



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 AND HARDENING OF THE WELCOME PARK COMMUNITY
CENTER AND SAFE ROOM PROJECT
WEST BANK, ST. JAMES PARISH, LOUISIANA
FEMA-1603-DR-LA

BACKGROUND

The Town of St. James is located on the West Bank of the Mississippi River in St. James Parish. The proposed tornado safe rooms would be located within the to-be-constructed and hardened Welcome Park Community Center, which would be located at 7248 Park Street, St. James, Louisiana (30.046556, -90.851331). St. James Parish is divided almost in half by the Mississippi River. Traveling from one side of the Parish to the other is only possible from one of two Mississippi River bridges or by vehicle ferry crossings in neighboring parishes. All of these bridges and vehicle ferries are maintained and operated by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD). When St. James Parish experiences sustained wind speeds in excess of 35 mph, all of the bridges and vehicle ferries are closed to traffic. Therefore, several hours before a storm makes landfall, during a storm, and several hours after a storm passes, there are no means of crossing the Mississippi River. Bridges and ferries have historically been out of service from 12 to 24 hours due to severe weather events. Therefore, it is important that essential Parish employees, emergency responders, law enforcement, and essential industrial site workers be provided a safe place to be protected. St. James Parish (Applicant) has requested federal funding through Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA)'s 404 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to "harden" the to-be-constructed Welcome Park Community Center and the construction of two interior tornado safe rooms within the new community center to accommodate 190 essential St. James Parish personnel on the West Bank of St. James Parish, LA.

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 "hardening" of the to-be-constructed 12,000 square foot Welcome Park Community Center and the construction of two interior tornado safe rooms within this new community center to accommodate 190 essential St. James Parish personnel, 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 provide essential St. James Parish employees who must remain in the Parish immediately before, during, and after a severe weather event, such as a tornado or hurricane, and citizens who are considered at population a safe place to stay during these times. The alternatives considered by St. James Parish include: (1) No Action, (Rejected);

(2) St. James Parish would develop plans to harden existing public facilities. However, none of the existing Parish structures are built to the new State of Louisiana building code requirements. Therefore, these existing structures would require extensive re-design and reconstruction to meet FEMA 361 guidelines for tornado safe rooms. Additionally, most St. James Parish structures are of a size that would only allow for occupancy of less than 20 individuals in each safe room, and approximately 100 individuals in total. (Rejected); and (3) The proposed action, which involves the "hardening" of the to-be-constructed 12,000 square foot Welcome Park Community Center and the construction of two interior tornado safe rooms totaling approximately 1,000 square feet within the new community center. The proposed Welcome Park Community Center's structural envelope would be designed by a certified engineer with experience in calculating wind loads on buildings and interior safe rooms so that the structure would not fail due to wind induced loads, wind pressure, or wind-borne debris. By hardening the proposed Welcome Park Community Center, St. James Parish would be able to provide a larger hurricane safe area for longer term occupancy as well as the tornado safe rooms for shorter term occupancy.

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:

- The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (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 Best Management Practices (BMPs) that meet the LDEQ permitting specifications for storm water discharge regulated under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act. All precautions should be observed to control nonpoint source pollution from construction activities.
- The contractor would be responsible for keeping all excavated areas periodically sprayed with water, all equipment maintained in good working order, and all construction vehicles would be limited to 15 mph to minimize pollution/fugitive dust.
- This project may require a Coastal Use Permit (CUP) from the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR). Determination of CUP requirements can be obtained through the submission of a completed CUP application to the LDNR. Projects may be

coordinated by contacting LDNR at (225) 342-7591 or 1-800-267-4019. The St. James Parish Coastal Zone Committee should be notified of the proposed project as well.

- The Applicant must coordinate with the Lafourche Basin Levee District (rtrouclair@lblee.us.com) to determine if a construction permit would be required.
- Any changes or modifications to the proposed project would require a revised 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.
- 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.
- 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 proposed project will include a sanitary wastewater treatment facility. A Sewage Sludge and Biosolids Use or Disposal Permit application or Notice of Intent must be submitted to the LDEQ. Additional information may be obtained on the LDEQ website at <http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/tabid/2296/Default.aspx> or by contacting the LDEQ Water Permits Division at (225) 219-3181.
- Prior to the proposed project implementation, the Applicant must contact is the St. James Parish Floodplain Administrator in order to ensure compliance with St. James Parish requirements for the National Flood Insurance Program and to ensure that all appropriate permits are obtained.
- If a bald eagle or its nest is spotted within 1,500 feet of the project site during the months of October through mid-May, the Applicant must cease construction activities and contact LDWF and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service immediately. All correspondence must be documented and remain in the project permanent files.
- Construction traffic should be closely monitored and controlled as appropriate. All construction activities would be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements. To alert motorists and pedestrians of project activities, appropriate signage and barriers should be used during construction. 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 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 the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) and FEMA of the discovery, and FEMA would 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 State Historic Preservation Officer 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 would immediately notify GOHSEP, FEMA, the local Police Department, and the local Coroner's Office of the discovery. The local Coroner's Office would 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 would take jurisdiction over the remains. Within twenty-four (24) hours, FEMA would notify the Louisiana Division of Archaeology (225-342-8170) of the finding. Within seventy-two (72) hours, FEMA would take the lead in working with 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 Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- 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.
- FEMA Mitigation Interim Policy MRR-2-09-1 and all applicable technical information provided in FEMA 361 must be adhered to as part of the HMGP funding requirements.

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

Katherine Zeringue,
FEMA Environmental Liaison Officer
Louisiana Recovery Office
FEMA 1603-1607-DR-LA

Date

Joseph Threat
Acting Executive Director
Louisiana Recovery Office
FEMA 1603-1607-DR-LA

Date

Draft