

## **NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION**

**NOTICE:** National Environmental Policy Act; is proposing construction of water distribution system upgrades throughout the Johnson Space Center.

**AGENCY:** National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

**ACTION:** Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40CFR 1500-1508), and the NASA policy and procedures (14 CFR part 1216 subpart 1216.3), NASA announces the availability of the Final Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) that address the environmental impacts expected to result from the construction of proposed water distribution system upgrades at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston, Texas. The proposed action would result in temporary adverse impacts during the construction phase to environmental resources along approximately 80,000 linear feet of water utility line primarily located within an existing utility corridor. No long-term adverse impacts to the human environment would be realized during operation of the proposed action. The proposed action would result in beneficial impacts to water resources due to the estimated 20% reduction in potable water usage at JSC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Written requests for copies of the Final EA and FONSI, or to provide comments or requests for information, should be directed to Mr. David Hickens, Chief, Environmental Office; NASA-JSC (Mail Code JE); 2101 NASA Parkway, Houston, TX 77058; or by Email: [david.hickens-1@nasa.gov](mailto:david.hickens-1@nasa.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:** NASA has reviewed the EA prepared for the construction of all three phases of the water distribution system upgrades and has determined that it represents an accurate and adequate analysis of the scope and level of associated environmental impacts. The EA is hereby incorporated by reference in this final FONSI.

Two alternatives have been considered: the proposed action of construction of all three phases of water distribution system upgrades and the no-action alternative. The preferred alternative would upgrade the current potable water delivery system at JSC by separating the potable water and fire water distribution lines and would install a reclaimed water irrigation system. The action would alleviate the regular line flushing that is currently required to maintain water quality to drinking water standards in the existing water and would replace the potable water currently used for irrigation with reclaimed water from the Clear Lake Water Authority water treatment plant. These actions would result in a decrease in potable water use at JSC. The no-action alternative would leave a 50-year old potable water system in place that is unsustainable in terms of efficiency and maintenance and would not provide the necessary infrastructure to meet the current and future initiatives of NASA-JSC, per Executive Orders 13423 and 13514.

The potential physical, biological, socioeconomic, and cultural impacts of the construction and operation of the water distribution system upgrades have been assessed and evaluated. No impacts related to any of these environmental issues were identified. As a result of this assessment and evaluation, a FONSI has been made. Physical and biological characteristics of the installation that were considered included, although not necessarily limited to: land resources, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, air quality, noise levels, hazardous materials, and socioeconomic and environmental justice. The proposed water distribution system upgrades would have no long term adverse impact on any of these resources. However, permanent impacts to wetlands could result if wetlands are confirmed to be present at the proposed location of the Phase III reclaimed water plant.

**Cumulative Impacts:** The EA reviewed cumulative impacts that could result from the incremental impact proposed activities when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Development projects within this context would be consistent with the JSC Master Plan and significant cumulative adverse impacts to the human environment would not be expected. Cumulative beneficial impacts to certain environmental resources may result from current and future development as NASA Policy Directive 8820.2C requires new construction to incorporate sustainable design features with the current recommendation to achieve LEED Silver certification through the U.S. Green Building Council.

**Mitigation:** Standard construction best management practices would be implemented to reduce erosion potential during ground disturbing activities and compliance with regulatory requirements would ensure appropriate storm water runoff control. The construction contractor would be required to develop a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and file a Notice of Intent with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and file a preconstruction notice to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), per Nationwide Permit No. 12, prior to the start of construction. Areas of construction near drainage features would need to employ sedimentation controls to ensure minimal discharge of sediment to nearby ditches. The USACE may require additional mitigation measures if any permanent impacts to jurisdictional wetlands exceeds the allowable criteria.

In response to comments made on the Draft EA by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during the public comment period, NASA intends to prohibit construction of the water line during the period of February 15 through June 15 in the vicinity of the Attwater's Prairie Chicken Captive Breeding Area, which is managed under a Space Act Agreement with the Houston Zoo. This accommodation should mitigate any potential adverse effects due to construction noise on these sensitive receptors. NASA will also include an endangered species survey at the time of the wetland delineation along the path of the line, and will perform a Section 7 consultation, if appropriate, based upon the outcome of the survey; however, NASA does not believe formal consultation will be required.

On the basis of the EA, NASA has determined that the physical, biological, socioeconomic, and cultural impacts associated with the construction of the water distribution system upgrades would not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, NASA has determined that an Environmental Impact Statement need not be prepared.

**Date:** Comments in response to this notice should be addressed to Mr. David Hickens at the address noted above within 30 days of publication.

  
fo Michael L. Coats, Director  
Johnson Space Center