

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Federal Financial Assistance Grant Number: 44068 Somers Point Resiliency and Embankment Project, Somers Point, Atlantic County, New Jersey

The U.S. Department of the Interior's (Department) Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant Program (Program) supports projects that reduce communities' vulnerability to the growing risks from coastal storms, sea level rise, flooding, erosion, and associated threats through strengthening natural ecosystems that also benefit fish and wildlife. The Program is funded by the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 and is administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The purpose of the Program is to undertake a variety of actions to restore wetlands and other natural areas, better manage storm water using green infrastructure, and assist states, tribes and local communities in protecting themselves from major storms such as Hurricane Sandy. Overall, the Program goals relate to coastal resiliency and ecosystem enhancement. The Program provides technical and financial assistance to identify, protect, conserve, manage, enhance, or restore habitat and infrastructure on both public and private lands that have been negatively impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

The Department, as lead federal agency, and its Project partner, the City of Somers Point, are proposing the Somers Point Resiliency and Embankment Project (Project), Federal Financial Assistance Grant Number: 44068. As the Project administrator, the City of Somers Point is managing Project activities. The actions being funded under the Program grant are dredging of the Higbee Marina pier site (partial funding) and installation of a living shoreline embankment. The purpose of the Project is to provide protection against flooding, wave action, and sea level rise and to enhance existing marsh habitat. Creation of the living shoreline embankment would demonstrate the beneficial reuse of dredged material and reduce tidal flooding along Somers Point-Mays Landing Road. In addition, the living shoreline embankment would create an environmental uplift by removing invasive, non-native plant species and replacing them with native pollinator species. The Project is needed to offset the continued loss of coastal land and marsh habitat and increase resiliency of coastal communities in this area to sea level rise.

This Environmental Assessment evaluates two alternatives for protection of the Project area against wave action, flooding, and sea level rise and to enhance existing marsh habitat: a No Action Alternative and one Action Alternative. The Environmental Assessment further analyzes the potential impacts these alternatives would have on the natural and human environment. This Environmental Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), and Department regulations (43 CFR Part 46), policy and

guidance.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no dredging of the Higbee Marina pier and no beneficial reuse of dredged material to create a living shoreline embankment. Under this alternative, there would be no elevation increase or improvement of marsh habitat and no increased resiliency of coastal communities to sea level rise. For these reasons, the No Action Alternative would not meet the Program and Project's purpose and need to provide protection against flooding, wave action, and sea level rise, increase the resiliency of coastal communities, and to enhance existing marsh habitat.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action Alternative involves dredging the Higbee Marina pier site and using the dredged material to create a living shoreline embankment along Somers Point-Mays Landing Road. The Project is anticipated to begin in November 2018 and be completed in February 2019.

The Higbee Marina pier site has been dredged previously and the proposed maintenance dredging would be of a slightly smaller length and width than previous dredging operations, with a dredge area of approximately 150 feet long and 135 feet wide, and 125 feet long and 86 feet wide. Once dewatered, the dredged material would be transported via tarped dump trucks to the living shoreline embankment site.

The city of Somers Point proposes to install a living shoreline embankment along Somers Point-Mays Landing Road. A living shoreline embankment is a sloped, erosion control technique built using natural materials and vegetation to protect an upland area. The length of the embankment would be 1,600 linear feet along the fringe of the existing marsh, having a 1-foot-wide top (at various elevations) and a 2 to 1 slope (height to width). The living shoreline embankment has been designed to mitigate tidal flooding up to elevation 5 feet (NAVD 88) and provide erosion protection for the road. Prior to dredge material placement, approximately 16,600 square feet (0.38 acre) of the existing embankment, currently overrun with invasive common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) species, would be removed at 6 inches below the ground at the root system. The living shoreline embankment would be created using 2,411 cubic yards of dredged sediments transported from the Higbee Marina staging area. Following site preparation and grading, native vegetation would be planted on the prepared embankment. Plant species have been selected to benefit pollinators, butterflies, and terrapins.

The Proposed Action Alternative will have minimal or negligible impacts on geology and sediment, topography, water resources and wetlands, biological resources and vegetation, human health and safety, cultural resources, socioeconomics, environmental justice communities, land use, recreation, coastal zone resources, or air and noise.

The Department finds there will be no significant adverse impacts resulting from the proposed activities of the Project. Therefore, the Department concludes that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued for the proposed project.

This Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact becomes a Federal Document when signed by the responsible Federal Official.



Grayford Payne, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary
Budget, Finance, Performance and Acquisition
U.S. Department of Interior



Date



Reference:

Environmental Assessment

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