology would occur. Soils at the damaged Gulfport Public Library site would be disturbed during building demolition and site grading. Because the demolition site comprises more than 1 acre, the applicant will be required to prepare a SWPPP. Implementation of appropriate BMPs would be required during all ground-disturbing activities, including the installation of silt fences and the revegetation of soils to minimize the potential for erosion.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to geology would occur. Soils at the damaged Gulfport Public Library site would be disturbed during building demolition and site grading, and soils on the proposed relocation site would be disturbed to develop the property. Because the demolition and construction sites collectively comprise more than 1 acre, the applicant will be required to prepare a SWPPP. Implementation of appropriate BMPs would be required at the construction site, including the installation of silt fences and the revegetation of soils to minimize the potential for erosion. A NPDES permit for construction activities would also be required.

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## 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 U.S.

The Gulfport Public Library property is located approximately 830 feet north of the Gulfport Harbor and 1,000 feet northwest of the Mississippi Sound. The site slopes to the southeast toward the Mississippi Sound. Stormwater run-off from the site would tend to flow in a southeasterly direction, draining into the Mississippi Sound. Elevations at the Gulfport Public Library site range from 17 to 15 feet above mean sea level (amsl).

The proposed relocation site is located near the top of a localized hill, with elevations on the site ranging from approximately 60 feet amsl in the northwest corner of the site to approximately 45 feet amsl on the east side of the site. Stormwater runoff follows surface topography and flows toward the east on most of the site; runoff in the southwest section of the site flows toward the south. Stormwater runoff in the vicinity of the proposed relocation site also generally flows in an easterly direction and into Qubbie Creek located to the east and on the opposite side of Old Highway 49. Qubbie Creek flows to the southeast and into Flat Branch located approximately 1 mile to the southeast. Flat Branch drains to Bayou Bernard and then to Biloxi Bay.

A site visit conducted by Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants (NISTAC) and FEMA biologists on April 23, 2009, verified these findings.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, short-term impacts to adjacent, off-site surface waters could occur during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building, due to soil erosion during demolition and site grading. Because the demolition site comprises more than 1 acre, the applicant will be required to apply for a NPDES construction permit. To reduce impacts to surface water, the demolition contractor would implement appropriate BMPs, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to adjacent, off-site surface waters could occur during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building and construction of the new library building, due to soil erosion during ground disturbing activities. Because the demolition and construction sites collectively comprise more than 1 acre, the applicant will be required to apply for a NPDES construction permit. To reduce impacts to surface water, the applicant would implement appropriate BMPs, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils.

On July 22, 2009, letters requesting project review were sent to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Management District, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Office of Pollution Control, and the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission (Appendix C). No response has been received to date.

### 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 FIRMs to identify the regulatory 100-year floodplain for the National Flood Insurance Program. Consistent with EO 11988, both conventional FIRMs and preliminary DFIRMs were examined during the preparation of this EA.

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The damaged Gulfport Public Library building is located outside of the 100-year floodplain according to the pre-Katrina FIRM (FEMA, 2002a; Zone X, Map 2852530077D). However, the post-Katrina DFIRM (FEMA, 2009a; Zone AE, Map 28047C0377G) shows that the property is located within the 100-year floodplain. The southern boundary of the Gulfport Public Library property is formed by Beach Boulevard, which is immediately adjacent to the Mississippi Sound. The Orange Grove Public Library property is located outside of both the 100- and 500-year floodplains according to the FIRM (FEMA, 2002b; Map 2852530030D) and DFIRM (FEMA, 2009b; Map 28047C0255G). The proposed relocation site is located outside of both the 100- and 500-year floodplains according to the FIRM (FEMA, 2002b; Map 2852530030D) and DFIRM (FEMA, 2009b; Map 28047C0255G).

FEMA has also developed ABFE maps (based on flood frequency analyses) that update the flood risk data with information on storms that have occurred in the past 25 years, including Hurricane Katrina. The ABFE map shows that the Gulfport Public Library property is located within the ABFE (FEMA, 2006a; Map MS-H19) and the Orange Grove Public Library property is located outside of the ABFE (FEMA, 2006b; Map MS-K18). The proposed relocation site is located outside of the ABFE (FEMA, 2006b; Map MS-K18).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, the damaged Gulfport Public Library building would be removed from the 100-year floodplain and the site returned to grade and revegetated. This would reduce occupancy of the floodplain and is considered a beneficial impact.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the damaged Gulfport Public Library would be removed from the 100-year floodplain and the site returned to grade and revegetated. This would reduce occupancy of the floodplain and is considered a beneficial impact. The Orange Grove Public Library is located outside the 100-year floodplain and no construction would occur there; therefore, there would be no impact on the floodplain. The proposed relocation site is located outside the 100-year floodplain; therefore, construction of the new Harrison County Public Library would have no impact on the floodplain.

#### 4.2.3 Waters of the U.S. Including Wetlands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill 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 impacts to wetlands.

A review of National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps indicated that there are no potential wetland areas located on the project sites (USFWS, 2009). A site visit by NISTAC and FEMA biologists on April 23, 2009, confirmed that no wetlands are present on any of the sites.

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 project sites are located within the Mississippi Coastal Zone (NOAA, 2004).

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

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

On July 22, 2009, letters requesting project review were sent to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR), Bureau of Wetlands Permitting, and to the USACE Mobile District. A response letter dated July 30, 2009, from MDMR stated that MDMR had no objections to the project provided there are no direct or indirect impacts to coastal wetlands and no coastal agency objects to the proposal (Appendix C). No response from the USACE has been received to date.

### **4.3 Transportation**

The damaged Gulfport Public Library was located on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, which is classified by the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) as a collector road. In urban areas, collector roads are characterized as the link between the arterial system and points of origin and destination (MDOT, 2001). The existing Orange Grove Public Library property is located on Mobile Avenue, and the proposed relocation site is located on Kenwood Drive, neither of which is classified by MDOT. Mobile Avenue and Kenwood Drive are accessed by Highway 49, which is classified by MDOT as “other principal arterial” (MDOT, 2005).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, short-term impacts to transportation and site access are anticipated during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building. There would be a minor temporary increase in the volume of traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of this site, which could potentially result in a slower traffic flow for the duration of the demolition phase. To mitigate potential delays, demolition vehicles and equipment would be stored on site, and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to transportation and site access are anticipated during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building and construction of the new Harrison County Public Library. There would be a minor temporary increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of these sites, which could potentially result in a slower traffic flow for the duration of the construction/demolition phase. To mitigate potential delays, construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on site during project activities, and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways.

Post-construction, traffic volumes in the vicinity of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building would return to normal levels; no long-term traffic impacts are anticipated. At the new Harrison County Public Library site, construction of a new library in a primarily residential area would result in a long-term minor increase in traffic volumes. On July 22, 2009, a letter requesting project review was sent to MDOT. In an e-mail response dated August 19, 2009, MDOT indicated that no MDOT projects are planned for the area of the proposed relocation site (Appendix C).

### **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,

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policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Socioeconomic and demographic data for the project area were reviewed to determine if the proposed project would have a disproportionate impact on minority or low-income persons.

The following information was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) 2007 population estimates and the USCB 2005-2007 American Community Survey (USCB, 2009).

Census Data	City of Gulfport	Harrison County	State of Mississippi
Population	66,271	181,764	2,906,118
Median household income	\$37,963	\$43,654	\$35,632
Individuals below poverty level	18.5%	14.8%	21.1%
Minorities	40.5%	27.3%	39.1%

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 continue to be adversely affected by the reduced capacity and efficiency caused by library services being provided out of a temporary trailer unit and the existing Orange Grove Public Library.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, all citizens living in the downtown area, including low-income and minority populations, would be adversely affected by the relocation of the library outside of the downtown area since they would not be able to easily access library services. This adverse effect would be mitigated by a separate Harrison County project to construct a new multipurpose government building and library in downtown Gulfport. Harrison County plans to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to construct a new multipurpose government building and library at 1708 25th Avenue in downtown Gulfport. An EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were prepared for that project (HUD, 2007), which would offset the adverse effect of the Proposed Action by providing a library in downtown Gulfport. Implementation of the Proposed Action would benefit all populations within Harrison County by providing a consolidated facility to carry out county library daily operations efficiently and effectively.

#### 4.5 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires that States adopt ambient air quality standards. The standards have been established to protect the public from potentially harmful amounts of pollutants. Under the CAA, the 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 ecosystem 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 (O<sub>3</sub>), particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), and lead (Pb). According to the MDEQ, the entire State of Mississippi is classified as being in attainment, meaning that criteria air pollutants do not exceed the NAAQS (MDEQ, 2009).

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No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, short-term impacts to air quality could occur during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building. To reduce temporary impacts to air quality, demolition 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, NO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, 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. No long-term impacts to air quality are anticipated.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to air quality could occur during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building and during construction of the new library at the proposed relocation site. To reduce temporary impacts to air quality, demolition and 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, NO<sub>2</sub>, O<sub>3</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, 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. No long-term impacts to air quality are anticipated.

#### **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).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, short-term increases in noise levels are anticipated during demolition of the damaged Gulfport Public Library building; the building is located adjacent to a parking garage and within an urban area. To reduce noise level impacts, demolition activities would take place during normal business hours. Equipment and machinery used at the project site would meet all local, State, and Federal noise regulations. No long-term increases in noise levels are anticipated.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term increases in noise levels are anticipated during the demolition and construction period. The damaged Gulfport Public Library building, which will be demolished, is located adjacent to a parking garage and within an urban area. The existing Orange Grove Public Library building is located within a mixed urban and residential area. The proposed relocation site on Kenwood Drive is located in a primarily residential part of town. To reduce noise level impacts, demolition and construction activities would take place during normal business hours. Equipment and machinery used at the project sites would meet all local, State, and Federal noise regulations. No long-term increases in noise levels are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

## 4.7 Biological Resources

The damaged Gulfport Public Library property and the Orange Grove Public Library property are developed sites that consist of buildings, maintained lawns, and paved parking areas. The proposed relocation site on Kenwood Drive consists of a residential lot containing an uninhabited single-family home and detached garage. The remainder of the property consists of a concrete driveway, mowed lawn, and landscaping that includes mature live oak trees.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists the following federally endangered and threatened animal species for Harrison County (USFWS, 2008):

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status
Louisiana black bear	<i>Ursus americanus luteolus</i>	T
Gulf sturgeon	<i>Acipenser oxyrhynchus desotoi</i>	T (CH)
Piping plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	T (CH)
Brown pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	E
Red-cockaded woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>	E
Gopher tortoise	<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	T
Green turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	T
Loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	T
Kemp's ridley	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	E
Mississippi gopher frog	<i>Rana capito sevosa</i>	E
Louisiana quillwort	<i>Isoetes louisianensis</i>	E
Alabama red-bellied turtle	<i>Psuedemys alabamensis</i>	E
Leatherback turtle	<i>Dermochelys comacea</i>	E
West Indian manatee	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	E
T = threatened, E = endangered, (CH) = listed with critical habitat		

A site visit conducted on April 23, 2009, confirmed that all of the project sites are previously disturbed and developed. The sites provide little wildlife habitat and do not contain habitat for any federally listed threatened or endangered species. Species likely to use the project sites would be those common to urban and suburban areas.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, some urban wildlife habitat would be provided when the damaged Gulfport Public Library is demolished and the property returned to grade and revegetated.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, some urban wildlife habitat would be provided when the damaged Gulfport Public Library is demolished and the site returned to grade and revegetated. Approximately 0.45 acre of maintained lawn at the proposed relocation site will be removed for construction of the new facility.

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No impacts to threatened or endangered species are anticipated. A letter requesting project review was sent to the USFWS on July 22, 2009 (Appendix C). No response has been received to date.

#### **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 ACHP an opportunity to comment on Federal projects that will have an effect on historic properties prior to implementation. Historic properties are defined as archaeological sites, standing structures, or other historic resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

A FEMA Archaeologist and Architectural Historian, both qualified under the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (36 CFR Part 61) in their respective disciplines, conducted an assessment of the project's potential to affect historic properties within the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the damaged Gulfport Public Library building site and the proposed relocation site. 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 archaeological resources, the APE consists of the legal land parcels of the project sites. For above ground historic properties, the APE is extended to a 0.5-mile radius around each of the project sites. This APE was previously established through FEMA consultation with the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

Above-ground Resources. The proposed relocation site is a 4.5-acre lot, located northwest of the intersection of Old Highway 49 (Old Magnolia Highway) and Kenwood Drive in Gulfport. It is approximately 6 miles north of the damaged Gulfport Public Library location, and is located in the northern suburban fringes of the City of Gulfport. The proposed relocation site is bounded to the south by Kenwood Drive and residential properties; to the west by residential properties; to the north by Edward Lane, residential properties, and a church; and to the east by Old Highway 49, railroad tracks, and commercial property. The surrounding area retains a sense of rural locality between spaced planned (subdivision) communities. Old Highway 49, which runs north-south and parallel to Highway 49, is a heavily urbanized, commercial shopping and services thoroughfare. The two highways are separated by a distance of about four city blocks and the railroad tracks that run north-south from Jackson to Gulfport (Gulf and Ship Island Railroad). The proposed relocation site is not located in or adjacent to any listed or eligible NRHP properties.

The 4.5-acre parcel on which the new Harrison County Public Library would be constructed is a residential lot containing a single-family dwelling and a detached garage, as well as hardscape and landscape features including an asphalt driveway lined by an alley of mature live oak trees. In the early 20th century, the parcel was part of a larger property consisting of approximately 160 acres owned by Thomas Watson who acquired the land through county auctions. The property was sold in 1917 to the McCandliss family, and used for timber harvesting between 1917 and 1923. In 1923, the property owner applied for a Federal Farm Mortgage from the Federal Land Bank in New Orleans under the condition that the acreage be used for agricultural purposes. From 1923 to 1972 the property was used for citrus cultivation. A 1933 Postal Service map shows a building on the property that may have been a dwelling. The property was sold



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again in 1972 and subdivided into residential lots. The proposed relocation site is located within the parcel sold to Jerry and Norma Williamson in 1972.

The extant one-story brick dwelling and detached one-story, two-car garage appear to have been constructed shortly after the sale of the property to the Williamsons in 1972, as suggested by the physical characteristics of the buildings, aerial imagery, and deed records. The dwelling is clad in brick veneer, features a high roof line, and exhibits aluminum-frame windows. The buildings do not possess the exceptional importance required for properties less than 50 years of age to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. The parcel also features hardscape and landscape features including: an asphalt driveway, accessible from Kenwood Drive that is lined with mature oak trees that appear to have been planted in the early 20th century; small linear mound rows and a defunct irrigation pump that appear to be remnant from the use of the property for citrus cultivation; and an abandoned well. Although reflective of the historical use of the property, these features are disconnected from one another and altered by later uses of the land. There is no indication that these features possess historical significance either as individual resources or collectively.

The 4.5-acre parcel is surrounded by residential, institutional (church), and commercial buildings that date from the second half of the 20th century. There is no evidence to suggest that these properties are eligible for listing in the NRHP either individually or as a district.

Archeological Resources. The proposed relocation site is situated inland on the coastal terrace at an elevation of approximately 55 feet amsl. The site lies 0.6 mile south of Flat Creek, a first order stream. It is 50 feet south of an unnamed seasonal stream or drainage channel that creates areas of marginal marshland just to the north. Due to its location and size, the relocation site was initially considered to have a moderate potential to yield archeological resources. However, visual inspection of the relocation site did not reveal any evidence of archeological resources on the surface other than remnant landscape features associated with the property's history of citrus agriculture from the 1920s to the 1970s. Despite numerous archaeological assessments conducted within a 1-mile (1.6-kilometer) radius of the proposed project area, a search of MDAH site files indicated no previously recorded archaeological sites were located within this area.

A Phase I Archaeological Survey of the proposed relocation site was conducted by NISTAC from July 26 to July 31, 2009 (Lazelle et al., 2009). NISTAC staff were accompanied by a FEMA Historic Preservation Specialist during field investigation. Work consisted of a pedestrian survey, photographic documentation, and the excavation of shovel test pits (STPs) spaced at 20-meter intervals across the 4.5-acre parcel. Forty-six STPs at 20-meters intervals were placed on eight staggered transects across the entirety of the proposed relocation site. The pedestrian survey revealed linear mound landscape features and a probable irrigation pump associated with past citrus cultivation. Additionally, a well with a hand-scribed date of 1942 on the well-cap is located on the western side of the extant dwelling. The Phase I Archeological Survey revealed a lack of archeological resources for the entire 4.5-acre parcel. One STP adjacent to the extant dwelling yielded probable 20th-century material remains likely associated with the building shown in the 1933 Postal Service map and later occupation of the property. The apparent modern-era nature of the five total recovered artifacts did not warrant site recordation under the qualitative criterion established with the MDAH. The eastern and southern perimeters of the

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property are notably disturbed. These portions of the property adjacent to Old Highway 49 and Kenwood Drive have been subject to past roadway construction and drainage ditch excavation.

The Phase I Archeological Survey concluded that the proposed relocation site (except for the eastern and southern boundaries disturbed through road and drainageway construction) exhibits a high degree of stratigraphic integrity, yet yields no cultural material. The assessment revealed no evidence of prehistoric or historic cultural activities prior to the property being put into citrus production after 1923. In total, 42 shovel test pits, including two radials, were excavated as part of the Phase I Archeological Survey. Five late-historic to modern-era artifacts were recovered. The artifacts were concentrated in one shovel test pit north of the footprint of the extant house. Although the archaeological assemblage was limited, the added value of landscape features and historical records indicating late-historic/early modern-era occupation and use of the property warrants site registration with MDAH.

The limited historical finds and features noted during the survey do not possess the qualities that would aid our understanding of local or regional patterns of history, and thus the finds would not be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. No further work is recommended at the relocation site (Lazelle et al., 2009).

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, a new Harrison County Public Library building would not be constructed. Services formerly provided by the damaged Gulfport Public Library would continue to be provided at a reduced capacity by the existing temporary trailer unit and the Orange Grove Public Library. The damaged Gulfport Public Library would be demolished, resulting in an adverse effect. This adverse effect has been resolved through the Section 106 process and the execution in May 2009 of an MOA signed by FEMA, MDAH, and other consulting parties. No impacts to archeological resources are anticipated.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the damaged Gulfport Public Library would be demolished, the Orange Grove Public Library property would be sold out of county ownership, the temporary trailer currently serving as the Gulfport Public Library would be removed, and a new library building would be built on the proposed relocation site. The undertaking would result in an adverse effect to the Gulfport Public Library. This adverse effect has been resolved through the Section 106 process and the execution in May 2009 of an MOA signed by FEMA, MDAH, and other consulting parties. The MOA stipulates that for a period of one year the HCBS will seek to identify viable re-use proposals for the Gulfport Public Library building. If a qualified lessee emerges, rehabilitation of the library will be carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Should HCBS efforts to market the building fail to identify a qualified lessee, the county will proceed with demolition. Mitigation includes the preparation of Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation and a completed MDAH Historic Resources Inventory Form.

FEMA has determined that no other historic properties, either above-ground or archeological, are located within the APE for the proposed undertaking. If unexpected discoveries are made during the course of project execution, FEMA will proceed in accordance with the applicable Programmatic Agreement. In letters to MDAH and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) dated September 10, 2009, FEMA submitted the Phase I Archeological Survey report for review, and requested concurrence with the findings and determinations as presented above (Appendix C). No responses have been received to date.

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## **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 relocation 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 and construction. These projects and the proposed project may have a cumulative temporary impact on air quality in Gulfport by increasing criteria pollutants during demolition and construction activities.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, all citizens living in the downtown area, including low-income and minority populations, would be adversely affected by the relocation of the library outside of the downtown area, since they would not be able to easily access library services. This adverse effect would be mitigated by a separate Harrison County project to use CDBG funds from HUD to construct a new multipurpose government building and library in downtown Gulfport. Therefore, cumulatively, no adverse effect to any populations, including low-income or minority populations, are anticipated from the proposed action. All populations in the county and downtown area would benefit from the services provided by the two new libraries.

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.

Harrison County 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. Responses received to date are included in Appendix C.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Regulatory Division
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, Water Management Division

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- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Harrison Field Office
  - Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
  - Mississippi Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Office)
  - Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (Tribal Historic Preservation Office)
  - 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
  - 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 relocation site.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS**

No impacts to geology, groundwater, waters of the U.S., including wetlands, public health and safety, hazardous materials, socioeconomic resources, biological resources, or archeological 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 using BMPs, such as silt fences, proper equipment maintenance, and appropriate signage. Beneficial impacts to floodplains are anticipated because the proposed project would reduce occupancy within the floodplain. All citizens living in the downtown area, including low-income and minority populations, would be adversely affected by the relocation of the library outside of the downtown area. This adverse effect would be mitigated by a separate Harrison County project to use CDBG funds from HUD to construct a new multipurpose government building and library in downtown Gulfport. All populations in the county and downtown area would benefit from the services provided by the two new libraries. A long-term impact to historic resources would occur with the demolition of the historic Gulfport Public Library; this adverse effect has been resolved through the execution of the May 2009 MOA.

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## Appendix A

### Figures

## Appendix B

### Site Photographs

## Appendix C

### Agency Coordination