

April 10, 2008

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

TO ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC GROUPS:

In accordance with the environmental review guidelines of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the implementing environmental review procedures of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act" as guidance, the EPA has performed an environmental review of the following proposed action:

Wastewater Construction Project
Proposed by Rapides Parish for improvements
Located in the Town of Ball, Louisiana

EPA Project Number: XP-96625101

Estimated EPA Share: \$ 577,300
Estimated Local Share: \$ 554,500

The Fiscal Year 2005 Appropriations Act for the EPA included special Congressional funding for water and wastewater construction projects. Rapides Parish (Parish) was selected to receive funding support through these special appropriations for the construction of new wastewater collection lines to serve an unincorporated area of the Parish not currently served by a public sewer system. The project area will be along Tioga Road (LA 623) located south of the Town of Ball (Town). The citizens in the area currently utilize private septic tanks, treatment systems or other methods to dispose of their wastewater. All of these systems are aging, most are inefficient and many have already failed causing contamination to the area surface and ground water resources.

Even with all on-site systems in good working order, the soils in the area are not conducive to the proper operation of on-site disposal methods due to lack of absorption and percolation rates. A tributary to Flagon Bayou, which discharges into nearby Catahoula Lake to the east of the area, is the primary natural drainage in the area. If not corrected, the present disposal methods will continue to leach wastewater into the immediate and downstream environment. The situation is contributing to a public health hazard and is allowing continued degradation to the local environment.

The Parish has experienced a fairly rapid growth rate in recent years, which has resulted in the need to install new wastewater collection service in this heavily populated portion of the Parish. The area is predominantly residential with a light mix of

commercial and business establishments, including churches, apartment complexes, schools and restaurants typical of most developed areas. The new collection lines will be connected to existing wastewater treatment facilities owned and operated by the Town, and will serve approximately 180 residents living along Tioga Road. The project will install the basic infrastructure to serve the project area covered by the enclosed Environmental Assessment, and will easily accommodate future expansion through extensions and laterals. However, any future expansion is not covered by the current assessment and will require future review if constructed. The Parish has proposed the construction of the new collection lines to eliminate the wastewater problems that currently exist along Tioga Road. The Parish will utilize the special Congressional funding support in conjunction with local funds to finance the proposed construction project.

The environmental review process, which is documented by the enclosed Environmental Assessment, indicates that no potential significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from the proposed action. The project individually, cumulatively over time, or in conjunction with other actions is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on the quality of the environment. On the basis of the environmental review determination that there are not any predicted or cumulative significant adverse impacts expected with the project, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary. My preliminary decision is based upon the enclosed Environmental Assessment, a careful review of the Environmental Information Document prepared for the project, the results of the public participation process, and other supporting data which are on file in the office listed below and available for public review upon request. Therefore, I am issuing this preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact pertaining to the project.

Comments regarding my preliminary decision may be submitted for consideration to the attention of the Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), Environmental Protection Agency, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733. After evaluating any comments received, the EPA will make a final decision. No administrative action will be taken on this preliminary decision for at least 30 calendar days after release of this Finding of No Significant Impact. The preliminary decision and finding will then become final after the 30-day comment period expires if no new significant information is provided to alter this finding.

Responsible Official,

John Blevins
Director
Compliance Assurance and
Enforcement Division

Enclosure

Finding of No Significant Impact
Rapides Parish, Louisiana

cc: Roy Hebron, Mayor
Town of Ball

Richard Lindsay, President
Rapides Parish Police Jury

Harold Leggett, PhD, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WASTEWATER CONSTRUCTION PROJECT Proposed by RAPIDES PARISH for Improvements Located in the TOWN of BALL, LOUISIANA

BACKGROUND

Rapides Parish (Parish) is located in the western central portion of the state, and includes the cities of Alexandria and Pineville and the Town of Ball (Town). The Parish was selected to receive federal funding support for the construction of new wastewater collection lines to serve an unincorporated area of the Parish not currently served by a public sewer system. The project area will be along Tioga Road (LA 623) located south of the Town. The citizens in the area currently utilize private septic tanks, treatment systems or other methods to dispose of their wastewater. All of these systems are aging, most are inefficient and many have already failed causing contamination to the area surface and ground water resources. Even with all on-site systems in good working order, the soils in the area are not conducive to the proper operation of on-site disposal methods due to absorption and percolation rates. A tributary to Flagon Bayou, which discharges into nearby Catahoula Lake to the east of the area, is the primary natural drainage in the area. If not corrected, the present disposal methods will continue to leach wastewater into the immediate and downstream environment. The situation is contributing to a public health hazard and is allowing continued degradation to the local environment.

The Parish has experienced a fairly rapid growth rate in recent years, which has resulted in the need to install new wastewater collection service in this heavily populated portion of the Parish. The area is predominantly residential with a light mix of commercial and business establishments, including churches, apartment complexes, schools and restaurants typical of most developed areas. The new collection lines will be connected to existing wastewater treatment facilities owned and operated by the Town, and will serve approximately 180 residents living along Tioga Road. The project will install the basic infrastructure to serve the project area covered by the enclosed Environmental Assessment, and will easily accommodate future expansion through extensions and laterals. However, any future expansions are not covered by the current assessment and will require future review if they are constructed. The Parish has proposed the construction of the new collection lines to eliminate the wastewater problems that currently exist along Tioga Road. The Parish will utilize special Congressional funding support in conjunction with local funds to finance the proposed construction project. The project area is shown on the map enclosed as Figure 1.

The proposed project is considered to be a federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In accordance with the environmental review requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500, and with the use of the Environmental

Protection Agency's (EPA) implementing regulations found at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act" as guidance, the EPA is preparing this Environmental Assessment to assist in determining the environmental impacts of the proposed action, and in evaluating whether an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact will be prepared for the proposed project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project, known locally as the "Tioga Road Sewer System Improvements for the Rapides Parish Police Jury and the Town of Ball," will be constructed in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's plans to widen and extend Tioga Road, and will consist of the following construction activities:

1. Construction of approximately 5,700 linear feet of new 8-inch gravity sewer line, including manholes, along Tioga Road from the Union Pacific Railway to the west to US Hwy 165 to the east;
2. Construction of approximately 5,660 linear feet of new 6-inch force main;
3. Construction of two new lift stations; and
4. Installation of electrical hookups and connections, as necessary.

All facilities for the proposed project will be located within property that will be owned or controlled by either the Parish or the Town. The new collection lines will be installed primarily utilizing the open trench method. The new lines will transfer untreated wastewater in the area to the Town's wastewater treatment facilities for treatment. Through an intergovernmental cooperative agreement, the Town will contribute to the funding, will provide wastewater treatment services/costs, and will own, operate and maintain the new facilities upon completion.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The funding recipient evaluated and considered a range of various alternatives to address the infrastructure needs of the area. Important factors influencing the evaluation of the processes and their recommended solutions include environmental acceptability, overall costs, availability of land for the intended uses, maximum reuse of existing facilities when applicable, operation and maintenance costs, system reliability, accommodation of future expansion needs, and public acceptance. A complete description of the alternatives is provided in the Environmental Information Document developed and provided by the funding recipient for the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area is located in a developed but unincorporated location in the far northeast part of the Parish between the City of Pineville and the Town of Ball. The Parish was established in 1807, encompasses approximately 1,362 square miles, and has

a population of more than 130,000 residents. The Police Jury is the governing authority for the Parish, with a nine member governing body. The Jury's main offices are located in Alexandria, which is also the Parish seat. The road system in the Parish consists mostly of asphalt and gravel roads, but only a few miles of concrete roads.

The Town has a population of approximately 3,900 residents with an annual median household income of \$32,000. Land use in the immediate area along Tioga is primarily residential with a mix of light industry and business. The construction area is located one mile south of the Town and six miles north of Pineville. The Town has a wastewater collection and treatment system, but the project area is not currently served by the Town's wastewater systems. Storm water in the area drains into a tributary of Flagon Bayou, and eventually into Catahoula Lake, which is the main surface water body in the area. There are two public water wells serving the area, and no water quality problems associated with these wells.

The topography in the area is gently sloping at an elevation of 161 feet above sea level, and with soils that are poorly to moderately drained and not suitable for the operation of septic tanks or other types of on-site treatment. The construction is not expected to have a significant negative impact upon the area, will not change the current land use patterns in the area, and will be compatible with applicable zoning ordinances in the area. It is anticipated that the new collection lines will have a useful life expectancy of 50 years, and is the first project in a phased approach to meeting the current and future wastewater needs of the area. The benefits, costs and minor impacts of the project such as limited noise and dust created during actual construction activities, will be shared equally by all citizens.

IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project was analyzed to identify potential short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts on the environment. Factors that were considered include the probability of impact occurrence, magnitude of any occurrence, if any predicted occurrence is determined to be reversible/irreversible, direct/indirect or one-time/cumulative, the proposed action's conformity to legal mandates, and the social distribution of risks and benefits. The proposed project is not expected to have a substantial negative impact upon current land uses or land values, nor is it anticipated to have a substantial impact upon the values of surrounding land holdings. The proposed action is expected to have energy requirements typical of other construction projects of similar scope, size and duration, and will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of all local and state regulations.

The majority of the impacts associated with the proposed project will be short-term and temporary due to actual construction activities, and will cease immediately upon completion of construction work in any particular area. There are not any anticipated significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed action that cannot be reduced to acceptable levels. The only irretrievable resources committed to this project are labor, machinery wear, materials, funds spent, and energy consumed

during construction. The potential short and long-term, direct, indirect and cumulative impacts resulting from the proposed action are identified and discussed below.

1. **Biological Resources Including Threatened and Endangered Species:** Based upon initial coordination with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to biological resources. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the USFWS to insure that protected species and their designated habitat in the area will not be adversely impacted by construction.
2. **Cultural/Historic Resources:** Based upon initial coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to archaeological, historical, architectural, or cultural resources. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the SHPO to insure that such resources are protected during construction activities. If cultural materials are encountered during construction, work will stop immediately in the general area of the discovery, and the funding recipient will immediately notify the SHPO of the discovery.
3. **Floodplain:** Based upon initial coordination with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the local Floodplain Administrator within the Rapides Area Planning Commission, a portion of the proposed project is located within a flood hazard area and requires a floodplain development permit. The Parish is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program, and has an approved floodplain development ordinance. The required permit has been issued and requires construction in a manner consistent with the need to minimize damage within the flood prone area. The funding recipient is responsible for compliance with the requirements of the permit, which should insure that construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to the floodplain.
4. **Wetlands:** Based upon initial coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and the EPA Region 6 Marine & Wetlands Section, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to designated protected wetlands within the project construction area. The work will be covered under Nationwide Permit 12 covering public utilities, and will not require a project-specific permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the COE to insure that designated wetlands in the area will not be adversely impacted by construction.

In order to further protect the natural beneficial functions of the floodplain and wetlands, and to minimize the potential flood hazards to life and property, the construction funding is conditioned to read:

- a. The recipient agrees not to collect or treat wastewater generated by new development in the floodplain or wetlands by the project facilities for a period of 50 years

from the date of the environmental assessment related to this project. This restriction does not apply to development in the floodplain or wetlands which existed prior to that date;

b. The recipient agrees to adopt and enforce suitable ordinances and implementing procedures for effective local administration of this floodplain and wetlands service area restriction. On application of the recipient's governing body and after considering all relevant information on a proposed development's effects on the natural functions and values of the affected floodplain and wetlands, the EPA Regional Administrator may waive the service area restriction in individual cases; and

c. EPA and the recipient intend that this floodplain and wetlands service area restriction shall benefit any person, organization, or entity possessing an interest in preservation of the natural environment in the 100-year floodplain and wetlands subject to this restriction. Any such beneficiary may seek enforcement of the restriction against the recipient or its successor in a court of competent jurisdiction, if notice of the intent to seek enforcement is first given to the recipient and the EPA Region 6, and neither entity initiates corrective action within 90 days of receiving such notice.

5. Surface Water Resources: Based upon initial coordination with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the Louisiana Scenic Rivers and Streams Commission and the National Park Service, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to surface water resources. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the LDEQ, and must obtain and abide by any/all necessary permits to insure that surface water resources in the area will not be adversely impacted by the construction.

6. Ground Water Resources: Based upon initial coordination with the LDEQ, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to ground water resources. The funding recipient is responsible for continued coordination with the LDEQ, and must obtain and abide by any/all necessary permits to insure that ground water resources in the area will not be adversely impacted by the construction. Upon completion of the project, continued contamination of local ground water resources should be eliminated.

7. Prime and Unique Farmlands: Based upon initial coordination with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to protected soils or farmlands.

8. Air Quality: Based upon coordination with the LDEQ, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to air quality. The proposed project is located in an attainment area, which is in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for all criteria air pollutants. All vehicles and equipment used in the construction of this project must comply with federal regulations concerning the control of air pollution from mobile sources. Adherence to these recommendations will insure

that construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to the air quality in the area.

9. Environmental Justice: The project was reviewed to ensure that construction will be conducted in an appropriate manner so that all persons and populations are served equally by the infrastructure improvements. Based upon the results of an evaluation to rank the potential environmental impacts to local communities using a computer-assisted mathematical formula, including Geographical Information System maps and census demographic data, no persons or populations will be discriminated against or denied the benefits of the proposed project. Since all persons and populations will be served equally by the project, there will be no adverse impacts that are considered disproportionate to any particular portion of the population.

10. Coastal and Barrier Resources: Since the entire project planning area is located inland and not adjacent to any coastal location, construction of the proposed project should not have significant adverse impacts to coastal and barrier resources.

11. Cumulative Impacts: Potential cumulative impacts would be those impacts to the local environment that would result from the proposed project in combination with other ongoing actions, and those reasonably foreseeable future actions. No other major construction activity is being conducted presently or planned for the immediate future. The proposed project will not individually nor cumulatively over time have a negative impact on the quality of the human or natural environment.

DOCUMENTATION, COORDINATION, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public hearing for the proposed project was held on July 9, 2007, at the Rapides Parish Police Jury Chambers in the Rapides Parish Courthouse located in Alexandria, Louisiana. All necessary information related to the project was available for public review and comment prior to the hearing. The purpose of the hearing was to inform the public of the proposed project, to identify any concerns, and to request public participation. After explanation of the project by the project manager for the consulting engineering firm for the project, one attendee asked about the requirement of annexation into the Town if citizens connect to the new wastewater collection line. The Parish President and the project manager stated there is no requirement for annexation into the Town in the intergovernmental agreement between the Parish and the Town. There were no other questions during the hearing. The project is supported by the community, and no adverse public comments or concerns were received.

During the process of conducting the environmental review and preparing this Environmental Assessment for the project, coordination has been conducted with all required resource protection agencies and offices to solicit and incorporate their initial review and comments. Copies of this Environmental Assessment will be provided to those agencies and offices for their final review and comments. Other interested parties may request a copy of the Environmental Assessment in writing from the EPA, Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733.

References

1. Environmental Information Document, Tioga Road Sewer System Improvements, Rapides Parish Police Jury and the Town of Ball, July 2007.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon completion of this Environmental Assessment, and a detailed review of the Environmental Information Document for the project, it has been determined that construction activities are considered to be environmentally sound. Therefore, it is recommended that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued for this project.