

Draft Environmental Assessment

Zirlott Park Emergency Temporary Housing Site

Bayou La Batre, Mobile County, Alabama

FEMA-1605-DR-AL,

September 2005



FEMA

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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**Draft Environmental Assessment
Emergency Temporary Housing
Hurricane Katrina
FEMA-1605-DR-AL**

A. Project Name: Zirlott Park Emergency Temporary Housing Site

B. Environmental Assessment

This Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) documents the results of a study of the proposed project's potential environmental impacts and has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969; the President's Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508); and FEMA's regulations implementing NEPA (44 CFR 10.9). Based on the evaluation described herein, FEMA has concluded that the proposed project would not have significant adverse environmental consequences.

C. Purpose and Need:

Hurricane Katrina, a Category Four hurricane with a storm surge 25 feet above normal high-tide levels, moved across the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama gulf coasts on August 29, 2005. First landfall occurred near southern Plaquemines Parish, south of Buras, Louisiana. Maximum sustained winds at landfall were estimated at 140 miles per hour. Hurricane Katrina made subsequent landfalls at Gulfport and Biloxi, Mississippi and along the coastal counties of Alabama.

President Bush declared a major disaster for Alabama due to damages from Hurricane Katrina, and signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-1605-DR-AL) on August 29, 2005, authorizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal assistance in designated areas of Alabama. Displaced individuals and families are currently living in shelters during temporary housing identification; therefore, there is a need to expedite the selection and development process where temporary housing will be built to minimize their time spent in the shelters.

FEMA proposes to administer federal disaster assistance funds per the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 USC 5121-5206, as amended (Stafford Act). Section 408 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Individual Assistance Program to provide emergency temporary housing for disaster victims whose homes are uninhabitable. FEMA has identified the need to provide temporary housing for residents in Bayou La Batre, Mobile County, Alabama where the proposed project is located and proposes to fund an emergency temporary housing project.

D. 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 EA: 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 the City of Bayou La Batre in Mobile County, Alabama.

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 county social and economic infrastructure.

Alternative 2 – Build Temporary Housing (Proposed Action):

The Proposed Action provides group housing for people displaced by Hurricane Katrina in the Bayou La Batre vicinity of Mobile County, Alabama. With this alternative, disaster victims will be temporarily relocated to a group housing site, and housed in manufactured housing (travel trailers). Under the Proposed Action Alternative at least 102 travel trailers would be placed on the site, which will be designed to accommodate up to 350 trailer sites if needed. 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 site would then be seeded and restored to previous conditions and/or used by the city in a manner consistent with its zoning classification.

E. Project Location:

The proposed site is located at 12755 Padgett Switch Road in Bayou La Batre, Mobile County, Alabama (Figure 1). The site is bordered on the north by Padgett Switch Road approximately 1 mile east of the intersection of State Route 188 and Padgett Switch Road. While the site is physically located in Bayou La Batre the designated U.S. Postal Service mail delivery drop is located within the city limits of Irvington. The site is located about 16 miles southwest of Mobile.

F. Site Description:

The site consists of approximately 12 acres of land owned by the City of Bayou La Batre. The site is bordered on the north by Padgett Switch Road, on the east by the Bayou La Batre Community Center and private property, on the south and west by private property that is forested. The terrain is essentially flat and ground cover consists of approximately 95 percent non-native grasses that are maintained as athletic fields and 5 percent tree cover which ring the park area. The site is currently recognized as the Lucille Zirlott Park and houses the local community's baseball and football fields (Figure 2).

G. Project Description:

The Proposed Alternative would involve the construction of a travel trailer park (hereafter "the Park") which would accommodate 102 travel trailers (Figure 3). The park is designed to be expandable, if necessary, to accommodate up to 350 trailers. At this time, Park occupancy is not expected to exceed 18 months.

All new utilities would be installed, including connecting potable water, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, telephone and electricity from the existing infrastructure. The city's utility infrastructure has the capacity to handle the temporary increase in services and flow rates. Sanitary sewer and waterlines will be buried underground with a minimum of 3-foot of cover. Two new access roads off Padgett Switch Road would be built for residents' ingress and egress. The site would be prepped by mowing the grass and then covering the area with geotechnical grade fabric. Rock would be laid over the top of the fabric to form the interior roadways and trailer pads. The existing treed areas along the perimeter would be left to maintain the visual aesthetics of the site. Stormwater runoff would be conveyed through the city stormwater system. A safety fence would also be installed and maintained around the Park perimeter.

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 previous conditions and/or used by the landowner in a manner consistent with county zoning classification.

H. 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.

I. 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. The environmental review process included a field reconnaissance visit of the proposed project site, as well as background research, and expedited agency consultation. The field reconnaissance visit was conducted on September 5, 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 endangered species information, soil surveys, and other available information. Expedited agency consultation through verbal and written communications with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service produced “No Effect” determination letters from each agency.

The following matrix summarizes the results of the environmental review process (Table 1). 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 developed in the following Section H. Definitions of the impact intensity are described below:

Negligible: The resource area (e.g., geology) 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, as applicable. Mitigation 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.

Table 1. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences Matrix

Resource Area	Impact Intensity				Mitigation	Agency Coordination / Permits	Comments
	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major			
Geology and Soils	X				Implement construction BMPs, install silt fences/straw bales to reduce sedimentation.		
Hydrology and Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)	X						Flood Insurance Rate Maps were reviewed on FEMA's website. The site is located outside the 100-year floodplain.
Wetlands (Executive Order 11990)	X						There are no jurisdictional wetlands in the project area.
Water Quality		X			Implement construction BMPs, install silt fences/straw bales to reduce sedimentation. Contractor to implement requirements of NPDES stormwater discharge permit.	NPDES stormwater permit to be obtained by Contractor	See Section I.
Air Quality		X			Vehicle operation times would be kept to a minimum. Area soils would be covered and/or wetted during construction to minimize dust. Rock cover for roads and housing pads would be wetted and/or treated periodically to minimize dust particles.		City airshed is in attainment for criteria pollutants per the Clean Air Act. See Section I.
Vegetation and Wildlife	X						Site is maintained athletic fields with predominantly non-native species.
Threatened and Endangered Species (Endangered Species Act Section 7)	X					USFWS determination of "No Effect" received (9/23/05).	
Cultural Resources (National Historic Preservation Act Section 106)	X					SHPO determination of "No Effect" received on (09/22/05).	
Socioeconomics / Recreation	X						Community Park and ball fields will be restored to their original condition after the trailers are removed.
Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)	X						
Noise		X					See Section I.
Safety and Security	X				Fences would be placed around the perimeter of the site.		

Hazardous Materials and Toxic Wastes	X						Hazardous materials database search queried per ASTM standards on September 21, 2005. No sites of concern were identified by the database search. No environmental conditions of concern observed during field reconnaissance.
Traffic and Transportation		X			Contractor will coordinate with City traffic engineer to ensure traffic infrastructure can service the increased traffic volume.	Contractor will contact City Traffic Engineer.	See Section I.

J. Additional Impact Analysis:

Water Quality

Stormwater flows may enter the site via rainfall and exit the site via the city sewer system and natural drainageways, which eventually drain into the Gulf of Mexico. In order to minimize pollutants from entering the Gulf of Mexico watershed, the contractor would be required to implement Construction Best Management Practices (CBMPs), develop a Construction Best Management Practices Plan (CBMPP) that meets the Alabama Department of Environmental Management specifications for stormwater discharge, or receive a waiver. Stormwater runoff would be treated before entering the Gulf of Mexico because it would be conveyed through the city stormwater sewer system.

Air Quality

The proposed project would include activities that would produce a minor, temporary, localized in vehicle emissions and dust particles. Tractor-trailers would transport manufactured trailer homes to the site. Grading equipment would be required for site preparation. While such equipment use would temporarily increase emissions, no long term air quality impacts are anticipated. Federal or state air quality attainment levels would not likely be exceeded.

Roads would be constructed of permeable asphalt like millings, gravel, or similar material to reduce airborne particles. Periodic wetting during construction and home removal would reduce fugitive dust. These mitigation measures would help reduce air quality impacts on asthmatics, seniors and other sensitive residents.

Noise

Impacts from noise as a result of the project would be minor. Noise levels within the project area would increase during construction of the project due to construction equipment. Construction noise impacts would be short-term and limited to the duration of construction activities (about 15 days). Due to the urgency of the situation, construction would occur on a 24-hour schedule until the Park is completed.

Certain land uses, facilities, and people associated with noise levels are more sensitive to a given level of noise than other uses. Such “sensitive receptors” can include schools, churches, hospitals, retirement homes. There are two noise “sensitive receptor” located within ¼ mile of the project area. The First Methodist Church is located at 12700 Padgett Switch Road and the Independent Church of God is located at 12750 Padgett Switch Road. Noise impacts will be reduced to the maximum extent possible. If necessary, noise reduction measures would be instituted. These measures could include (1) restricting the 24-hour construction schedule; (2) using a 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. construction schedule; (3) completing construction closest to the sensitive receptor first, and/or (4) completing noisier activities during the day if using a 24-hour schedule.

Traffic and Transportation

Currently, Padgett Switch Road is a paved two-lane roadway without paved shoulders. No traffic lights are located on any of the roadways within the project area. Traffic within the general project area would increase due to the ingress and egress of construction equipment. This traffic impact would be short-term and limited to the duration of construction. Traffic volumes would also increase due to the Park residents. These traffic impacts would short-term and limited to the duration of the need for temporary housing at the site. Due to the increased traffic volume, the contractor would need to work with the City Traffic Engineer to assure that the local level of service on the roadway remains adequate.

Hazardous/toxic Materials

A Phase I ESA and EDR Report were prepared for the target property. No hazardous materials sites were found at or within ½ mile radius of the proposed project.

No drinking water wells would be installed because the Park would be connected to the city water supply through existing infrastructure.

Although no hazardous materials were found on-site, if any are found between start of construction and final Park closure, all hazardous materials shall be either remediated, abated, or disposed of as appropriate, and otherwise handled in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Alternatively, the site could be abandoned in view of finding another site that better meets the identified project purpose and need.

K. Public Involvement:

Due to the emergency nature of this action, the public comment period will be brief – September 28 to September 29, 2005. A Public Notice will be published in the Mobile Register on September 28, 2005. The Draft EA can be viewed and downloaded from FEMA’s website at <http://www.fema.gov/ehp/docs.shtm> and is also available for public review at the Bayou La Batre City Hall, located at 13785 South Wintzell Avenue, Bayou La Batre, Alabama 36509; the Bayou La Batre Community Center located at 12755 Padgett Switch Road; and the U.S. Post Office located at 7970 Highway 188, Coden, Alabama 36523. The hours for City Hall are Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM; the hours for the U.S. Post Office are Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM and Saturday from 8:30 AM to 10:00 AM. Written comments on the Draft EA can be faxed to FEMA’s Joint Field Office in Montgomery at (334) 409-4692; and verbal comments will be accepted at (334) 260-3569 between 7:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. If no substantive comments are received, the Draft EA will become final and this initial Public Notice will also serve as the final Public Notice.

L. Figures:

Figure 1: Project Location

Figure 2: Aerial View of the Site

Figure 3: Preliminary Site Plan



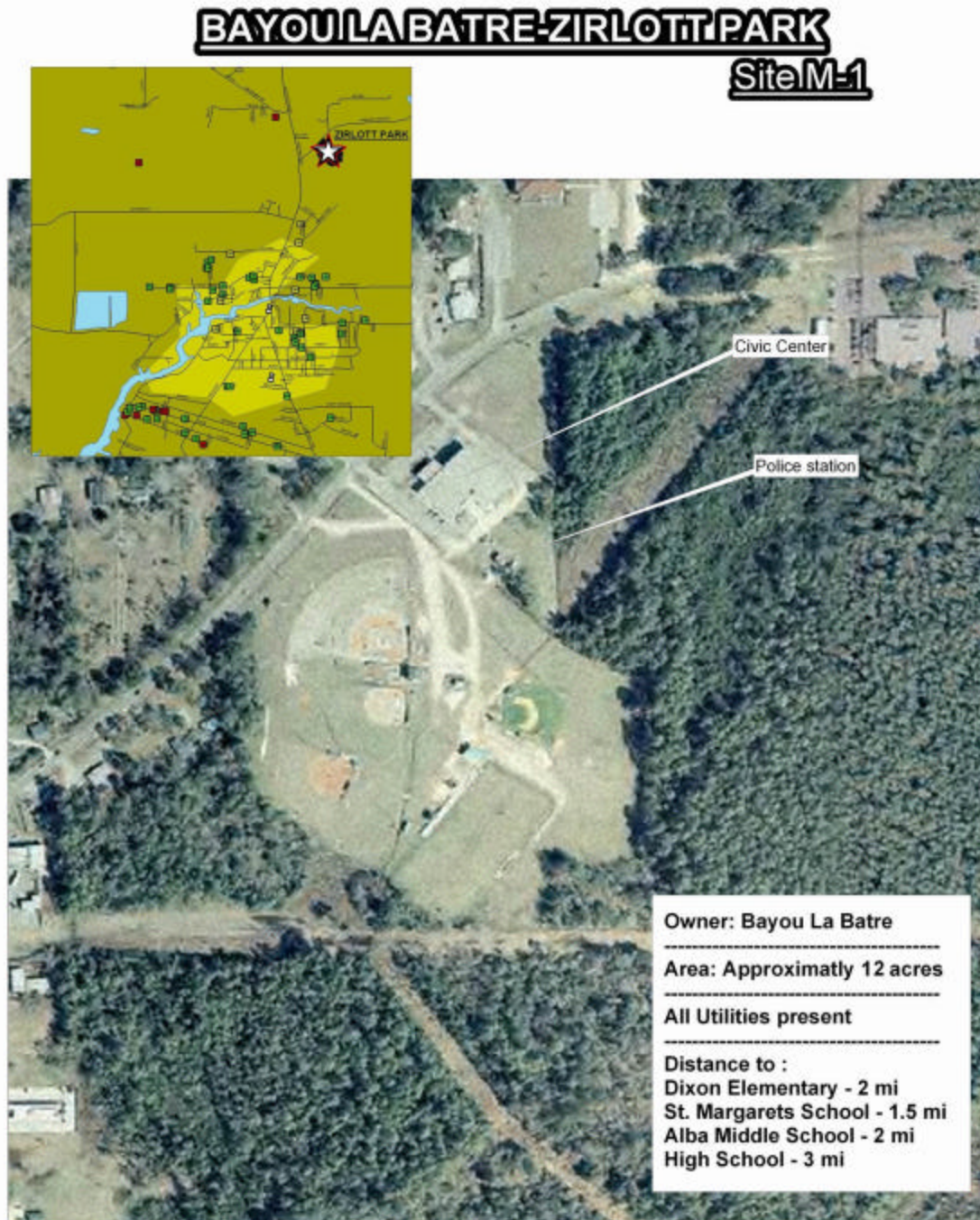


Figure 2

