



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

City of Chipley Effluent Disposal Project
Washington, Florida

Rural Utility Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

City of Chipley

Prepared by: Stephen Morris
Staff Rural Development

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A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Chipley (Chipley) plans to submit a financing request to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utility Service (RUS) to construct the proposed City of Chipley Effluent Disposal Project (Project) in Washington County, Florida. RUS is considering this financing request. Prior to taking a federal action (i.e., providing financial assistance), RUS is required to complete an environmental impact analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (U.S.C. 4231 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and RD's NEPA implementing regulations, Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970). After completing an independent analysis of an environmental report prepared by Chipley and its consultant, RUS concurred with its scope and content. In accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102, RUS adopted the report and issued it as the Agency's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Project. RUS finds that the EA is consistent with federal regulations and meets the standards for an adequate assessment. RUS published a newspaper notice, announcing the availability of the EA for public review, in accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102. In addition, RUS considers the proposed Project an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 16 USC 470(f), and its implementing regulation, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE/NEED

The overall purpose of the Project is to expand effluent disposal capacity to resolve the requirements set forth in a proposed Consent Order issued by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in July 2018. RUS has reviewed the purpose and need for the Project and determined that the proposal will meet the present and future needs of Chipley.

C. ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

1. No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, RUS would not provide financial assistance to Chipley, and/or the proposed Project would not be constructed. This alternative would not assist Chipley in meeting the requirements of the FDEP proposed Consent Order.

2. Action Alternative (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Action Alternative, RUS would consider financing the proposed Project, and Chipley would construct the Effluent Disposal Project. The proposed project would construct a 12-mile forcemain for effluent conveyance to a 200 acre sprayfield site, of which 167 acres would be developed for current effluent disposal needs with the balance of land (25 acres) available for future expansion.

3. Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

In addition to the No Action Alternative and Action Alternative, Chipley considered other technology and siting alternatives, which are documented in the Alternatives section of the EA.

D. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The analyses in the EA documented that the proposed Project would have no adverse effects to land use, floodplains, traffic, socioeconomic issues, air quality, noise, public services/utilities, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, and important farmland. A summary of anticipated impacts on the human environment is provided below, including any mitigation measures deemed necessary to avoid or minimize impacts. Chipley is responsible for implementing these measures.

Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
Geology, Topography and Soils	No impacts to geology or topography. There may be short-term impacts to soils during the construction period.	Area soils would likely be disturbed during construction. Soil loss may occur directly from disturbance or indirectly via wind or water. Best management practices will be developed and implemented, such as erosion and sedimentation control (e.g. silt fences, hay bales, re-vegetating disturbed soils, and maintaining site soil stockpiles, to prevent soils from eroding and dispersing off-site).
Water Resources	No direct impacts to jurisdictional wetlands are proposed.	None
Surface Water	No direct impacts to surface waters are proposed.	None
Floodplains	No impacts to floodplains are anticipated.	None
Groundwater	The proposed project will provide groundwater recharge	None
Biological Resources	No impacts to biological resources (e.g. threatened or endangered species) are anticipated. The proposed project is within existing rights-of-way and the sprayfield parcel has been cleared and maintained (manicured) for over 20 years.	None
Air Quality	Short-term impacts to air quality may occur during the construction period.	Construction contractors would be required to water down construction areas (e.g. exposed soil) as necessary and fuel-burning equipment running times would be kept to a minimum and engines would be properly maintained.
Transportation	There may be a minor temporary increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site. No significant impacts to daily traffic congestion above current patterns are anticipated during operating hours.	Construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on-site during project construction and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways. None
Noise	Short-term impacts to noise may occur at the proposed project site during the construction period.	Construction would take place during normal business hours (e.g. daytime hours) and equipment and machinery will meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations.
Cultural Resources	No cultural or historical resources are known to occur on the property. However, preliminary tribal consultation has generated a request for a Cultural Resource Survey.	To be determined based on Cultural Resource Survey to be prepared independent of this report.
Important Farmland	No impacts to important farmland are proposed according to a review of the NRCS Farmland Classification map/	None

Socioeconomic Resources	No impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated.	None
Environmental Justice	No disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low-income populations are anticipated.	None
Hazardous Materials	No impacts from hazardous materials or wastes are anticipated.	Any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during construction would be disposed of and handled in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

E. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

A local newspaper advertisement, announcing the availability of the EA and participation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, was/were published on October 16th and 23rd of 2019, in Washington County News (Washington County Florida). A copy of the EA was available for public review at the USDA RD Area Office at 2741 Penn Avenue, Suite 5, Marianna, Florida. The 14-day comment period ended on October 30th, 2019. RUS received comments which are detailed in a memorandum to the file dated November 22, 2019. The Environmental Assessment was revised to address the substantive comments provided (revision dated February 2020).

F. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on its EA, RUS has concluded that the proposed Project would have no significant effects to land use, floodplains, traffic, socioeconomic issues, air quality, noise, public services/utilities, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, and important farmland. The proposed Project will utilize the Nationwide Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Programs, National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers and The Advisory Council on historic Preservation for Sequencing Section 106 (NPA) to achieve compliance with the Nation Historic Preservation Act and formally determine effects on Historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed project will have no effects to federally listed species or designated critical habitat.

The proposed Project would not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), and RD's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970), RUS has determined that the environmental impacts of the proposed Project have been adequately addressed and that no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment would result from construction and operation of the proposed Project. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed Project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant federal and state environmental laws and regulations. Because RUS action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, RUS will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its potential federal action associated with the proposed Project.

G. RUS LOAN REVIEW AND RIGHT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This FONSI is not a decision on a loan application and therefore not an approval of the expenditure of federal funds. Issuance of the FONSI and its notices concludes RUS's environmental review process. The ultimate decision on loan approval depends upon conclusion of this environmental review process in addition to financial and engineering reviews. Issuance of the FONSI and publication of notices will allow for these reviews to proceed. The decision to provide financial assistance also is subject to the availability of loan funds for the designated purpose in RUS's budget. There are no provisions to appeal this decision (i.e., issuance of a FONSI). Legal challenges to the FONSI may be filed in Federal District Court under the Administrative Procedures Act.

H. APPROVAL

This Finding of No Significant Impact is effective upon signature.

Signature

Philip Leary
Name

State Director
Title

Date