

## **NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)**

**NOTICE:** 08-GSFC-02

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA):** Space Network Expansion Ground System – East at the U.S. Army Garrison Adelphi Laboratory Center Blossom Point, La Plata, Maryland

**AGENCY:** NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC)

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

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to NEPA of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and NASA policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216 Subpart 1216.3), NASA has made a Finding of No Significant Impact with respect to the proposed Space Network Expansion Ground System – East (SNEGS-E) Project. The proposed action would be the construction and operation of a satellite ground communications terminal facility at the U.S. Army Garrison Adelphi Laboratory Center Blossom Point (USAG ALC BP), La Plata, Maryland.

**ADDRESS:** The Environmental Assessment (EA) that supports and serves as a basis for this FONSI may be reviewed at:

Charles County Public Library, La Plata Branch  
2 Garrett Avenue  
La Plata, Maryland 20646

A limited number of copies of the EA may be obtained by contacting Ms. Lizabeth Montgomery at the address or telephone number indicated below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Ms. Lizabeth Montgomery, NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, Safety and Environmental Division, Code 250, Greenbelt, Maryland 20771, Phone: 301-286-0469, Email: [Lizabeth.R.Montgomery@nasa.gov](mailto:Lizabeth.R.Montgomery@nasa.gov)

### **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**

The Army has prepared an EA to examine the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. NASA has reviewed the EA prepared for the Space Network Expansion Ground System - East project and has determined that it represents an accurate and adequate analysis of the scope and level of associated environmental impacts. In accordance with NASA Procedural Requirements 8580.1, NASA, as the adopting agency, has concluded that the EA prepared by the Army adequately describes its proposed action, its potential environmental impacts and in all other respects meets its requirements for an EA. NASA, therefore, has adopted the Army EA (September 2008) and hereby incorporates it by reference in this FONSI.

The EA describes the ecological, cultural and social issues associated with the proposed clearing and construction of a satellite ground communications terminal facility on a parcel approximately 15.2 acres in size. This proposed facility would be called the Space Network Expansion Ground System-East (SNEGS-E) and would be located at the U.S. Army Garrison Adelphi Laboratory Center Blossom Point (USAG ALC BP). The preferred alternative includes development of a site for new antennas and related structures immediately southeast of the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) Blossom Point Tracking Facility (BPTF). Part of the site is within an area currently under a land use agreement between the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy for operation of the BPTF. The signal line of sight (LOS)

"Clearance Zone" and the remainder of the new antenna site are located on the USAG ALC BP property. NASA would operate the SNEGS-E Blossom Point Remote Station (BPRS) facility in cooperation with the NRL BPTF. The proposed site clearing, preparation and construction of the new satellite ground communications terminal facility, preparation of the associated "Clearance Zone" and operation of the facility would provide for the collection of signals from satellites.

The method of vegetation removal in the new antenna site and "Clearance Zone" area will vary, at times involving the use of gasoline powered logging equipment (i.e. chainsaws, trucks, brush chippers, etc.) and at other times using bulldozers and other heavy equipment as well. Antenna site preparation and antenna site construction would use equipment normally associated with this type of project (bulldozers, cranes, front end loaders, etc.).

Several alternative sites at USAG ALC BP were considered for the SNEGS-E, but analysis showed that potential signal interference at the alternative sites rendered them unsuitable. The No-Action alternative for construction of the proposed facility would result in continued inability for NASA to effectively communicate with orbiting platforms over the eastern Atlantic Ocean, causing serious degradation of the U.S. Government's satellite reception ability.

The EA examines potential effects of the proposed action on natural and cultural resources and areas of environmental concern that could be affected by the implementation of the project. These include, *but are not limited to*, land use, soils, wetlands, forests, groundwater, surface water, wildlife, terrestrial habitat, aquatic habitat, biological resources, endangered species, cultural resources, and environmental justice.

The analysis demonstrates that the implementation of the preferred proposed action at the selected site would have no significant impacts on the environment. Implementation of the project would entail the use of best management practices for construction and coordination with the following agencies: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Maryland Department of the Environment, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maryland Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Commission, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. It is anticipated that a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit will be needed pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 C.F.R. § 1344) for work in wetlands associated with the "Clearance Zone." All Corps of Engineers permit conditions would be used to mitigate impacts to wetlands and all construction restrictions recommended by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would be honored to mitigate possible disturbances to bald eagles. The proposed action fulfills the needs and purpose of the SNEGS-E.

On the basis of The Space Network Expansion Ground System - East Environmental Assessment, NASA has determined that the environmental impacts associated with the Space Network Expansion Ground System - East project and locating it at Site #1 (the preferred alternative) will not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. NASA will take no final action prior to 30 days following the publication of this Finding of No Significant Impact.

  
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 Robert Strain  
 Director  
 NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

12-2-08  
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 Date