



**FEMA**

## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

### **DCNR Loyalsock State Forest Alternate Project, DR-4292**

#### **Sullivan and Lycoming Counties, Pennsylvania**

#### **FEMA-4292-DR-PA**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) has applied through the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) grant program for funding assistance, under the Presidentially declared disaster FEMA-4292-DR-PA, for the reconstruction of five road sites in Sullivan and Lycoming Counties, Pennsylvania. The project proposes to use Public Assistance Alternative Procedures pursuant to Section 428 of the Stafford Act, to construct the roads in a new alignment. In accordance with FEMA Directive 108-1 and FEMA Instruction 108-1-1, this Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500-1508. The purpose of the EA is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, and to determine whether to prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The north-central region of Pennsylvania experienced severe storms and flooding during the period of October 20-21, 2016. The intense rainfall and storms caused flooding throughout a four-county area that caused substantial damages to public infrastructure. The counties of Bradford, Centre, Lycoming, and Sullivan received a federal disaster declaration on December 2, 2016 making PA funds available within those four counties. Five sites within close proximity to one another were damaged in the DCNR-owned and maintained Loyalsock State Forest. These sites were previously damaged in 2011 due to flooding from Tropical Storm Lee and rebuilt in-kind. The frequency and severity of flooding in the area demonstrates the need to consider an alternative to rebuilding the sites in the same location. The proposed alternate project would relocate transportation infrastructure to reduce the potential for severe flood damages in the future. One of the sites would rebuild a damaged bridge over the new stream alignment which moved during the storm event. The other four would rebuild roads in a new alignment north of their current locations. These five sites are being evaluated together in one EA, as they are connected actions, within close proximity to one another. DCNR is proposing the alternate projects as a long-term solution to avoid future flood damages in the area. The infrastructure repairs are necessary to allow full access through the state forest, for outdoor recreation, transportation, forest management, and economic activities.

To determine a path forward for the damaged roads and bridge in Loyalsock State Forest, several options were evaluated, including no-action and redevelopment in a new alignment. Focus was

placed on rebuilding the damaged infrastructure with reduced risk for severe flood damage. DCNR hired the Larson Design Group (LDG) to develop plans to rebuild the damaged sites with a reduced risk of flood damage. Due to the frequency and severity of recent flooding, DCNR is proposing to construct a long-term solution to avoid future reconstruction projects in this area. The applicant will utilize the Public Assistance Alternative Procedures (PAAP) Pilot Program for Permanent Work to fund this project, based off of a fixed cost estimate for the repair of the facilities in-kind, back to pre-disaster condition.

In accordance with federal laws and FEMA regulations, the EA process for a proposed federal action must include an evaluation of viable alternatives and a discussion of the potential environmental impacts. This EA was prepared in accordance with NEPA, 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508, and FEMA's implementing procedures for NEPA, including those in FEMA Instruction 108-1-1. As part of this NEPA review, the requirements of other environmental laws and executive orders were evaluated. This EA informed FEMA's decision on whether to prepare an EIS or a FONSI.

Under the No Action Alternative, repairs to the damaged roads and bridge in Loyalsock State Forest would not occur. Visitors and patrons of Loyalsock State Forest would have to continue to use the detour routes in place. The state forest has experienced economic loss due to the loss of access to forest land in the Pleasant Stream and Mill Creek Valleys. Approximately 21,000 acres of state forest land has severely limited vehicular access for recreation and harvesting forest products resulting from the flood damages. The destruction of these roads has increased travel distances by around 23 miles for the majority of the project area. If the detour route was utilized long-term, 7,000 acres of state forest land would have no vehicular access for emergencies, fire control, recreation, and timber harvesting.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the five damaged sites, one bridge and four roads, would be rebuilt in new locations to reduce the risk of future flood damages. The Proposed Action Alternative was selected by the applicant, as it reduced the flood risk for the infrastructure and minimized construction costs and impacts, compared to other possible alignments. The start/stop coordinates (latitude/longitude) for the five sites are:

- Site 105 – Big Hollow Rd (SLD022): 41.469557, -76.740158 to 41.470667, -76.739246
- Site 109 – Mill Creek Rd (SLD018): 41.486933, -76.768736 to 41.482523, -76.753670
- Site 114 – Pleasant Stream Rd (SLD062): 41.483301, -76.945204 to 41.497150, -76.900622
- Site 115 – Pleasant Stream Rd (SLD058): 41.495257, -76.851932 to 41.495298, -76.846038
- Site 119 – Pleasant Stream Rd (SLD059): 41.492605, -76.853992 to 41.495257, -76.851932

At Site 105, the proposed scope of work would involve building a new bridge over Mill Creek at its post-flood location and leaving the old bridge in place as an overflow channel. The upstream bank would be protected from further erosion using log deflectors and the deposited material in the upstream and downstream channel would be removed. Roadway repairs to Big Hollow Road would be performed in the footprint of the existing roadway.

At Site 109, the proposed scope of work would involve installing a new roadway segment for Mill Creek Road from a point just to the west of the East Mill Creek Bridge and connecting into Camels Road to the west. The new road would run to the north of the current damaged roadway, would be sixteen feet wide with two-foot wide shoulders, and would include new culverts, ditches, and

roadway surfacing material. One of the new culverts would be a metal pipe arch structure on an Unnamed Tributary to West Branch Mill Creek. The box culverts and plastic culvert pipes would be removed from the currently damaged roadway. Additionally, rock protection would be installed at the existing bridge on Mill Creek Road, crossing over East Branch Mill Creek.

At Site 114, the proposed scope of work would involve installing a new roadway segment for Pleasant Stream Road on an old railroad grade to the north of Pleasant Stream and a single radius aluminum bottomless arch culvert (fifteen feet by seven feet by nine inches) over an Unnamed Tributary to Pleasant Stream. Riprap would be placed along the footings and wingwalls of the culvert. The realigned road would be sixteen feet wide with two-foot shoulders, and would also include twenty-two new pipe culverts, ditches, and roadway surfacing material.

At Site 115, the proposed scope of work would involve installing a new roadway segment for Pleasant Stream Road from a point to the east of the slide area, running to the west ending at Short Run. The new road would be moved to the north, away from Pleasant Stream. The new road would be sixteen feet wide with two-foot wide shoulders, and would include new culverts, ditches, and roadway surfacing material. Additionally, existing stormwater pipes would be removed along the damaged section of Pleasant Stream Road.

At Site 119, the proposed scope of work would involve replacing the large corrugated metal culvert (Span = nine feet, four inches, Height = five feet, six inches, Length = thirty-four feet) over Short Run with a new precast reinforced concrete rigid frame culvert structure north of its current location and relocating the Pleasant Stream Road to the north to match the relocated road in Site 115. The road would be sixteen feet wide with two-foot wide shoulders, and would include new culverts, ditches, and roadway surfacing material. The large metal culvert would be removed from the currently damaged segment of Pleasant Stream Road. The remaining work in this site would remain in-kind repairs, including replacing damaged smaller culverts, cleaning out clogged culverts, rebuilding damaged headwalls, and repairing roadway washouts and road surface.

A public notice was posted in the two local newspapers of record, the *Sullivan Review* and the *Sun Gazette*, and on FEMA's website at <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4292>. No comments were received during the 30-day public comment period.

## **FINDINGS**

The Proposed Action would not affect historic and cultural resources and would have no known impact to USFWS threatened and endangered species. During construction, short-term impacts to soils and geology, water resources and water quality, air quality, noise, migratory birds, and safety and security are anticipated. The project would be required to follow all applicable restrictions and regulations and implement best management practices (BMPs) during construction to minimize and mitigate adverse impacts to resources.

The Proposed Action would have negligible to minor, long-term impacts on soils and geology, water resources and water quality, air quality, wetlands, and terrestrial and aquatic environment. Implementation of mitigation procedures would minimize long-term effects to water resources resulting in minor long-term impacts. Impacts to the soils would be minimized using Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plans. Projects proposed in the floodplain are managed through the requirement to obtain permits from the local floodplain manager and projects proposed to impact

waterways and wetlands would obtain all necessary permits through Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Because frameworks are in place to manage potential environmental impacts, no significant impacts are anticipated from the incremental impact of the proposed action in combination with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions near the Proposed Action Alternative project sites.

## **CONDITIONS**

The following conditions must be met as part of this project. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize the receipt of federal funding.

1. If deviations from the proposed scope of work result in substantial design changes, the need for additional ground disturbance, additional removal of vegetation, or any other unanticipated changes to the physical environment, prior to the start of work the applicant (DCNR) must contact FEMA so that the revised project scope can be evaluated for compliance with NEPA and other applicable environmental laws.
2. The applicant (DCNR) is responsible for obtaining and complying with all required local, State and Federal permits and approvals.
3. The applicant/contractor must coordinate with the local floodplain administrator to receive a permit to conduct any activities that would occur within the Special Flood Hazard Area.
4. For each site, all work authorized under the Pennsylvania State Programmatic General Permit - 5 (PASPGP-5) must be performed in compliance with the General Conditions noted in the permit and if applicable, any Procedural, and Special Conditions. General Conditions include but are not limited to compliance with time-of-year restrictions in spawning areas, erosion and sedimentation controls, and requirements for the discharge of suitable material and temporary fill.
5. The applicant (DCNR) will monitor ground disturbance during the construction phase; should human skeletal remains, or historic or archaeological materials be discovered during construction, all ground-disturbing activities on the project site shall cease and the applicant shall notify the coroner's office (in the case of human remains), FEMA, and the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office.
6. Erosion controls will be in place prior to any ground disturbing activity.
7. Work must be conducted in the fashion it is proposed in any permit applications. Changes to project design would require reopening consultations with regulatory agencies.
8. Heavy machinery and equipment to be used for the proposed action will meet federal clean air standards. In addition, all equipment used shall have sound control devices no less effective than those provided on the original equipment. No equipment shall have un-muffled exhaust.
9. All equipment shall comply with pertinent equipment noise standards of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
10. An Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) Pollution Control Plan has been prepared in accordance with PA DEP Chapter 102 regulations and requirements. The contractor will be required to

adhere to the E&S plan during construction in order to minimize erosion and sedimentation impacts to the surrounding environment.

11. Wetland protective fence will be utilized during construction in order to prevent any potential impacts to nearby wetlands, if applicable.
12. Any and all necessary PA DEP 105 and USACE 404 permits will be obtained prior to the start of construction. Any permit special conditions will be adhered to as part of construction.
13. Construction equipment will be well maintained and non-polluting.
14. It is recommended that the applicant follow conservation measures for the timber rattlesnake. These measures include conducting a timber rattlesnake habitat assessment in the project area to avoid critical habitat. Additionally, tree clearing and timbering within critical habitat should be conducted from October 16 to April 14. A PA Fish and Boat Commission (FBC) representative should be on site prior to and during construction between April 15 and October 15 to inspect and clear the area of any rattlesnakes that may interfere with construction activities.
15. It is recommended that the workers responsible for implementing this project be advised that timber rattlesnakes may be encountered, and that avoidance is the best means of minimizing risks to personal safety. Workers should also be advised that the timber rattlesnake is a state protected species and is not to be harmed. If any timber rattlesnakes are observed on-site, please notify PA FBC.

Site-specific mitigation measures and conditions:

Site 105

16. Instream construction restrictions would be required from March 1 to June 15 and October 1 to December 31 due to trout water classifications. No work would be allowed in the stream channel during this timeframe.

Site 109

17. Soil limitations and the proposed construction activities warrant special consideration. The Dystrudepts, Morris Channery Silt Loam, and Oquaga Channery Silt Loam soils have a poor rating for roadway fill material. To address this, an additional layer of subbase will be placed under the typical roadway material used for stabilized roadway construction.
18. Instream construction restrictions would be required from October 1 to December 31 due to trout water classifications. No work would be allowed in the stream channel during this timeframe.

Site 114

19. The soils present at the project site, Oquaga and Lordstown and Udifluvents, have limitations (i.e., classified as poor roadway fill and not rated). Therefore, neither soil will be used as embankment material.
20. Instream construction restrictions would be required from March 1 to June 15 and October 1 to December 31 due to trout water classifications. No work would be allowed in the stream channel during this timeframe.

Site 115/119

21. Soil limitations and the proposed construction activities warrant special consideration. Oquaga and Lordstown Very Stoney Loams have a poor rated for roadway fill material. To address this, an additional layer of subbase will be placed under the typical roadway material used for stabilized roadway construction.
22. Instream construction restrictions would be required from October 1 to December 31 due to trout water classifications. No work would be allowed in the stream channel during this timeframe.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the EA, coordination with the appropriate agencies, comments from the public, and adherence to the project conditions set forth in this FONSI, FEMA has determined that the proposed project qualifies as a major federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment, nor does it have the potential for significant cumulative effects. As a result of this FONSI, an EIS will not be prepared (FEMA Instruction 108-1-1) and the proposed project as described in the attached EA may proceed.

## **APPROVAL**

---

Stephanie Everfield  
Regional Environmental Officer  
FEMA Region 3

Date 4/14/20