

**Draft Environmental Assessment
Lattimore Property, Saint Bernard Parish, Louisiana
Group Temporary Emergency Housing
FEMA-1603-DR-LA**

A. Project: Lattimore Property Group Temporary Emergency Housing Group Site

B. Introduction

The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is mandated by the U.S. Congress to administer Federal disaster assistance pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), PL 93-288, as amended. The Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Individual Assistance Program to provide emergency temporary housing for disaster victims whose homes are uninhabitable or destroyed.

President Bush declared a major disaster for the State of Louisiana due to damages from Hurricane Katrina and signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-1603-DR-LA) on August 29, 2005, authorizing FEMA to provide federal assistance in designated areas of Louisiana. The purpose of this action is to fulfill FEMA's mandate under the Individual Assistance Program to expeditiously provide temporary housing for Hurricane Katrina disaster victims until permanent housing can be established.

This Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) documents the results of the proposed project's potential environmental impacts. This DEA has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508); and FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR 10.9). 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).

C. Purpose and Need

Hurricane Katrina resulted in catastrophic damage and an extraordinary demand for housing assistance in southeast Louisiana. FEMA has identified the need to provide temporary housing for residents in Meraux, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, where the proposed project is located. FEMA proposes to fund the emergency temporary housing project.

D. Site Selection Process

NEPA requires investigation and evaluation of reasonable project alternatives as part of the project environmental review process. In order to expedite the site selection process, FEMA's contractors review available aerial photos and maps, conduct site reconnaissance field surveys, and contact state and local officials to identify potential sites. Factors considered in choosing a site include: site topography, property owner willingness, past land use, if it was already planned for development, access to existing utilities, and engineering feasibility.

E. Project Alternatives

NEPA requires the investigation and evaluation of reasonable project alternatives as part of the project environmental review process. Two alternatives are addressed in this DEA: the No Action Alternative, where FEMA would not build temporary housing, and the Proposed Action, where FEMA would build temporary housing on land owned by Rudolf Burton Lattimore in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana.

Alternative 1- No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, FEMA would not fund the proposed project. Most hurricane victims would stay with their families and friends or in schools, churches, shelters, motels or other locations until they can find other housing. This would result in further economic and personal hardships for affected residents, disrupt school attendance and the school system, and further strain the Parish social and economic infrastructure.

Alternative 2 – Installation of Travel Trailers on Undeveloped Land (Proposed Action)

The proposed action would provide group housing for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina in Meraux, Louisiana. Disaster victims would be temporarily relocated to a group housing site, and housed in travel trailers. The project would involve the construction of a travel trailer park (hereafter “the park”) which would accommodate approximately 124 travel trailers. At this time, park occupancy is not expected to exceed 18 months.

The proposed site is located at 3200 E. Judge Perez Drive in Meraux, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. The site consists of approximately seven acres of land owned by Rudolf Burton Lattimore. The site is bordered on the north by State Highway 39, on the south by residential properties, on the east by the Delchamps Travel Trailer site (FAG00003) and on the west by commercial property. The terrain is flat and ground cover consists of turf grasses, bare soil, gravel and limited pavement. The northern most quarter of the site formally served as a parking area for recreational vehicles (RVs). A west to east drainage swale bisects the property and connects to an existing drainage canal along the east border of the site.

Existing site utility services for sewer, water and electricity will be used to serve the new travel trailer systems. Waste water and potable water systems will be a combination of underground and above ground utilities that will tie into the existing systems. The city’s utility infrastructure has the capacity to handle the temporary increase in services and flow rates. Two access roads to the park would allow for residents’ ingress and egress along East Judge Perez Drive. A safety fence would be installed and maintained along the east and north perimeter of the park. Figure 3 illustrates the park design and layout.

When the temporary housing need has ended, FEMA expects that the trailers would be hauled from the site, to suitable locations elsewhere (to be determined on a case-by-case basis). The park would then be seeded and restored to its previous conditions or used by the landowner in a manner consistent with local zoning classifications.

F. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

In order to meet the proposed purpose and need of timely delivery of emergency temporary housing, FEMA conducted an expedited environmental review process to identify environmental issues that need addressing.

Alternative 1- No Action Alternative

The No Action alternative will not impact the existing environment. No Action would not entail construction or preparation of a site for temporary emergency housing of disaster victims, nor would it allow the federal government to adequately address the urgency for providing temporary and transient emergency housing. Consequently, people displaced by floodwaters would have to remain in the temporary housing they have found with friends or family members, hotels, apartments, rental houses, or shelters. The No Action alternative would forego disaster assistance and would not be acceptable to the local community or local interests. Flood victims would continue to suffer social and economic stresses related to the disaster.

Alternative 2 – Build Temporary Housing (Proposed Alternative)

The environmental review process for the Proposed Alternative included a field reconnaissance site visit, as well as background research, and expedited agency consultation. The field reconnaissance visit was conducted on December 31, 2005. Background research consisted of a review of wetlands maps, census statistics, FEMA floodplain maps, hazardous materials databases, archaeological and historic structures databases, threatened and Lattimore Property, St. Bernard Parish

endangered species information, soil surveys, and other available information. Expedited agency consultation through verbal and written communications with the Louisiana State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service produced “No Effect” determination letters from each agency.

Table 1 summarizes the results of the environmental review process. Potential environmental impacts that were found to be negligible are not evaluated further. Resource areas that have the potential for impacts of minor, moderate, or major intensity are further reviewed in the table and the appropriate investigation, coordination and consultation with regulatory agencies is conducted. When applicable, mitigation measures that would reduce any potential adverse effects are required as conditions for the project to proceed. Definitions of the impact intensity are described below:

Negligible: The resource area would not be affected, or changes would be either non-detectable or if detected, would have effects that would be slight and local. Impacts would be well below regulatory standards, as applicable.

Minor: Changes to the resource would be measurable, although the changes would be small and localized. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, but historical conditions are being altered on a short-term basis. Mitigation measures would be necessary and the measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.

Moderate: Changes to the resource would be measurable and have both localized and regional scale impacts. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, but historical conditions are being altered on a short-term basis. Mitigation measures would be necessary and the measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.

Major: Changes would be readily measurable and would have substantial consequences on a local and regional level. Impacts would exceed regulatory standards. Mitigation measures to offset the adverse effects would be required to reduce impacts, though long-term changes to the resource would be expected.

G. Additional Impact Analysis

Hazardous Material and Toxic Waste

A search of hazardous material databases was completed on January 11, 2006. One Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) generator and one regulated underground storage tank (UST) site was reported to be located on the proposed park site. Upon further investigation the site address, 4141 E Judge Perez Drive, is not located on the proposed property. The RCRA and UST site is located approximately one-quarter mile east of the proposed park. This recognized environmental condition is not anticipated to have an impact on the proposed temporary housing park.

Sediment sampling was conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at a location less than one-quarter mile southwest of the proposed park (sampling point #11447). Diesel range organics (DRO) and petroleum hydrocarbons were above the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) Risk Evaluation/Corrective Action Program (RECAP) screening standards for soil. Sediment sampling at the proposed park was requested on January 17, 2006 and conducted by the EPA on January 19, 2006. Six sediment samples were collected from the park site to screen for the presence of hazardous materials. Sampling results are pending and final project approval will be determined after consulting with the EPA.

H. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are defined as environmental effects that are greater in magnitude, extent, or duration than the direct and indirect effects of the proposed FEMA-associated action when combined with the effects of other Lattimore Property, St. Bernard Parish

current and future actions, regardless of the proponent. Cumulative impacts will be considered when determining the compatibility of this EA for specific actions.

I. Public Involvement:

Public involvement is being performed in compliance with NEPA, FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA at 44 CFR 10.9(c), and Executive Orders 12898, 11988, and 11990. A Public Notice will be published in the *Times Picayune* beginning on January 25, 2006. Due to the emergency nature of this action, the public comment period will be brief, from January 25, 2006 to January 27, 2006. Written comments on the Draft EA can be faxed to FEMA's Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge at (225) 346-5848. Verbal comments are being accepted at (225) 376-5137, and TTY for hearing or speech-impaired at 800-462-7585; between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. The Draft EA is available for public review at the St. Bernard Parish Government Building, 8201 W. Judge Perez Drive, Chalmette, LA 70043, and the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) located at the 8101 W. Judge Perez Drive, Chalmette, LA 70043. The DRC hours are 9am to 5pm Monday through Saturday. The Draft EA is also available for viewing and download from FEMA's website at <http://www.fema.gov/ehp/docs.shtm>.

If no substantive comments are received, the Draft EA will become final and the initial Public Notice will also serve as the final Public Notice. Substantive comments will be addressed as appropriate in the Final documents.

J. Conclusion

FEMA is proposing to construct temporary emergency disaster housing in Meraux, Louisiana to provide temporary housing for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina in southeast Louisiana. The numbers of displaced people and applications for individual assistance emphasizes the critical need for emergency housing. The purpose of this DEA is to minimize the potential for adverse environmental impacts from the proposed action. Table 1 addresses the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management), 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and 12898 (Environmental Justice), and various hazardous and toxic waste regulations. The DEA provides a mechanism to ensure compliance with applicable local, state and federal environmental laws and regulations, and to support the timely and effective provision of temporary emergency housing. Findings of this DEA indicate that impacts to the environment from the proposed action would be negligible, and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this action.

Table 1. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences Matrix

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Geology and Soils	X				Potential for localized increase in soil erosion during construction. (See water quality section.)	Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) stormwater construction permit to be obtained by construction contractor.	Implement construction Best Management Practices (BMPs). Install silt fences/straw bales to reduce sedimentation. Area soils would be wetted during construction to minimize wind erosion. If fill is stored on site, the contractor would be required to cover it appropriately.
Hydrology and Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)	X				Approximately 90% of project area is located in a 100-year floodplain per the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Zone A2, Community Panel No. 225204 0290B B (FEMA 1985). Completion of this EA is consistent with FEMA's 8-Step Planning Process. Per the 8-Step Planning Process there are limited practicable alternatives to siting temporary housing sites in the floodplain in this parish and a public notice was published in the <i>Times Picayune</i> on October 17-19, 2005.	Coordination with the parish floodplain administrator to ensure compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as administered in the local floodplain ordinance including issuance of appropriate permitting. To be coordinated by construction contractor.	This site is located in the floodplain and must accordingly comply with the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program as outlined in 44 CFR Part 60. Per 44 CFR 9.11 (d) (8), an evacuation plan that includes written evacuation procedures for the temporary housing site occupants must be prepared, posted and made available to them.
Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)	X				No wetlands were observed at the project site during the site visit. No wetlands were shown on the USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps. No impacts anticipated.		
Coastal Zone Management	X				Project site is within the boundaries of the Coastal Zone. The project would avoid wetlands and is above any tidal influence.	Communication with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on 9/21/05. Project would be compatible with the general consistency authorization agreement. Joint permit not required.	
Water Quality	X				Potential for localized increase in sedimentation during construction.	LPDES stormwater construction permits to be obtained by construction contractor.	Implement BMPs, i.e., install silt fences, straw bales, etc. to reduce sedimentation. If fill is stored on site, the contractor would be required to cover it appropriately.
Air Quality	X				Negligible impact would be anticipated from vehicle exhaust emissions and increased dust during construction. Federal and state air quality attainment levels would not be exceeded.	EPA Region 6 designation.	Area soils would be covered and/or wetted during construction to minimize dust.

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Vegetation and Wildlife	X				The project site is a maintained vacant lot with improved turf grasses, bare soil, gravel, and limited pavement. Impacts to natural resources are expected to be negligible.		Once the temporary housing need has ended, the site would be seeded and restored to previous conditions to the extent practical and/or used by the landowner in a manner consistent with local zoning. This may include a requirement to use native species to re-vegetate the site
Threatened and Endangered Species (Endangered Species Act, Section 7)	X				Eleven species are listed as Endangered or Threatened in St Bernard Parish. However, no listed species or appropriate habitat is located within the project area. No impacts anticipated.	USFWS guidance letter dated 9/27/05 and "no effect" species determination letter received 1/17/06.	
Cultural Resources (National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106)	X				FEMA has determined that there are no National Register listed historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect (APE).	SHPO concurrence letter 1/12/06.	
Socioeconomics	X				Park occupancy is expected to be about 310 people (124 units x estimated 2.5 people per unit) maximum. It is expected the park residents are currently displaced residents of St. Bernard Parish. The median household income in 1999 was \$47,958.	In a letter dated 12/9/05, the Parish approved the site for use as temporary housing.	
Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)	X				FEMA disaster housing assistance is available to any affected household that meets the conditions of eligibility and demographics are not among the eligibility requirements. The demographic makeup of the future park residents is expected to be similar to the community as a whole. The percent populations of zip code 70075 are: 92.5% Caucasian, 3.8% African American, and 3.7% Hispanic and 9.1 % of families are below poverty level. The proposed action is not expected to pose disproportionately high and adverse public health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations.		

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Impact Summary	Agency Coordination / Permits	Mitigation
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Noise	X				During the construction period residents immediately adjacent to the project site would experience an increase in noise levels. Due to the urgency of the situation, construction would likely occur on a 24-hour schedule until the park is completed. Construction noise impacts would be short-term and limited to the duration of construction activities. The vehicles from park occupants would also increase the level of vehicular noise in the area.	In a letter dated 12/9/05, the Parish approved the Site for use as temporary housing.	If necessary, the following noise reduction measures should be considered: (1) restricting the 24-hour schedule to the first two weeks of construction; (2) using a 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. construction schedule; (3) completing construction closest to adjoining residents first; and (4) completing noisier activities during the day if a 24-hour schedule is used.
Safety and Security	X				The proposed park is in close proximity to a canal.	In a letter dated 12/9/05, the Parish approved the site for use as temporary housing.	The contractor would post appropriate signage and fencing to minimize potential adverse public safety concerns. Appropriate signage and barriers should be in place prior to construction activities in order to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities and traffic pattern changes.
Hazardous Materials and Toxic Wastes		X			A search of hazardous materials databases was completed on 1/11/06. The EPA conducted sediment sampling at the park site, EPA sampling results are pending. See Section G	Sediment sampling at the proposed park site was conducted by the EPA on 1/19/05. Sampling results are pending.	If sediment sampling results exceed the State of Louisiana Risk Evaluation/Correction Action Program (RCRA) standards, appropriate remediation will be required prior to project approval.
Traffic and Transportation	X				Traffic volumes on the local road network in the project area would increase during park construction and occupancy. The existing infrastructure would be able to accommodate these increases without impacting local traffic.		

K. References

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Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), Community Panel 225204 0290 B, revised May 1, 1985.

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Rodriguez, Henry J., Letter from Parish President. December 9, 2005.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2000. American Factfinder. <http://www.census.gov>. Website Accessed January 20, 2006.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Letter of No Effect. January 17, 2006.

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U.S. Geological Survey. www.Topozone.com. Chalmette Quad. Website accessed January 6, 2006.

L. List of Figures

Figure 1: Geographic Location

Figure 2: Photographs

Figure 3: Preliminary Site Design

Figure 1: Geographic Location of Lattimore Property Temporary Housing Site, 3200 E. Judge Perez Drive, Meraux, St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana

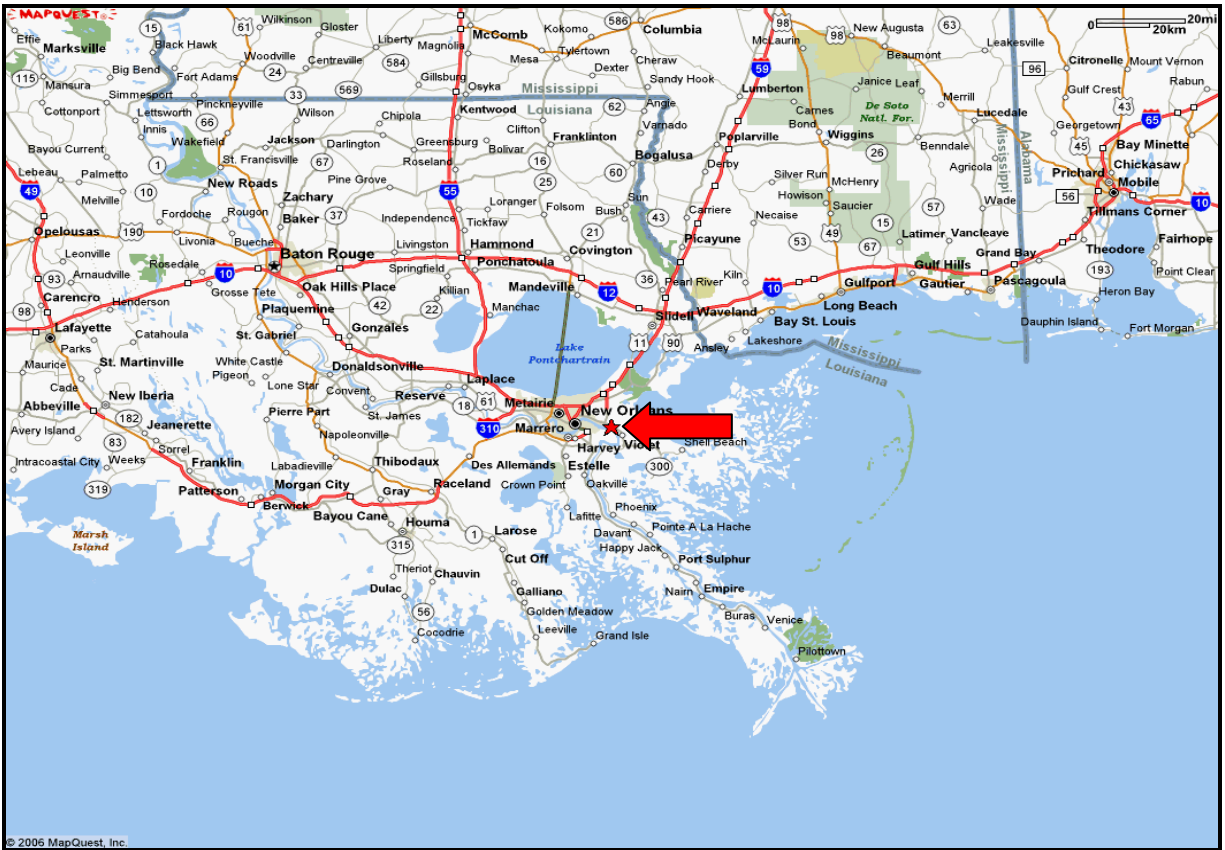
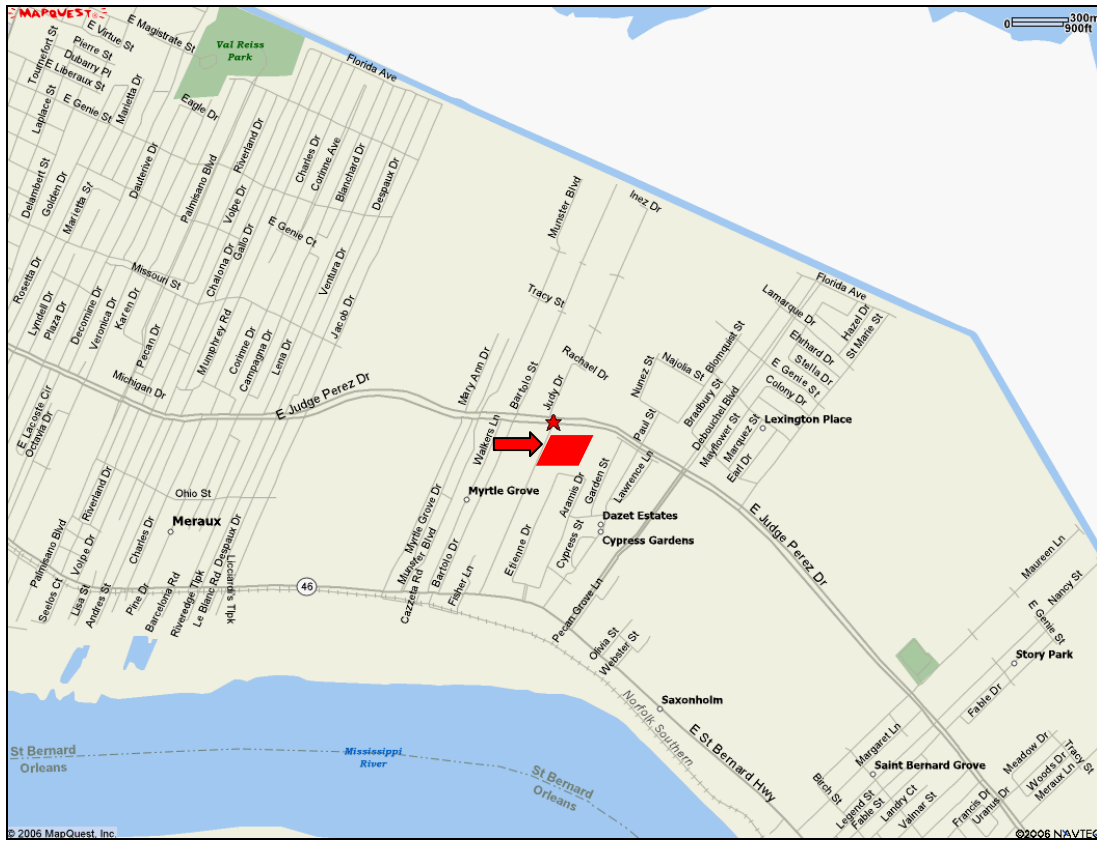


Figure 2: Photographs of Property



Project Area Facing South



Project Area Facing North

Figure 3: Lattimore Property Design (Flour 2005)

