

DRAFT Environmental Assessment

Nora Navra Library
City of New Orleans
FEMA-1603-DR-LA

Orleans Parish, Louisiana
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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region VI
Louisiana Recovery Office
New Orleans, Louisiana 70114



FEMA

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABFE	Advisory Base Flood Elevation
APE	Area of Potential Effects
BMPs	Best Management Practices
CAA	Clean Air Act
CBRA	Coastal Barrier Resources Act
CBRS	Coastal Barrier Resources System
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
DFIRM	Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
EDMS	Electronic Document Management System
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
GNO	Greater New Orleans
HEAG	Highest Existing Adjacent Grade
HSDRRS	Hurricane Storm Damage Risk Reduction System
LADOTD	Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
LA GOHSEP	Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness
LDEQ	Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
LDNR	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NAVD 88	North American Vertical Datum of 1988
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
PA	Public Assistance Grant Program
RECAP	Risk Evaluation/Corrective Action Program
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RHA	Rivers and Harbors Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office/Officer
US	United States
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Authority

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 29, 2005 near the town of Buras, Louisiana with sustained winds of more than 125 mph. President George W. Bush declared a major disaster for the State of Louisiana (FEMA-1603-DR-LA) on August 29, 2005, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide Federal assistance in designated areas of Louisiana. This is pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), PL 93-288, as amended. Section 406 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Public Assistance Program (PA) to assist in funding the repair, restoration, reconstruction, or replacement of public facilities damaged as a result of the declared disaster.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500 to 1508), and FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR Parts 9 and 10).

The purpose of this EA is to analyze potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. FEMA will use the findings in this EA to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

1.2 Background

The Nora Navra Library, owned by the City of New Orleans in Orleans Parish, sustained major damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. It was deemed eligible for repairs by FEMA for Federal disaster public assistance as a non-critical facility serving the needs of the general public.

The Nora Navra Library is a facility of the New Orleans Public Library System, which is a department of the City of New Orleans, and is located at 1902 St. Bernard Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana, Latitude 29.97578, Longitude -90.06739 (Figures 1 and 2). Nora Navra Library, built in 1954, is a one-story building with brick exterior walls, slab-on-grade foundation, flat composite, roof and an irregular footprint measuring approximately 3000 square feet (SF).



Figure 1 Orleans Parish, Louisiana (Google Images, 2011)

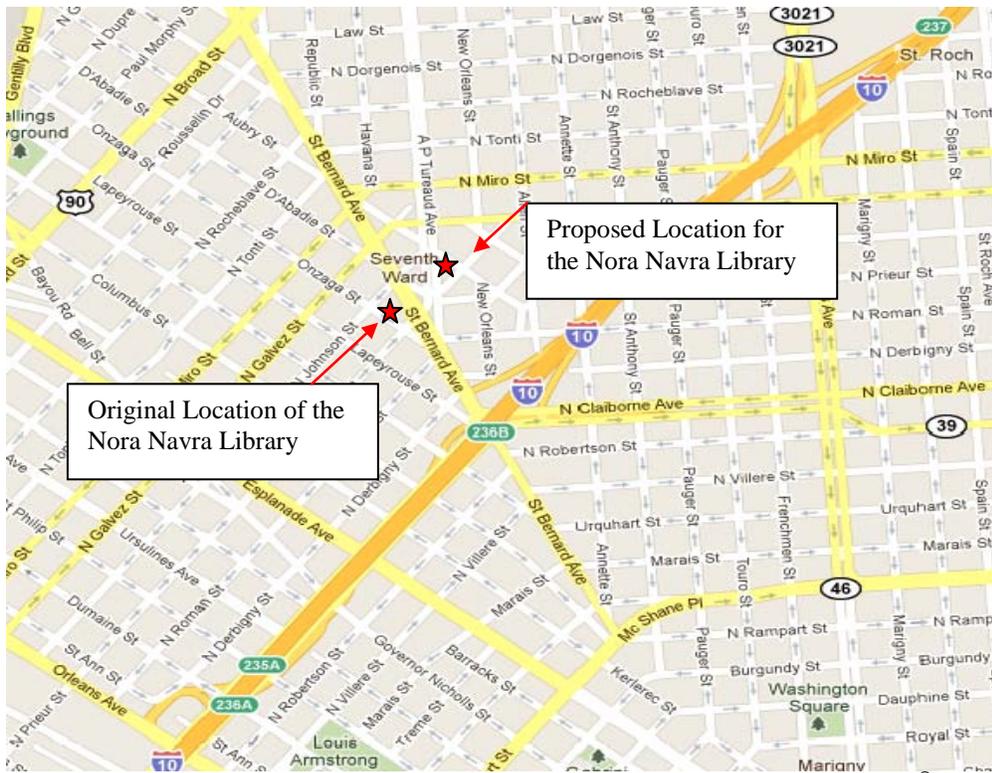


Figure 2 – Nora Navra Library - Current and Proposed Locations (Google Maps®, 2011)

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, Nora Navra Library serviced residents of the Seventh Ward as a neighborhood branch library. The library served the general public’s education and literary needs by providing a basic collection of both print and non-print material, public-use computers, community meeting spaces, and enterprise space that was utilized by area residents, schools and other organizations.

As directed by the Stafford Act (PL 93-288), the objective of FEMA's PA Grant Program is to provide assistance to State, Tribal and local governments, and certain types of Private Nonprofit organizations so that communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. Nora Navra Library was utilized by residents of the Seventh Ward Area and aided the area's commitment to provide educational and literary services. Due to damages sustained from Hurricane Katrina, these community services provided by Nora Navra library were lost. Restoration of educational and literary services in a manner that best serves the local community is needed for the FEMA PA Grant Program and the City of New Orleans to achieve its objective.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

The NEPA process consists of an evaluation of the environmental effects of a Federal undertaking, including its alternatives. Three alternatives have been proposed and reviewed including, 1) the No Action Alternative, 2) Reconstruction/repair of the Nora Navra Library in the same footprint and original location, and 3) Reconstruction of the Nora Navra Library in an alternate location (Figures 2 and 3).

3.1 Alternative 1 - No Action

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would entail no repair, reconstruction, or relocation of the Nora Navra Library. Consequently, the public would be unable to utilize this public facility. No Action would forego opportunities for reconstruction and recompense.

3.2 Alternative 2 – Reconstruction/Repair in the Same Footprint

This alternative would reconstruct/repair the damaged Nora Navra Library facility to the pre-disaster configuration, function and capacity in substantially the same footprint, which would restore the community service as it existed prior to Hurricane Katrina. This practicable alternative meets the purpose and need of the action and will be further evaluated in this EA.

3.3 Alternative 3 - Reconstruction at an Alternate Location - Proposed Action

The proposed action is for replacement of the 3000 SF Nora Navra Library building with a 6673 SF facility in an alternate location approximately 500 feet northeast of the present site. The proposed location consists of a triangular lot bounded by Old Prieur Street, Aubry Street, and A.P Tureaud Avenue. This action would include site preparation, construction of a new building and installation of necessary utilities and appurtenances. The new facility will be expanded in capacity and size but will retain the function and purpose of the former library facility. The current site of the Nora Navra Library is too small to support a larger facility and would therefore require the acquisition of adjacent land from multiple owners. The proposed location has one owner thus resulting in one real estate transaction. Additionally, as demolition is not required prior to construction at the alternative site, the construction schedule will be shorter. Reconstruction of the Nora Navra Library facility in a new location instead of its current location will hasten the restoration of community services lost as a result of Hurricane Katrina. This

practicable alternative also meets the purpose and need of the action and will be further evaluated in this EA.



Figure 3 - Proposed Action (Google Maps®, 2011)

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

4.1 Wetlands

The United States Army Corps Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Wetlands are identified as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. The USACE also regulates the building of structures in waters of the U.S. pursuant to the Rivers and Harbors Act (RHA).

Executive Order (EO) 11990, Protection of Wetlands, directs Federal agencies to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the values of wetlands for federally funded projects. FEMA regulations for complying with EO 11990 are found at 44 CFR Part 9, Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) map shows no wetlands within the proposed project area that could be adversely affected by the project (Figure 4, USFWS 2010). In comments received on October 3, 2011, the USACE indicated that no federal permit would be

required for the placement or redistribution of dredged or fill material on the proposed project site (*Appendix B*).

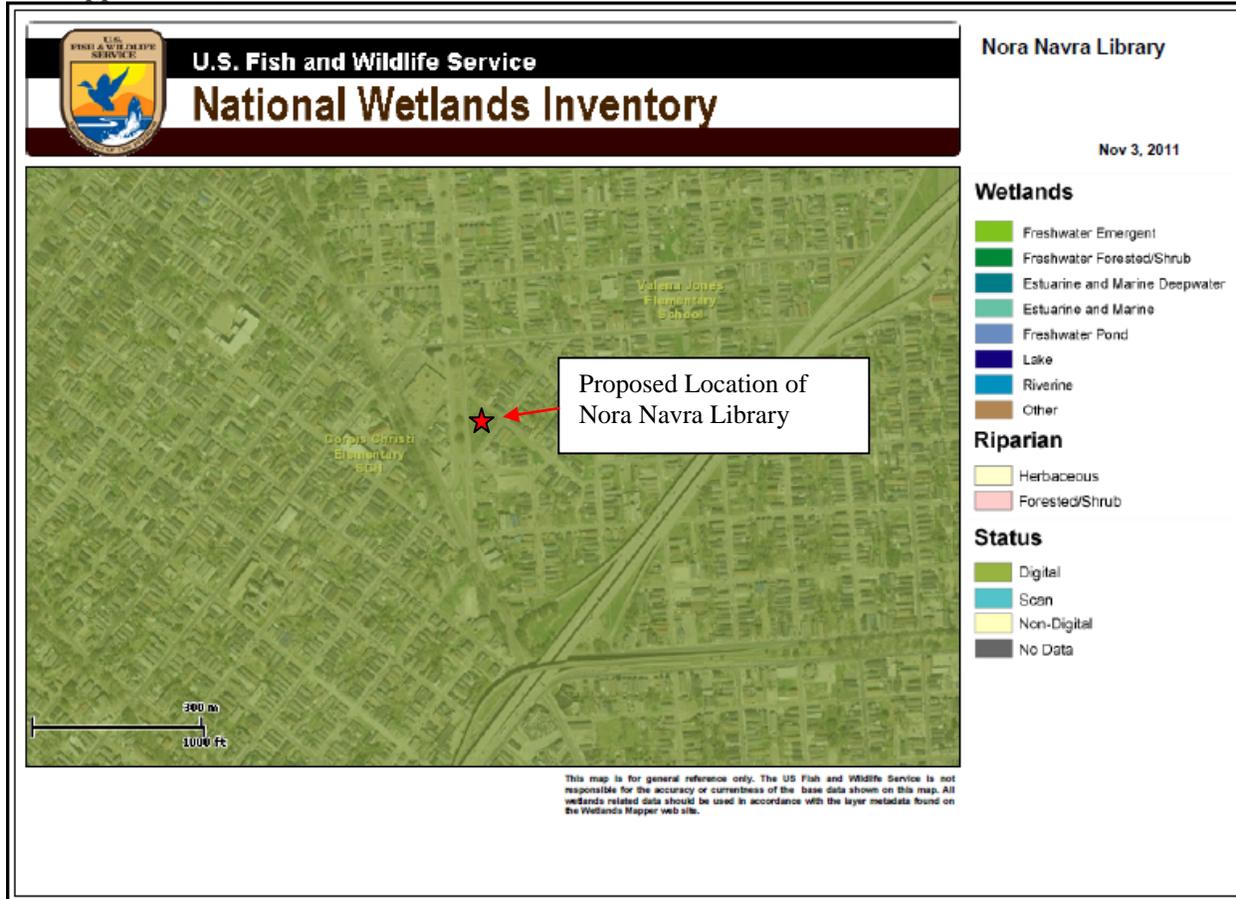


Figure 4 - U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wetlands Inventory Map (USFWS, 2011)

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action Alternative would have no impact on wetlands or other waters of the U.S. and would not require permits under Section 404 of the CWA or Section 10 of the RHA.

Alternative 2 – Reconstruction/Repair in the Same Footprint: Reconstruction/repair of Nora Navra Library in substantially its same footprint would have no impact on wetlands or other waters of the U.S. FEMA has determined the proposed location is an urban, previously-disturbed site and is not a wetland under Executive Order 11990. It would not require permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

Alternative 3 – Reconstruction at an Alternative Location - Proposed Action: The proposed action alternative would have no impact on wetlands or other waters of the U.S. FEMA has determined that the proposed location is an urban, previously-disturbed site and is not a jurisdictional wetland under Executive Order 11990. The project as proposed would not require permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act.

To minimize indirect impacts (erosion, sedimentation, dust and other construction-related disturbances) to the well-defined urban drainage ways surrounding the proposed action, the

following best management practices should be included into the daily operations of the construction activities: silt screens, barriers (e.g., hay bales), berms/dikes, and/or fences to be placed where and as needed. Fencing will be placed for marking staging areas to store construction equipment and supplies as well as conduct maintenance/repair operations.

4.2 Floodplains

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) requires Federal agencies to avoid direct or indirect support or development within the 100-year floodplain whenever there is a practicable alternative. FEMA's regulations for complying with EO 11988 are found at 44 CFR Part 9, Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands.

In July 2005, FEMA initiated a series of flood insurance studies for many of the Louisiana coastal parishes as part of the Flood Map Modernization effort through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Fund. These studies were necessary because the flood hazard and risk information shown on many Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) was developed during the 1970s, and the physical terrain had changed significantly, such as major loss of wetland areas. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA expanded the scope of work to include all of coastal Louisiana. The magnitude of the impacts of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reinforced the urgency to obtain additional flood recovery data for the coastal zones of Louisiana. More detailed analysis was possible because new data obtained after the hurricanes including information on levees and levee systems, new high-water marks, and new hurricane parameters (Lamp 2007).

During an initial post-hurricane analysis, FEMA determined that the "100-Year" or 1-percent chance storm flood elevations on FIRMs for many Louisiana communities, referred to as Base Flood Elevations (BFEs), were too low. FEMA created recovery maps showing the extent and magnitude of Hurricane Katrina's and Rita's surge, as well as information on other storms over the past 25 years (Lamp 2007). The 2006 advisory flood data shown on the recovery maps for the Louisiana-declared disaster areas show high-water marks surveyed after the storm; flood limits developed from these surveyed points; and Advisory Base Flood Elevations, or ABFEs. The recovery maps and other advisory data were developed to assist parish officials, homeowners, business owners, and other affected citizens with their recovery and rebuilding efforts (Lamp 2007).

Updated preliminary flood hazard maps from an intensive five-year mapping project guided by FEMA are now provided to all Louisiana coastal parishes. The new maps released in early 2008, known as Preliminary Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs), are based on the most technically advanced flood insurance studies ever performed for Louisiana, followed by multiple levels of review. They provide an up-to-date, accurate picture of coastal Louisiana flood risks. The DFIRMs provide communities with a more scientific approach to economic development, hazard mitigation planning, emergency response and post-flood recovery (Lamp 2007).

The USACE is currently working on a Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) for the Greater New Orleans (GNO) area (Miller 2011). This 350-mile system of levees, floodwalls, surge barriers, and pump stations will reduce the flood risk associated with a storm event. In September of 2011, the USACE provided FEMA with assurances that the

HSDRRS is capable of defending against a storm surge with a 1-percent annual chance event of occurring in any given year. The areas protected include portions of St. Bernard, St. Charles, Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines parishes (Miller 2011). FEMA has now begun revising the preliminary DFIRMs within the HSDRRS to incorporate the reduced flood risk associated with the system improvements. In the spring of 2012, FEMA should be prepared to release revised preliminary DFIRMs (Miller 2011).

The 2008 Preliminary DFIRMs – currently viewed as the best available flood risk data for the five GNO parishes – do not consider the completion of the HSDRRS. In many areas, the flood risk has been significantly reduced due to heightened protection (Miller 2011). To ensure that the best available data is used when reviewing and approving grant applications within the HSDRRS, FEMA will re-examine individual grant reconstruction projects using sound engineering data and judgment (Miller 2011). The case-by-case review may indicate that the source of best available flood risk data for a reconstruction project is preliminary DFIRMs, ABFEs, or other relevant sound engineering data. No project should be built to a floodplain management standard that is less protective than what the community has adopted in local ordinances through their participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (Miller 2011).

In compliance with FEMA policy implementing EO 11988, Floodplain Management, the proposed project was reviewed for possible impacts associated with occupancy or modification to a floodplain. Orleans Parish enrolled in the NFIP on August 3, 1970.

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action Alternative would have no impact on the 100-year floodplain as no building would be constructed at the site.

Alternative 2 – Reconstruction/Repair in the Same Footprint: Per preliminary DFIRM panel number 22071C0230F, dated November 13, 2008 (Figure 5), the current Nora Navra Library site is located in AE (EL 1), a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) subject to inundation by the 1-percent annual chance (100-year) flood; base flood elevations determined. Per Advisory Base Flood Elevation Map (ABFE Map) LA-DD31 (Figure 6), dated June 5, 2006, the former site is located in ABFE EL 1.5 or 3 feet above Highest Existing Adjacent Grade (HEAG). Reconstruction/repair of the Nora Navra Library in substantially its same footprint will have no determinable impact on flood elevations, nor will it increase development in this fully built-out area. In compliance with EO 11988, an 8-step process was completed and documentation is attached in Appendix C.

Alternative 3 – Reconstruction at an Alternate Location - Proposed Action: The proposed action alternative would involve the reconstruction of the Nora Navra Library facility at an alternate location. Per preliminary DFIRM panel number 22071C0230F dated November 13, 2008 (Figure 5), the proposed project site is located in AE (EL 1), a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) subject to inundation by the 1-percent annual chance (100-year) flood; base flood elevations determined (older FIRMs may show “A numbered” zones; these are the same as Zone AE). In addition, per Advisory Base Flood Elevation Map (ABFE Map) LA-DD31 (Figure 6) the proposed project site is located in ABFE EL 1.5 or 3 feet above Highest Existing Adjacent Grade (HEAG). The reconstruction of this facility in a new location will have no determinable impact on flood elevations, nor will it increase development in this fully built-out area. As per 44 CFR

9.11 (d), new construction of non-residential structures must be elevated or flood-proofed to the 100-year BFE. This location is currently being re-evaluated by FEMA to determine the appropriate base flood elevation the facility must be protected against. The City of New Orleans is required to coordinate with the local floodplain administrator regarding floodplain permit(s) prior to the start of any activities. All coordination pertaining to these permit(s) should be documented to the local floodplain administrator and copies provided to the State and FEMA as part of the permanent project files. Additionally, per 44 CFR 9.11(d)(9), mitigation or minimization standards must be applied, where possible. The replacement of building contents, materials, and equipment should be, where possible, wet or dry-proofed, elevated, or relocated to or above the BFE. In compliance with EO 11988, an 8-step process was completed and documentation is attached in Appendix C.

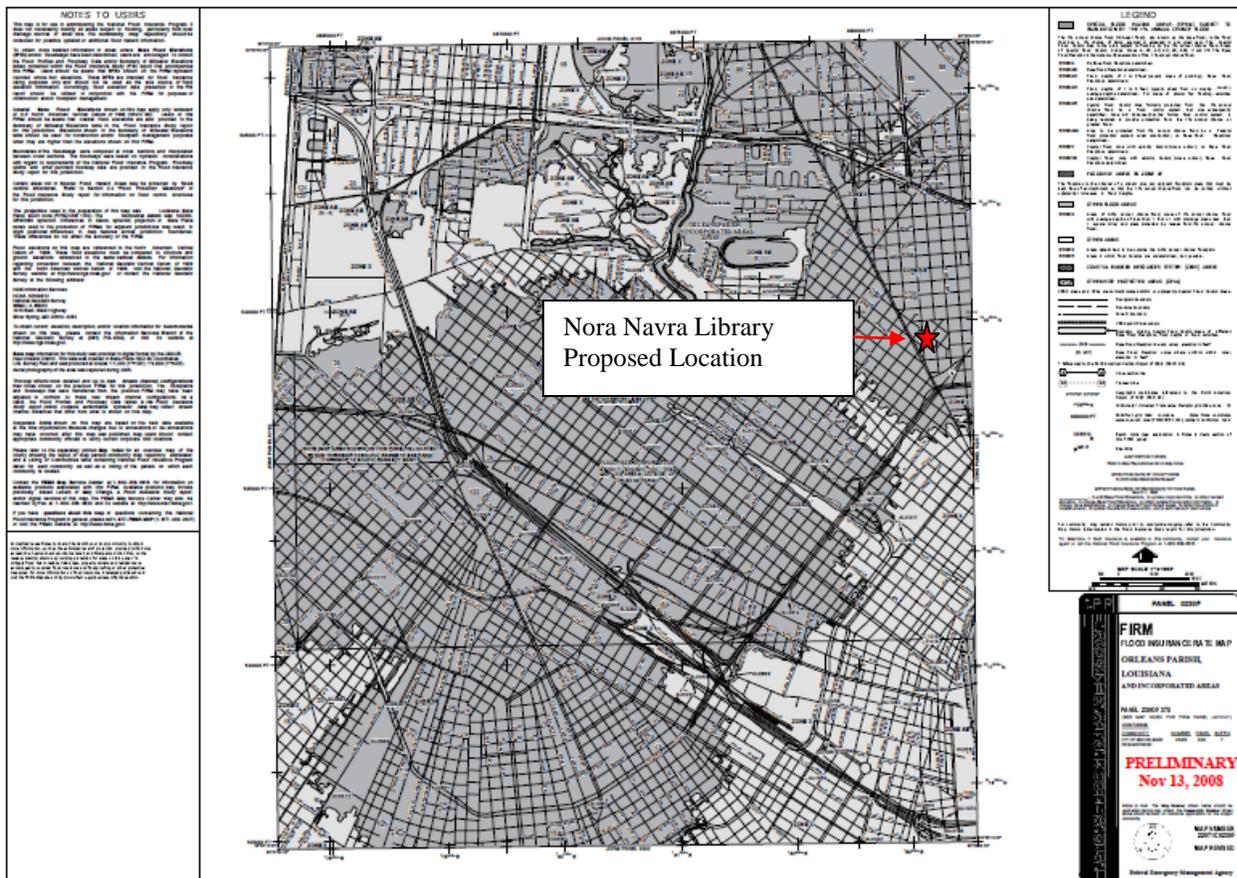


Figure 5 - Preliminary Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map Panel 22071C0230F (FEMA, 2008)

4.3 Coastal Resources

The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA) requires Federal agency actions to be consistent with the policies of the state coastal zone management program when conducting or supporting activities that affect a coastal zone. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) regulates development in Louisiana's designated coastal zone through the Coastal Use Permit Program. The existing facility and the proposed project site are located in the coastal zone and are required to obtain a Coastal Use Permit prior to construction (*Appendix B*).

The USFWS regulates Federal funding in Coastal Barrier Resource System (CBRS) units under the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA). This Act protects undeveloped coastal barriers and related areas (*i.e.*, Otherwise Protected Areas) by prohibiting direct or indirect Federal funding of projects that support development in these areas. The Act promotes appropriate use and conservation of coastal barriers along the Gulf of Mexico. The proposed project site is not located within a regulated CBRS unit.

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action Alternative would have no impact on a coastal zone or to a CBRS unit.

Alternative 2 – Reconstruction/Repair in the Same Footprint: Reconstruction/repair of the Nora Navra Library in substantially its same footprint would involve construction in a designated coastal zone. This project requires a Coastal Use Permit from LDNR. The City of New Orleans is required to contact LDNR prior to initiating work. The original site is not within a CBRS unit; therefore, it does not trigger the CBRA.

Alternative 3 – Reconstruction at an Alternate Location - Proposed Action: The proposed action alternative would involve construction in a designated coastal zone. This project requires a Coastal Use Permit from LDNR. The City of New Orleans is required to contact LDNR prior to initiating work. The proposed site is not within a CBRS unit; therefore, the Proposed Action Alternative does not trigger the CBRA.

4.4 Biological Resources

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 prohibits the taking of listed, threatened, and endangered species unless specifically authorized by permit from the USFWS or the National Marine Fisheries Service. "Take" is defined in ESA Section 3 as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct." Harm is further defined by the ESA regulations to include significant habitat modification or degradation that results in death or injury to listed species by significantly impairing behavioral patterns such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering. The West Indian manatee, Gulf sturgeon and pallid sturgeon are species federally listed as threatened or endangered found in Orleans Parish.

Alternative 1 – No Action: The No Action Alternative would have no impact on species federally listed as threatened or endangered.

Alternative 2 – Reconstruction/Repair in the Same Footprint: Reconstruction/repair of the Nora Navra Library in substantially its same footprint would have no impact on species federally listed as threatened or endangered.

Alternative 3 – Reconstruction at an Alternate Location - Proposed Action: Inspections of the proposed site did not indicate the presence of any species federally listed as threatened or endangered. In correspondence dated September 15, 2011, the USFWS stated that the project, as proposed, would have no effect on Federal trust resources under its jurisdiction and currently protected by the ESA (*Appendix B*).

4.5 Cultural Resources

The consideration of impacts to historic properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places is mandated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) as implemented by 36 CFR Part 800. Requirements include the identification of significant historic properties that may be impacted by the proposed action or alternatives within the project's area of potential effect. Historic properties are defined as archaeological sites, standing structures or other historic resources listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If adverse effects on historic, archaeological or cultural properties are identified, agencies must consider effects of their activities and attempt to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts to these resources.

FEMA, the Louisiana State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO), the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (ACTT), the Caddo Nation (CN), the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (CTL), the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO), the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (CT), the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (JBCI), the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MBCI), the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma (QTO), the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma (SNO), the Seminole Tribe of Florida (STF), the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (TBTL), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) have executed a Statewide Programmatic Agreement (PA) dated August 17, 2009 to streamline the Section 106 review process (hereafter referred to as the Statewide PA). The proposed action is subject to the standard project review stipulation of the Statewide PA.

Existing Conditions

The applicant intends to demolish the Nora Navra Library located at 1902 St. Bernard Avenue and rebuild it with improvements 500 feet to the northeast on a triangular piece of land bounded by Aubry Street on the northeast, Old North Prieur Street on the southeast and A.P. Tureaud Avenue on the west. The library was constructed circa 1954.

Standing Structures

Based on research using the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) database and the Louisiana Cultural Resources Map on the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation's website, FEMA has determined that the project areas, demolition site and construction site, are located adjacent to the Esplanade Ridge National Register Historic District (NRHD). FEMA, in