



FEMA

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Louisiana Recovery Office
1 Seine Court, 4th Floor
New Orleans, Louisiana 70114

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for the
CONSTRUCTION OF A DOPPLER WEATHER RADAR SYSTEM TOWER
PROJECT
MONROE, LOUISIANA
FEMA-1603-DR-LA

BACKGROUND

Doppler Weather Radar coverage in Louisiana is fragmented as evidenced by the fact that in the northern part of the State, Doppler Weather coverage is poor or non-existent. The existing radar service in the northeast Louisiana area can detect storms and other adverse weather only in the range from 5,000 feet above the ground to 9,000 feet above the ground. Any storms, tornadoes, or other adverse weather systems within the proposed project area that exist below this elevation range are not visible using the existing radar coverage. The proposed Doppler Weather Radar System (DWRS) site would provide the ability for meteorologists to be able to see potential storm activity closer to the ground, such as storms that are capable of producing a tornado at a level lower than the currently available 5,000 feet to 9,000 feet above ground level range. As a result, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) (Applicant) has requested federal funding through FEMA's 404 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to construct a 70-foot tower which will support a dual polarization radar antenna/pedestal assembly with a 41-foot Sandwich Foam Core Radome at the ULM Agriculture & Auto Science Shop building in Monroe, Louisiana to provide enhanced Doppler Weather Radar service to the northeast Louisiana area.

In accordance with 44 CFR Part 10, FEMA regulations to implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared. The purpose of the EA was to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with construction of a 70-foot tower to support a dual polarization radar antenna/pedestal assembly with a 41-foot Sandwich Foam Core Radome and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The need for the proposed action is to enhance the severe weather coverage in the northeast Louisiana area. The alternatives considered include 1) No Action; 2) Construction of the DWRS tower at the ULM site (Proposed Action); 3) Having the National Weather Service enhance the coverage of four regional DWRSs by changing the scan angles of these DWRSs (Dismissed); and 4) Construction of another type of Weather Radar which only measures base reflectivity (Dismissed).

The Applicant proposes to construct an approximately a 70-foot tower to support a dual polarization radar antenna/pedestal assembly with a 41-foot Sandwich Foam Core

Radome. The proposed action also includes refurbishing the ULM Agriculture & Auto Science Shop to house the associated DWRS electronic equipment and serve as the distribution point for real time data. The equipment will include a DWRS-8501S/SDP S-Band, Simultaneous Dual Polarization Doppler Weather Radar System, electrical and mechanical tool boxes.

FINDINGS

FEMA has evaluated the proposed project for significant adverse impacts to geology, soils, water resources (surface water, groundwater, and wetlands), floodplains, coastal resources, air quality, biological resources (vegetation, fish and wildlife, Federally-listed threatened or endangered species and critical habitats), cultural resources, socioeconomics (including minority and low income populations), safety, noise, and hazardous materials. The results of these evaluations as well as consultations and input from other federal and state agencies are presented in the EA.

CONDITIONS

The following conditions must be met as part of the implementation of the project. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize federal funds:

Based upon the studies and consultations undertaken in this environmental assessment, several conditions and mitigation measures must be taken by the Applicant prior to and during project implementation.

- LDEQ has stormwater general permits for construction areas equal to or greater than one acre. It is recommended that the LDEQ Water Permit Division be contacted at (225) 219-3181 to determine whether the proposed improvements require one of these permits. The contractor is required to implement BMPs that meet the LDEQ permitting specifications for storm water discharge regulated under Section 402 of the CWA.
- Any changes or modifications to the proposed project would require a revised USACE determination. Off-site locations of activities such as borrow, disposals, haul-and detour-roads and work mobilization site developments may be subject to the Department of the Army regulatory requirements and may have an impact to a Department of Army project.
- If any solid or hazardous wastes, or soils and/or groundwater contaminated with hazardous constituents are encountered during the project, notification to LDEQ's Single-Point-of-Contact (SPOC) at (225) 219-3640 is required. Additionally, precautions should be taken to protect workers from these hazardous constituents.
- The Applicant would be responsible for contacting the USFWS if there is a change in the scope of work, the project necessitates removal of mature pine trees, construction activities have not been initiated within one year, or if any new bald eagle nests are observed in proximity to the proposed project activities during the

next nesting season (October 1 through mid-May). If the projects have not been initiated within one year, follow up consultation is required with the USFWS prior to construction.

- The Applicant should contact the local or regional USFWS office for instructions on the proper collection and disposal of injured or dead birds and removal of nests. If requested, the Applicant will allow USFWS personnel access to the tower site to document and monitor avian mortalities and injuries, monitor bird behavior, assess lighting impacts on migratory birds, and conduct similar research. If the tower is discovered to have adverse effects to migratory birds, (i.e., greater than 10 birds kills per night), the tower must be reported immediately to the USFWS.
- The Applicant would be responsible for contacting the USFWS if there is a change in the scope of work, the project necessitates removal of mature pine trees or if construction activities have not been initiated within one year.
- Construction traffic should be closely monitored and controlled as appropriate. All construction activities would be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with OSHA requirements. To alert motorists and pedestrians of project activities, appropriate signage and barriers would be on site prior to and during construction activities. During construction activities, the construction site(s) would be fenced off to discourage trespassers.
- If archaeological artifacts or features (prehistoric or historic) are discovered during the course of FEMA funded work at the proposed project site, the Applicant must ensure that their Contractor stops work in the vicinity of the discovery and takes all reasonable measures to avoid and minimize harm to the discovery. The Applicant shall inform GOHSEP and FEMA of the discovery and FEMA will deploy an archaeologist to the location to conduct a site condition assessment. The Applicant would not proceed with work until FEMA has completed consultation with the SHPO and other appropriate consulting parties on the treatment of the discovery.
- In addition, if human remains are discovered during the course of FEMA funded work, the Applicant and the Applicant's Contractor are responsible for immediately halting work within the vicinity of the human remains finding. The Applicant will immediately notify GOHSEP, FEMA, the local Police Department, and the local Coroner's Office of the discovery. The local Coroner's Office will assess the nature and age of the human skeletal remains. If the Coroner's Office determines that the human skeletal remains are older than 50 years of age, the Louisiana Division of Archaeology will take jurisdiction over the remains. Within seventy-two (72) hours, the Applicant will notify FEMA and the Louisiana Division of Archaeology (225-342-8170) of the finding. FEMA will assist, as requested, the Louisiana Division of Archaeology and other interested parties, as necessary, to ensure compliance with the Louisiana Unmarked Human Burial Sites Preservation Act (R.S. 8:671 *et seq.*) and other applicable laws. In addition,

the Applicant must afford FEMA the opportunity to comply with the “Human Remains Policy” set forth by the ACHP.

- Any change to the approved scope of work will require reevaluation under Section 106.
- In accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations, the Applicant is responsible for acquiring any necessary permits and/or clearances prior to the commencement of any construction related activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the incorporated EA, and in accordance with Presidential Executive Orders 12898 (Environmental Justice), 11988 (Floodplain Management), and 11990 (Wetland Protection), FEMA has determined that the proposed action implemented with the conditions and mitigation measures outlined above and in the EA will not have any significant adverse effects on the quality of the natural and human environment. As a result of this FONSI, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared (44 CFR Part 10.8) and the proposed action alternative as described in the EA may proceed.

APPROVALS

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FEMA 1603-1607-DR-LA

Date

Joseph Threat
Acting Executive Director
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Date