

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Federal Financial Assistance Grant Number: 44109 Marsh Restoration and Replenishment, Little Egg Harbor, 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 DOI, as lead Federal agency, and its Project partners Little Egg Harbor Township and Tuckerton Borough, are proposing the Marsh Restoration and Replenishment Project (Project), Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey, Federal Financial Assistance Grant Number: 44109. The Project area encompasses communities surrounding the Great Bay Boulevard Wildlife Management Area, and would consist of stabilizing the shoreline and marsh area of Great Bay at Iowa Court in the Township of Little Egg Harbor, and stabilizing the beach at Tuckerton Cove at South Green Street, in Tuckerton Borough. As the Project administrator, NJ Future is managing the Project activities.

The purpose of the Project is to enhance resiliency of the adjacent communities from future storms, and to enhance, protect and restore habitat. The Project is needed to address marsh and beach erosion that continuously occurs from severe storm events at the two Project sites. By strengthening the natural buffer from storm surges, critical natural resources and infrastructure in the nearby communities would be protected. The Project area is located in Ocean County, New Jersey, where the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy included flood damage and wind shear to buildings surrounding the Project area, severe erosion of beach and marsh habitats, and damage to basic infrastructure including roads, electric and phone lines, and water and sewage treatment systems. Barnegat Bay, from Mantoloking to Little Egg Harbor, was one of the most severely impacted sections of natural resource habitat along the New Jersey Coast. Thousands of homes and businesses in the neighborhoods surrounding the South Green Street and Iowa Court Project sites were inundated with up to five-foot storm surges and severely damaged.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluates two alternatives to address the shoreline erosion issues at each Project site; a no-action alternative and a proposed action alternative. The EA further analyzes the potential impacts these alternatives may have on the natural and human environment. This EA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508), and DOI regulations (43 CFR Part 46), policy, and guidance.

No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, no living shoreline installation would take place at either Project site. The No Action Alternative would give rise to continued erosion within Tuckerton Cove and Great Bay, threatening Project area homes, businesses, the recreational economy, critical infrastructure and one of the least-disturbed marine wetlands habitats in the northeastern United States. This alternative does not meet the Project purpose and need as it would not address marsh and beach erosion or provide a natural buffer from storm surges.

Proposed Action Alternative

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, just over an acre of salt marsh at Iowa Court owned by the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust would be restored and enhanced. In addition, a small breakwater and beach enhancement project on 0.2 acres would be completed on privately owned land on South Green Street in the Borough of Tuckerton. The approximately 1.3-acre Project area, consisting of two sites, is located on either side of the Great Bay Boulevard Wildlife Management Area in Little Egg Harbor and Tuckerton Borough, New Jersey.

Iowa Court

The Iowa Court Project activities include creation of an approximately 0.349-acre marsh sill comprised of 760-linear feet of timber sheeting, 2,260-cubic yards of stone fill, and 50-cubic yards of rip-rap stone revetment; and vegetative stabilization consisting of a discharge of approximately 2,625-cubic yards sand fill acquired from an upland source into 0.721-acres of degraded tidal marsh, with subsequent plantings of native species, including salt marsh grass (*Spartina alterniflora*) and saltmeadow cordgrass (*Spartina patens*). The Iowa Court Project activities would also incorporate oyster spat into the stone which would attract colonization in order to establish oyster habitat. The Project Engineer, T&M Associates, is working with ReClam the Bay and Mordecai Land Trust in order to incorporate the oyster friendly material.

Equipment to be used during implementation of Project activities include heavy equipment such as excavators and dump trucks, power hand tools and manually operated hand tools, with work being staged at the shoreline and also from a barge. Upon completion of the Project at the Iowa Court site, the cul-de-sac would feature a sign to educate the public about living shorelines and a bench for visual access to the water and tidal marsh habitat.

South Green Street

The South Green Street Project site includes the creation of a 225-foot long by 28-foot wide breakwater structure comprised of 885-cubic yards of stone rip-rap constructed approximately 120-linear feet offshore from the existing plane of Mean High Water of Tuckerton Cove at South Green Street. Additionally, 454-cubic yards of sand fill acquired from an upland source would be discharged below the plane of Mean High Water along 0.07-acres of eroded shoreline at Tuckerton Cove at South Green Street. Equipment to be used during implementation of Project activities include heavy equipment such as excavators and dump trucks, power hand tools and manually operated hand tools, with work being staged at the shoreline and also from a barge.

Implementation of activities at both sites would begin in late fall 2018 and proceed through December 2018 for in-water work. Plantings, introduction of the oyster spat, and work that is not subject to in-water restrictions which would be funded outside of the Program would be completed in June 2019. Monitoring for native plant establishment and erosion controls would occur after Project completion for up to 5 years, and would be funded outside of the Program.

The Proposed Action Alternative to stabilize eroded shorelines via installation of a living shoreline to include a marsh sill and breakwater would strengthen the natural buffer, enhance habitat, improve accessibility for the public, and enhance water quality.

The Proposed Action Alternative will have minimal or negligible, if any, impacts on soils and sediment, water resources and wetlands, biological resources and vegetation, socioeconomics, cultural resources, land use and recreation, and air quality and noise.



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



Date



Reference:

Environmental Assessment

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Finding of No Significant Impact

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