



OFFICE OF LOCAL DEFENSE COMMUNITY COOPERATION

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National Environmental Policy Act Categorical Exclusion Adoption for the Joint Emergency Coordination Center, Plaquemines Parish -Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, Louisiana

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) gives notice that it is adopting the Navy Record Categorical Exclusion (CATEX) for Joint Emergency Coordination Center, executed April 8, 2021. The OLDCC Grantee, Plaquemines Parish proposes to convert the existing 40-acre Medal of Honor Park into a Joint Emergency Coordination Center (J-ECC). The J-ECC will be constructed immediately off installation property and will allow a multi-governmental and non-governmental disaster response team to organize during emergencies. Construction includes a Multi-Agency Emergency Command Center, an Emergency Provisions Assembly and Issuance Point, a Governmental and Non-Governmental staging area, and an Early Childhood Disaster Coping, Healing, and Resiliency Area. The Proposed Action also consists of the removal of the existing chain-link fence, drain lines, pavement, curb, sidewalks, trees, driveway, power poles, and overhead lines. The project area consists of two separate tracts (Tract 1 and Tract 2) located between the Intercoastal Waterway and Bayou Barrier in Belle Chase, Louisiana. Tract 1 is approximately 4.3-acres and Tract 2, just north of Tract 1, is approximately 0.68-acres. Aerial photographs of the project area are included in Attachment 2. This “joint” use facility will allow for coordination and provision of support to occur, without the delays and inefficiencies in trying to clear personnel for NAS JRB New Orleans access during an emergency event.

OLDCC is the Grantor of federal funding under the Defense Community Infrastructure Program, which seeks to address deficiencies in community infrastructure that support military installations to enhance military value, installation resilience, and/or military family quality of life. Plaquemines Parish and NAS JRB New Orleans prepared a Record of Categorical Exclusion (Attachment 1) for the proposed construction of the J-ECC. NAS JRB New Orleans applied CATEX 32 listed in 32 CFR § 775.6(f) for “renewals or initial real estate in-grants and out-grants involving existing facilities and land wherein use does not change significantly.” Furthermore, NAS JRB New Orleans determined that none of the extraordinary circumstances outlined in 32 § CFR 775.6(e) are applicable to this project. The Grantee is responsible for meeting and implementing all applicable construction conditions and best practices attached to the CATEX determination and supporting documentation (Attachments 1 and 2), and all federal, state, and local permits. OLDCC agrees with this determination and finds the attached documentation appropriately evaluates the Proposed Action.

In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality’s “National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations” at 40 CFR § 1506.3, OLDCC may adopt another agency’s determination that a CATEX applies to a Proposed Action if the action covered by the original CATEX determination and OLDCC’s Proposed Action are substantially the same. The action

evaluated in the NAS JRB New Orleans Record of Categorical Exclusion is the same proposed project that is the subject of the OLDCC award. Further, OLDCC agrees the Proposed Action will not have significant individual or cumulative environmental impacts, meets the criteria for the listed CATEX, and that no extraordinary circumstances exist to preclude use of the CATEX. Therefore, OLDCC adopts NAS JRB New Orleans' CATEX determination for the subject project as supported by the analysis and documentation provided in the following attached files, which are incorporated by reference herein:

- “United States Navy Record of Categorical Exclusion for Joint Emergency Coordination Center-NAS JRB New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana” Navy Categorical Exclusion Determination signed on April 8, 2021; (Attachment 1- CATEX-Plaquemines Parish JECC).
- Supporting environmental documentation and consultation records; various formats, signatories, and production or signature dates (Attachment 2 – Plaquemines JECC Supplemental Docs).

The CATEX determination and supporting materials in Attachments 1 and 2 demonstrate that the Proposed Action will have no significant environmental impacts and therefore does not require further assessment. The documentation constitutes a complete NEPA determination and shows that Navy CATEX 32 listed in 32 CFR § 775.6(f) is applicable to the subject project.

OLDCC has independently reviewed the attached documentation and finds that implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. NAS JRB New Orleans is not located within an air quality nonattainment area. Emissions due to the Proposed Action would be construction-related and temporary. Typical construction noise is anticipated during the construction and will be temporary. Once constructed, the Proposed Action will not increase noise levels.

Pursuant to the Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Grantee consulted with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for a report of the Endangered Species potentially present at the project site. No critical habitat is located within the project site. Felling of trees should be seasonally restricted to avoid effects to migratory birds and the federally listed tricolored bat, which may be present at the project site. Other species listed in the USFWS consultation are unlikely to be affected due to the nature of the project. Consultation with USFWS can be found in Attachment 2. Overall, significant impacts to natural resources are not anticipated.

The Grantee evaluated the project pursuant to the requirements of Executive Orders 11988 (*Floodplain Management*) and 11990 (*Protection of Wetlands*). The Grantee determined that approximately 0.09 acres of floodplain/wetland would be affected by the project. A public notice describing the project was published in The Plaquemines Gazette, the official journal of the Plaquemines Parish Government on March 5, 2024. The public notice targeted all interested federal, state, and local agencies, groups, and individuals. The required 15 calendar days were allowed for public comment. To date, no comments have been received. As the J-ECC must be located adjacent to installation property for effective emergency responsiveness, it was determined that an alternate location for the project is not feasible. The Grantee completed a

wetlands delineation report and submitted a “Request for Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination” from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with the determination that the project will not be in a wetland. Project engineers have reviewed potential impacts and have advised that there will be no adverse impacts on the floodplain and/or wetlands as a result of this project. In addition, multiple local, state, and federal agencies and local officials were consulted in the environmental review process and no adverse impacts were identified. The Grantee is committing to the following mitigation measures to minimize impacts to floodplains:

- The Plaquemines Parish Government will maintain its participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and incorporate, where applicable, flood prevention activities to mitigate probable future flood damage;
- The Parish will control all filling, grading, and other construction development so as not to increase the potential for future damage;
- The proposed project will be designed to avoid any altering of the natural floodplains and/or the formation of flood barriers which increase flood hazards to adjacent lands;
- All permitting requirements will be met in the construction of the project and be accomplished in accordance with all federal, state, and parish construction statutes, ordinances, and regulations; and
- Project construction will be closely monitored by the Project Engineer, the Plaquemines Parish Government Engineering and Public Works Department and administrative personnel.

Following their review, the Plaquemines Parish Government determined that there is no practicable alternative to the action as proposed, and the action will not have a significant effect on floodplains or wetlands. Their review process is outlined in Attachment 2. USACE responded to the Grantee’s requested Jurisdictional Determination and authorized the project under a General Permit. The Grantee’s General Use Permit from USACE is included in Attachment 2.

The Grantee consulted with the Louisiana (LA) Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a review of the project pursuant to LA’s State and Local Coastal Resources Management Act of 1978. The LA DNR determined that the Proposed Action is exempt and does not require a Coastal Use Permit. Record of coordination with LA DNR is included in Attachment 2. Because the project is larger than 1 acre, a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System General Permit is required for the project. The Grantee is responsible for obtaining this permit prior to construction.

The Grantee consulted with the LA State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requesting a review of the project pursuant to requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. They submitted a description of the project, materials delineating the Area of Potential Effect (APE), and a summary of previous cultural resources investigations to the SHPO on February 15, 2024. The SHPO responded on March 1, 2024, concluding that no historic properties would be impacted by the action. Record of consultation with the SHPO is included in Attachment 2. OLDCC consulted with 7 federally recognized tribes for their review of the project on June 21, 2024, and July 26, 2024. OLDCC submitted description of the project,

materials delineating the APE and a summary of previous cultural resources investigations. To date, no responses have been received. Consultation with tribes can be found in Attachment 2. If human remains, funerary objects, cultural items, or archaeological materials are encountered during project construction and related work, activity in the area must cease immediately and appropriate Native American tribal government contacts, SHPO, OLDCC, and NAS JRB New Orleans personnel must be contacted for additional guidance.

The action for which the Grantee and NAS JRB New Orleans prepared and executed the attached CATEX determination (Attachment 1) is the same action as OLDCC's Proposed Action and applying the Navy CATEX 32 listed in 32 CFR Part 775.6(f) is an appropriate NEPA determination for this project. Therefore, OLDCC adopts the CATEX determination per 40 CFR § 1506.3. Further, OLDCC, as the adopting agency, confirms that none of the circumstances listed in 40 CFR § 1506.3(e) are present.

I have determined that the information provided above and in the attached documents provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. O'Brien
Director

Attachments:
As stated