DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE

Draft Report

Environmental Assessment for Proposed New Collocated Administration Building at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge Oceanville, New Jersey

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Prepared for:
Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge
800 Great Creek Road
Oceanville, New Jersey 08205

Prepared by:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
New Jersey Field Office
927 North Main Street, Bldg. D
Pleasantville, New Jersey 08232

Executive Summary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to site and construct a building that will house the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Forsythe NWR, refuge) headquarters, the New Jersey Field Office for Ecological Services (NJFO), and the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE).

The Forsythe NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved by the Regional Director in June 2004 called for constructing a new headquarters and visitor center in the southern portion of the refuge by 2008 to include office space for the NJFO and OLE (the visitor center was constructed in 2011). In anticipation of that action, an Environmental Action Memorandum, Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and Final Environmental Assessment (EA) were developed in 2007. That process evaluated 23 sites with the intention of also including a 'mirror image' building that would house the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDEP). The NJDEP building would have been the responsibility of the State regarding funding, land ownership, and maintenance.

The Preferred Alternative was a 12-acre forested site along the east side of State Highway 9 south of Motts Creek Road. The current headquarters area of the refuge was not considered due to space limitations. As time passed, lack of funds from both the Service and NJDEP hampered progress and the projects were canceled. In an effort to find a way to fund much-needed Service office space, funds were made available through the Service's fiscal year (FY) 2015 and FY 2016 deferred maintenance account to design and construct a refuge office. Funds are still being sought to construct the space for NJFO and OLE.

The Service met with the contracted architectural and design firm on September 16, 2014, to discuss options to construct a collocated office for the three Service divisions. On December 8, 2014, the architectural and design firm presented a conceptual design for the building. Subsequent designs were provided including the 67 percent design that was provided to the Service on August 5, 2015.

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that the Service evaluate any effect its actions might have on the environment. This draft EA serves the purpose of meeting that requirement. The draft EA is being prepared to evaluate environmental criteria at the proposed development area, within the existing headquarters boundaries.

The Service is proposing to replace the existing administration building built in the early 1980s to provide a new administration building for staff, as well as other Service programs, including NJFO and OLE. The building will incorporate renewable energy systems as funding allows. The project consists of the construction of a new administration building (approximately12,525 square feet), to be constructed in two phases, the addition of a multi-purpose room to the existing visitor information center (1,700 square feet), and the demolition of the existing headquarters building. The planned multi-purpose room addition to the visitor information center is intended to replace the multi-purpose in the existing administration building, which is not planned for inclusion in the new administration building. This important space is needed for staff meetings, meetings with partners, training, and public events.

The proposed development at the approximately 7-acre project site includes an administration building, associated parking lot, landscaping, and a storm water retention basin. About 4 of those acres would be disturbed directly by construction.

The site development is expected to result in minor, short-term impacts to some environmental criteria reviewed in this draft EA, including air quality, soils, hydrology, noise, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources. Unavoidable impacts will continue to be minimized through the implementation of best management practices.

Impacts associated with the project area should be minimal as development will be conducted in accordance with the U.S. Department of the Interior design standards, in accordance with Federal law, and with appropriate site-specific mitigation measures. The analysis is consistent with FONSI for the development of the selected project area.

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1.0 PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION OF NEED

1.1 Introduction

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) administers the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Forsythe NWR, refuge), located at 800 Great Creek Road in Oceanville, New Jersey (Figure 1). Forsythe NWR is the largest national wildlife refuge in New Jersey and is on a significant migration route that follows the east coast of North America. Forsythe NWR's primary purpose is to protect fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.

To meet the directives of Executive Order (EO) 13423 and recent energy acts requiring Federal agencies to reduce energy consumption and increase the use of renewable energy, the proposed project consists of a new administration building, including renewable energy components, within the boundaries of the existing refuge property (Figure 2). In addition, construction of the new headquarters is one of the objectives identified in Forsythe NWR's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) (USFWS 2004). The objective also calls for providing office space for the New Jersey Field Office (NJFO) and Office of Law Enforcement (OLE).

Regional Director's Order (RDO) No. 06-02 on collocation states that field stations that are within a reasonable distance of one another will make every effort to collocate. In conjunction with collocation, new opportunities for collaboration will be sought. The benefits of collocation include one-stop shopping for the public, increased/shared outreach and partnership capabilities, strong delivery of habitat conservation and improvement, improved communication among staff members, shared resources (e.g., equipment, administrative, and maintenance staffs), and conservation of funds through reduced space costs. In fiscal year 2015, about $162,000 was spent by the NJFO for rent, and rent for the OLE office in Millville was approximately $46,000. In total, over $200,000 was paid for rent in 2015 which could have been saved if the Service had been collocated on owned property. Collocation of Service offices will decrease expenses through cost sharing and the elimination of rental fees in the long term. Perhaps even more importantly, proximity should improve coordination within the Service.

The current headquarters building at the refuge is inadequate and needs to be replaced. The current headquarters office was built in the early 1980s and is deteriorating. It is located at the head of the Wildlife Drive in Galloway Township. Visitation to the Drive averages 150,000 per year, including several thousand students who visit with school classes. It is a renowned Atlantic Flyway birding hot spot and, as such, is a destination for visitors throughout the United States. The refuge is within a half-hour drive of Atlantic City, which receives over 25 million visitors annually, according to the South Jersey Transportation Authority. Forsythe NWR provides an outstanding opportunity to connect people with nature.

The existing headquarters building contains a small number of administrative offices that do not meet the needs of current staff levels as staff are currently distributed among four buildings at the station It also contains a 45-seat auditorium/multi-purpose room that serves as both meeting space and classroom (4,037 square feet total). It is too small for some groups and functions. In short, the current headquarters facilities are inadequate to house the staff needed to implement the CCP, meet the needs of the visitors, and support environmental education and outreach.

The NJFO is located in rented space at Heritage Square, a commercial park close to the junction of Delilah Road and Main Street in Pleasantville, New Jersey. Although the building meets the office's needs, the Service intends to move all of its field offices throughout the country out of rented space by 2015, where possible.

The OLE office building is presently in Millville, New Jersey. Office space is adequate; however, OLE was formerly collocated with the NJFO, and returning to a colocation situation would affect smoother coordination between OLE and other Service offices.

The renewable energy systems, primarily solar, will be connected to the proposed administration building. The proposed site for the new administration building consists of approximately 7 acres of mostly previously impacted area. The proposed administration building project area also includes associated parking lots, landscaping, septic field, and a storm water retention basin.

In 2007, the Service worked with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW) to design two buildings that would have been sited south of Nacote Creek, on the east side of State Highway 9. Considerations for conceptual alternative analysis included:

1. Visibility and easy accessibility from a major highway.
2. Possible building site(s) not within delineated wetlands and flood plain.
3. Low impacts to neighbors.
4. Consistency with future land use plans for the vicinity.
5. Proximity to existing Service or NJDFW facilities from which personnel will be moved.
6. Proximity to other scientific, natural, or cultural facilities/features.
7. Boat access (dock and ramp) to tidal waters for management, monitoring, and research activities.
8. Opportunity for wildlife observation/photography and environmental education and interpretation.
9. Access to utilities: water, sewer, electric, and gas.
10. Limited environmental contamination concerns.
11. Overall positive impacts on natural and cultural resources.
12. Enough land for two buildings and appurtenances.
13. Already disturbed facility footprint.

Those projects were not completed due to funding constraints.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires by law that Service evaluate any effect its actions might have on the environment. This Environmental Assessment (EA) serves the purpose of meeting that requirement. The EA is being prepared to evaluate environmental criteria at the proposed development areas, within the existing refuge boundaries.

1.2 Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed project at Forsythe NWR is to provide a new administration building for refuge staff, to collocate the NJFO and OLE into one building, and to conserve energy. This draft EA evaluates environmental criteria at the development areas within the existing refuge boundaries, describes the environmental impacts associated with the proposed development, and focuses on environmental areas identified during the 2014 administration building scoping process.

This draft EA is prepared in accordance with the NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [C1 1500- 1508]), and Service Regulations, Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 26.4(a). Service policy includes provisions to protect, restore and enhance the quality of the human environment; and to minimize adverse environmental consequences, consistently with other national policy considerations (CEQ 1997).

1.3 Description of Need

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, EO 13423, and the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, require a 30 percent reduction in energy use (from 2003 levels) by Federal agencies by 2015. The need for a new proposed administration building is to provide a new facility for staff, collocate Service programs, and to conserve energy. The installation of renewable energy sources at the proposed administration building will assist the Service in achieving the energy standards required of Federal agencies. Additionally, the RDO No. 06-02 on collocation states that field stations that are within a reasonable distance of one another will make every effort to collocate.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The NEPA and the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA require that NEPA documents include a discussion of reasonable alternatives to a proposed action. Reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint.

CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1500 to 1508) require consideration of a 'No Action' Alternative. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives can be evaluated. A No Action Alternative is evaluated in this draft EA.

2.1 Basis for Selection

The proposed project area was selected due to its proximity to the existing Forsythe NWR headquarters building, the existing Visitor Information Center (VIC), the maintenance area, the heavily visited Wildlife Drive, and existing utilities and other administration facilities. Visitors to the refuge will have immediate access to information and facility resources. The renewable energy elements should be located near the source of energy demand to reduce impacts and costs associated with connecting the renewable energy systems to the serviced structures. Existing vegetative cover and topography were also considerations in the siting of the administration

building and renewable energy elements. In addition, the proposed development site is not proximate to critical wildlife habitat areas and will not have a negative visual effect on the refuge environment. The relative size of the project area (7 acres in total, which includes existing infrastructure) is small and has minimal impacts.

2.1.1 No Action Alternative (Alternative A)

Under the No Action Alternative, a new office/administration building would not be constructed; the NJFO and OLE would not collocate with Forsythe NWR; and no new renewable energy components would be installed. There would be no impacts at the development site related to the proposed actions, as they would likely remain in their present conditions until such time that the Service required these areas for other purposes. No land at the headquarters area would be disturbed for septic and stormwater purposes; and no new construction would occur related to the VIC. However, this alternative would not improve the renewable energy options of the facility; would not allow collocation of Service programs; and would not meet the objectives of the project purpose and need. Additionally, no action would result in the continued occupation of the existing refuge headquarters building, which is rapidly deteriorating.

2.1.2 Preferred Alternative – Proposed Development (Alternative B)

The proposed project at Forsythe NWR includes the construction of a new administration building in two phases. The first phase would include approximately 5,275 square feet of office/administrative space for refuge staff and volunteers, and the construction of an approximately 1,700 square-foot addition to the existing VIC to be used as a multi-purpose room for staff meetings, meetings with partners, training, and public events. Stormwater and septic facilities would be constructed in Phase 1, and landscaping, sidewalks, 3-phase power line installation, and rehabilitation of parking areas are included. The second phase would provide office/administrative space for NJFO and OLE (approximately 7,250 square feet). Expanded parking and storm water management basin are included in Phase 2 (Figure 3-6).

The project site has been the site of various facilities for decades. In the 1940s, a maintenance shop was constructed at the location of the proposed Phase 1 office. It was demolished in 1981 and the site is now covered in grass and other vegetation. The proposed Phase 2 office would be constructed on an area that is kept as a mowed lawn/turf. New staff parking would overlay the current parking lot, and stormwater and septic would be constructed in areas that are currently kept as mowed lawn. It is estimated that construction would commence in winter 2015/2016 with a length of 12 months. The proposed development is the preferred alternative because the Service already owns the property proposed, the refuge is currently in operation at the site, and the proposed project site is associated with existing buildings and parking lots.

2.1.3 Other Alternatives

As a part of the 2007 re-location effort with NJDEP, the Service identified 23 sites, all north of the current refuge headquarters location, as potential alternatives (USFWS 2008).

A 12-acre forested site along the east side of State Highway 9 south of Motts Creek Road was selected in the NEPA process due to its accessibility to the public, proximity to township sewer lines, and the potential for development of interpretive trails. Additionally, it was large enough to meet the needs of two large office buildings, and within the Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland locality pay area (rather than New York-Newark-Bridgeport, which is higher).

Subsequently, that project was canceled due to lack of funds. The current proposal will only house Service employees and requires a smaller building than was needed primarily because it no longer will contain a visitor center. The refuge constructed a visitor center in 2011 on the headquarters site.

Private property outside the existing refuge boundaries was not evaluated as additional land acquisition is not needed when the Service has sufficient previously impacted acreage for the construction of the administration building on refuge property.

The preferred alternative appears to be the most feasible and efficient, readily available, and reasonable and appropriate for this action. This alternative would result in minimal impact to the environment and would meet the objectives of the project purpose and need.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

3.1 Procedures

This draft EA was prepared in accordance with the NEPA and CEQ regulations implementing NEPA. The Service policy includes provisions to act with care in carrying out its mission of providing visitor services and to ensure it does so consistently with national environmental policies. The draft EA approach is recommended for this site since the Service already owns the property proposed for development, the refuge is currently in operation, and the proposed project site is already associated with existing buildings and parking lots.

3.2 Prior Environmental Studies

The CCP for Forsythe NWR includes a detailed analysis of the refuge's environmental features. The CCP identified the current proposed location as a potential future site for the new administrative building. Favorable impacts focused on the park-like setting of the proposed building site providing an aesthetically pleasing facility representing long term preservation of the natural environment and land use compatible with the rural character of the area. Adverse impacts included a minor loss of some trees, and grubbing and grading and potential soil erosion issues associated with the development of the property.

3.3 Specific Areas Evaluated

The current refuge headquarters site was examined to review the impacts of the proposed development. The evaluated environmental criteria include: aesthetics, noise, air quality, community services, cultural and historical resources, economic activity, wetland and floodplains, geology and soils, land use and real property, resident population, solid and

hazardous waste, transportation, utilities, vegetation and wildlife, water resources, and environmental justice. A brief discussion of cumulative impacts that may occur as a result of the proposed project is also included in this section.

3.3.1 Aesthetics and Noise

Existing Setting – Approximately 40 acres of the over 47,000-acre Forsythe NWR have been developed as a headquarters complex with associated infrastructure (roads [including Wildlife Drive], administrative and maintenance facilities, temporary housing, VIC, etc.).

The proposed administration building project area consists of approximately 7 acres of previously developed land consisting of mostly maintained lawn with landscaped trees immediately adjacent to the entrance road. The area is moderately sloping and suited for development.

The proposed development area has no sources of significant noise generation. Noise at the proposed project area is generally associated with the operations of the refuge and generally consists of periodic ground maintenance activities, including the use of lawnmowers and weed trimmers associated with maintenance. The short bursts of noise from operations only occur during weekday business hours. Noise from vehicle traffic on Great Creek Road is barely noticeable at the proposed project area.

Potential Environmental Impacts – The aesthetics of the refuge and the surrounding properties is not expected to be impacted by the development at the administration building project area. The surrounding areas are already characterized by the existing refuge, associated facilities, and undeveloped woodlands. Development of the proposed project is limited to a total construction footprint of approximately 4 acres within the 7-acre "project area." The area immediately surrounding the project area will remain as visitor parking area and undeveloped fields and woodlands that serve as vegetative buffers. The existing headquarters building will be demolished once Phase 1 construction is complete. Minimal short-term noise impacts to the surrounding area are expected to occur during the construction and demolition phases. Impacts should be minimized by limiting construction activity to daylight hours and by requiring properly muffled equipment.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts on the noise level or aesthetics of the area.

3.3.2 Air Quality

New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country. The State also has the highest density of roads and traffic. These factors impact air quality. The greatest adverse impact seems to be elevated levels of low-altitude ozone. The ozone levels in Atlantic County exceed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) thresholds set for the State (USEPA 2015). In 1978, Congress designated the Brigantine Wilderness Area (Wilderness Area) as a Class I air quality area, giving it special protection under the Clean Air Act.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Development of the proposed administration area will require clearing and grading. During the development of the proposed project, emissions from internal combustion engines and generation of dust from the vehicles involved with earthmoving activities could temporarily increase levels of some pollutants. There may also be emissions from fugitive dust associated with vehicles using unpaved roads, windblown dust from areas not covered by vegetation, material handling, etc.

Operations at Forsythe NWR are not considered to be a source of air emissions and no air quality permits are required for the development of the proposed project. The implementation of appropriate best management practices (BMPs) to control soil erosion and dust should minimize releases of fugitive emissions to the atmosphere. It is expected that construction contractors will properly maintain their fleet of vehicles/equipment so that carbon monoxide, ozone-producing chemicals, and other emissions are kept to a minimum. Impacts to air quality are expected to be short-term and minor. BMPs will also be followed during demolition of the existing headquarters office.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts on the air quality of the area.

3.3.3. Community Services

Existing Conditions – Forsythe NWR is located in Galloway Township and receives law enforcement services from Galloway Township Police Department and the New Jersey State Police. Emergency services are provided by the Oceanville and Bayview Volunteer Fire Companies. The closest full-service hospital is the Atlanticare Regional Hospital, located approximately 5 miles west of the site.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Development of the proposed project will increase the number of staff at the facility by about 22 people. Although the relocation of some operations personnel may occur, local fire, police, and medical services would not be noticeably affected.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts on community services in the Galloway Township area.

3.3.4 Cultural and Historical Resources

Conditions presented in the 2004 CCP include a brief section listed as "Archeological and Historic Environment." Except for a handful of studies prior to refuge construction projects, Forsythe NWR lands have not been comprehensively surveyed for archaeological sites. Prehistoric site potential is high, but site discovery is complicated by major changes in sea level over the last 12,000 years. Much of the refuge is tidal marsh, and archaeological sites in this setting are especially difficult to locate and study. However, the upland portions of the refuge have generally high potential for prehistoric sites, as much of this land adjoins wetland resources used by their inhabitants.

Existing Conditions – Previous disturbance from past refuge development exists within the Phase 1 portion of this proposed project. Any previously intact archaeological remains would have

been compromised by past refuge construction at this location. The footprint of the former refuge maintenance facility and associated infrastructure followed by subsequent demolition significantly altered the landscape. The 3-phase power line will be buried within 12 feet of and parallel to Lily Lake Road. It will then cross over a portion of Great Creek Road and link to the existing pole in the visitor parking area (Figure 2). The site of the proposed septic system and associated lines lies outside of the previously disturbed area. Therefore, the Service, in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), will conduct a Phase I archaeological inventory of the undisturbed portion of Phase 1 and Phase 2 construction. The Service will consult with the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), federally recognized tribes, and interested parties as necessary.

Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures – No known significant historic properties or cultural resources exist within the project area. No intact resources are expected within the majority of the Phase 1 construction. The Service will undertake a systematic archaeological survey of the undisturbed portions of this project prior to any ground disturbing actions. In the event that cultural remains are recovered during the survey, the Service will coordinate with the SHPO and other stakeholders to determine significance. Should a historic property be determined significant, all potential alternative and or mitigation measures will be discussed and consulted on with stakeholders. Based on past excavation and grading activities at the site, it is unlikely the project will impact cultural resources. In the event that undocumented cultural resources are encountered during ground-disturbing activities at the site, all work in the immediate area of the discovery should cease and a qualified archaeologist and New Jersey SHPO would be notified. The work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery area would not resume until the resource has been documented and evaluated for cultural significance.

Regarding demolition of the existing headquarters building, which was constructed in the early 1980s, no new ground disturbance will result from this action and therefore no potential to effect historic properties will occur.

Selection of the No Action Alternative would not impact cultural or historic resources in the area.

3.3.5 Economic Activity

Forsythe NWR receives over 250,000 visitors per year. The predominant public uses of the refuge are wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hunting, fishing, and environmental education and interpretation. The dikes surrounding the impoundments near the headquarters serve as an 8-mile auto tour for the public. This area accounts for about one-half of visitors. The impoundment area is renowned as one of the premier birding sites in North America. A recent study shows that refuge visitors annually add about $4.08 million to the local economy (USFWS 2013). Wildlife-dependent public use at the refuge is consistent with the primary industry for the region–tourism. The New Jersey shore has long been a major tourist destination. Boating, fishing, hunting, shellfishing, and beach-related pursuits are typical for tourists.

Existing Conditions – The 2014 population of Atlantic County was 275,209, with an unemployment rate of 10.6 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). The top three industry segments by number employed are the leisure/hospitality, education/health services, and retail trade. In 2014, the Service paid $28,409 for payment in lieu of taxes to Galloway Township.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Temporary jobs will be created at the refuge during construction of the proposed project. Additional maintenance activities associated with the new administration building project area would be minimal and would not be expected to require additional employees at the site. Some additional contracted services such as cleaning and maintenance of heating/cooling systems are anticipated. However, no significant and/or long-term impacts on the economic activity in the area would result from the proposed project.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no new impacts on economic activity in the area.

3.3.6 Floodplains and Wetlands

There are no intermittent and/or perennial streams located within the proposed administration building project boundaries (USEPA 2010).

Existing Conditions – According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency website, no portion of the proposed project area is within the 100-year floodplain.

Potential Environmental Impacts – No portions of the proposed project area is mapped within the 100-year floodplain.

Landscaping and development practices at Forsythe NWR generally avoid wetlands and maintain vegetative buffers around these areas. Ground disturbance at the project area will be limited, and BMPs will be implemented during construction to minimize soil erosion and runoff.

All proposed development is outside the 300-foot buffer from coastal wetlands set by NJDEP Coastal Zone Management and the 150-foot transition area from freshwater wetlands set by NJDEP Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules.

Adverse impacts to floodplains and wetlands are not anticipated as a result of the proposed action or the No Action Alternative.

3.3.7 Geology and Soils

The Forsythe NWR is within the Outer Coastal Plain, which consists of sedimentary deposits dating from the tertiary period. Elevations on the refuge range up to 50 feet above mean sea level. Topography is nearly level to gently sloping. Uplands slope gradually to a wide band of salt marsh to shallow bays. Major soil series in this area of the refuge are Tidal Marsh-Coastal Beach association and Downer-Hammonton-Sassafras association (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2015). Geotechnical work was conducted at the site in July 2015. Existing soils are compatible with the proposed development.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Minor, long-term impacts to the surficial soils will occur as a result of the proposed project. Due to the relatively small footprint required for the proposed development, there will be minimal disturbance associated with grading and construction for the project. During site development, appropriate BMPs will be implemented as required by applicable Federal, State, and local rules and regulations, to minimize the potential for soil loss and subsequent water quality impacts from construction activities. The majority of displaced top soils will be reused at the building site, as they are useful in landscaping applications.

Minimal impacts to the geology of the site are expected to occur as a result of excavations into the shallow sub-soils for foundations and/or footings. Use of drilling and trenching equipment may result in localized soil compaction and mixing of the soil horizon. However, given the localized nature of these disturbances, potential impacts from such activities on geology and soils are expected to be minimal.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts on the geology or soils of the area.

3.3.8 Land Use and Real Property

The proposed administration building site is located entirely within the boundaries of Forsythe NWR. The site is primarily a multiple-use, open-space field surrounded by parking lots and a wooded area allowing birdwatching, outdoor skills training, and recreational opportunities. Land use in the surrounding areas consists of residential development, wetlands, and forested areas.

Potential Environmental Impacts – No transfer of ownership is required for the development of the project area. The proposed action is contained within the boundaries of the existing refuge, and would have no impact on land use, property values, or tax revenues. Demolition of the existing headquarters building would occur shortly after completion of the new administrative building. The site will be leveled to grade and all materials will be recycled or hauled to the local solid waste disposal site, as per State regulations. The proposed development plans are consistent with the current uses of refuge operations.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to land use or real property.

3.3.9 Resident Population

Existing Conditions – The proposed development of the project area is within the boundaries of the existing refuge. These areas currently consist of a grassland field, VIC, and parking lots surrounded by forested areas. There are no residences and/or occupants in these areas. There are currently 11 full-time employees working at the refuge.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Under the Proposed Alternative, no impacts to the resident population of the area are expected. Short-term, temporary jobs may be created during the construction phases of the proposed project, but there will only be limited opportunities to create permanent jobs, as the general maintenance and operations of these areas likely will be conducted by existing refuge staff or contracted. The new facility will add approximately 22

full-time Service employees to the building site. No noticeable changes to the neighborhood makeup and/or demographic characteristics of the area are expected as a result of the proposed project.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to the resident population in the area.

3.3.10 Solid and Hazardous Waste

The Atlantic County Utilities Authority operates a transfer station for refuse disposal approximately 7 miles from the site. Currently, the refuge utilizes a dumpster for solid waste disposal. There is no solid and/or hazardous waste present at the proposed administration building site and a discussion of hazardous waste sites, hazards, or other nuisances is not included here.

Existing Conditions – No generation of hazardous waste is currently occurring at the proposed project area. Solid waste is generated at the existing headquarters and VIC, and disposed of in dumpsters located outside the maintenance yard gate.

A database search of information published by the State and Federal regulatory agencies was completed for the site and adjacent and surrounding properties. It should be noted that regulatory listings are limited and include only those sites that are known to the regulatory agencies at the time of publication to be contaminated, regulated, or in the process of evaluation; and within the specified search radius.

Potential Environmental Impacts – No impacts to solid and/or hazardous wastes would be expected at the proposed project area. Although the generation of solid waste will occur at the proposed administration building, this type of waste is currently being generated at the existing administration building and at existing offices housing the NJFO and OLE. No significant changes in current acceptable waste disposal practices are expected. The generation of hazardous waste is not expected to occur as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed administration building. As a part of the demolition process of the current refuge office, the site will be evaluated for hazardous waste or asbestos prior to demolition. As the site was constructed in the early 1980s, generation of waste other than typical solid waste that can be placed in a State-regulated dumping site (or recycled) is not anticipated.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no new impacts related to solid and hazardous waste generation or disposal at the site.

3.3.11 Transportation

Existing Conditions – Forsythe NWR is located approximately 3 miles east of the town center of Galloway, New Jersey, with the main entrance at the east end of Great Creek Road. The proposed project area is located within the boundaries of the existing refuge with access from maintained gravel and paved roads. No additional access points are required or planned for the proposed project.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Under the preferred alternative, a minor, short-term increase in traffic along Great Creek Road, and/or roadways internal to the existing refuge, may occur due to the additional workers employed at the site during construction. Minimal impacts to transportation and/or parking are expected to occur as a result of the operation of the proposed project. The addition of 22 new employees at the site will increase traffic slightly. Approximately 24 parking areas will be added to the site during Phase 2.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to transportation and/or parking.

3.3.12 Utilities

The use of an on-site well is considered the most practical method of obtaining water for the project as there is no public water available nearby and on-site wells are currently used for the rest of the facility. No irrigation system is planned for the proposed building site. The site was identified within a service area for electricity with Atlantic City Electric. However, the project calls for use of a heating and air conditioning system that requires a 3-phase power supply, which will be installed as a part of the Proposed Action.

Existing Conditions – The majority of the proposed project area is currently developed with lighting, parking lots, VIC, and the existing Forsythe NWR headquarters building. The following utility providers currently service the existing refuge facility:

Electricity: Atlantic City Electric
Water: Refuge wells
Sewage: On-site Septic System
Solid Waste: Waste Management
Fuel Oil: Pomona Oil
Propane: Suburban Propane
Phone/Internet: Comcast and Verizon

Potential Environmental Impacts – The refuge is expected to continue using existing utility providers and minimal changes in utility use would occur as a result of the proposed project. Installation of an underground 3-phase power line running along Lily Lake Road will be required (additional information provided in Section 3.3.13). Construction of the proposed administration building will require the installation of a new septic system.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts on utilities at Forsythe Refuge.

3.3.13 Vegetation and Wildlife

Conditions presented as a part of the development of the refuge CCP include a detailed discussion of vegetation and wildlife known to occur at the proposed administrative building site. The site is mostly mowed turf bordered by existing buildings, parking lots, and trees, primarily eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*).

A purple martin (*Progne subis*) gourd complex is adjacent to the proposed building site. Purple martins are habituated to nest in areas near human habitation. No threatened or endangered species were reported within the project area.

Existing Conditions – Forsythe NWR lies within the Outer Coastal Plain. Much of this region is a mosaic of coastal wetlands, coastal forests, cedar swamps, and pine barrens. Forested habitat surrounds the project area.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Minor impacts are expected to vegetation as a result of the proposed project. A total of approximately 0.60 acres of existing trees and 0.05 acres of existing turf will be cleared for the development of the proposed administration building complex, including clearing of about 12 feet of vegetation along 900 feet of Lily Lake Road for installation of a buried 3-phase power line. The remainder of the 3-phase line will be buried under Great Creek Road, the existing visitor parking area, and under the Phase 1 and 2 portions of the construction project (see Figure 2). Primary tree species to be cleared in the wooded area include pitch pine, eastern red cedar, and American holly (*Ilex opaca*). Understory plants include bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), southern red oak (*Quercus falcata*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), grape (*Vita* sp.), and non-native plants such as Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) and privet (*Ligustrum* sp.).

Temporary, minor impacts to wildlife may be expected during the construction phase of the project. Primarily, these disruptions will only require movement to undisturbed areas. Several of the purple martin gourds will be moved prior to the nesting season to reduce conflicts with construction equipment and the new administration building. Several other nest boxes used by tree swallows will be removed from the site prior to construction and occupation by birds.

The Service has conducted an Intra-Service Section 7 consultation and determined that there will be "no effect" on red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), American chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*), Knieskern's beaked-rush (*Rhynchospora knieskernii*), and swamp pink (*Helonia bullata*), as those species are not located at the project site. The project "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and/or its habitat. To avoid direct impacts to bats, all habitat disturbance/tree removal will occur between October 1 and March 31 of any year. No trees with conspicuous exfoliating bark will be cut (none are present at the site), and all work will be conducted during daylight hours to avoid disturbance to foraging bats. Demolition of the existing headquarters building will occur in winter when long-eared bats are no longer active. Refuge biologists inspected the existing building in September 2015. No bat activity was observed.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to vegetation or wildlife.

3.3.14 Water Resources

Conditions presented in the 2004 CCP include a brief discussion of the "Hydrology" (surface-water and groundwater) at Forsythe NWR. No lakes, ponds, intermittent/perennial streams, or other impoundments were identified on the site. Measures to control soil erosion and

sedimentation would be implemented during the construction of the proposed building site. It was estimated that runoff rates would remain similar to existing conditions. Groundwater was encountered 19 feet below ground surface during geotechnical investigations at the proposed building site.

Existing Conditions – No surface water resources, such as streams, rivers, and ponds are located in the proposed project area. No water wells (except for the well currently supplying water to the existing buildings) are present.

Potential Environmental Impacts – Development of the proposed administration building at the project area will not significantly affect surface and/or groundwater resources. The project will require more groundwater to support an additional 22 full-time employees, but this increase is considered insignificant in comparison with the size and volume of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. During site development, appropriate BMPs will be implemented as required by applicable Federal, State, and local rules and regulations, to minimize potential water quality impacts from construction activities.

Sediment will be contained on-site, if possible, and will not be directly discharged into surface waters or drainages.

Under the Proposed and No Action Alternative, impacts to water resources are not anticipated.

3.3.15 Environmental Justice/Potential for Generating Controversy

Existing Conditions – EO 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) requires that Federal projects consider whether the project would have an adverse effect on minority or low income populations.

According to the U.S. Census, the population of Atlantic County in 2014 was estimated at 275,209, with approximately 66 percent of the total population employed in non-agricultural industries. The plan indicated a 10.6 percent unemployment rate for the county in 2014, and summarized that in 2014, 27.8 percent of the employed population worked in the "Arts, entertainment, and recreation" sectors (likely casino-related employment in Atlantic City), 21.7 percent in the "educational services and health care" sector, and 10.6 percent in retail trade. Commerce within close proximity to the proposed administration building site was primarily identified as retail services (stores, restaurants, etc.). The total expected construction cost for the project is $6.9 million.

Potential Environmental Impacts – The proposed project area is located within the boundaries of the refuge, currently in operation. Based on the nature of the development, the proposed action at the refuge will have no effect on the local population and will not disproportionately affect minority and/or low-income populations. A very low potential for controversy is expected associated with the proposed project.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts on minority and/or low income populations in the refuge area.

3.3.16 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are those impacts that result from the incremental impact of an action added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions in the future. The NEPA requires that Federal projects undergoing NEPA analysis consider cumulative impacts. The project under consideration in this draft EA involves the construction of a new administration building totaling approximately 12,525 square feet on approximately 7 acres within the boundaries of the existing refuge. No wetlands, cultural resources, or protected species will be impacted by the proposed development. Other environmental criteria evaluated resulted in a finding of minimal, short-term effects or no effects.

The proposed project will require the conversion of approximately 0.05 acres of turf and 0.50 acres of woodland within the approximately 47,000-acre refuge. Favorable impacts focus on the park-like setting of a refuge providing an aesthetically pleasing facility representing a long-term preservation of the natural environment and land use compatible with the rural character of the area. Adverse impacts include the minor loss of turf area, as well as site preparation activities with a potential for short-term soil erosion issues associated with the development of the property.

The areas surrounding the refuge primarily consist of undeveloped woodlands, associated with the neighboring rural residential properties; with the communities of Oceanville and Galloway adjacent to the refuge. Evaluation of potential environmental impacts of the alternatives in this draft EA included consideration of the effects of other actions or projects planned in close proximity to the refuge. Given the identified land use in the areas surrounding the refuge, as well as the limited affected acreage for the proposed project, the loss of low-quality habitat is expected to be negligible at both a local and regional level as a result of the development and operation of the new administration building.

3.3.17 Effects Summary

Definitions of Impacts:
Beneficial ("+"): No adverse effect anticipated. Effect would provide a favorable, advantageous, and/or improved condition.

Minimal ("-"): Temporary or minor destruction, disruption, violation of standards, disturbance, or surpassing of capability of the attribute. This effect can be minimized through standard design, construction or operational procedures.

Moderate ("- -"): Considerable destruction, disruption, violation of standards incompatibility, disturbance, or surpassing of capability of the attribute. However, the effect can be minimized through further study and mitigation.

Severe ("- - -"): Complete destruction, disruption, violation of standards, incompatibility, disturbance, or surpassing capability of the attribute under consideration.

No Significant Effect ("0"): No effect anticipated.

Environmental Factors	Alternative A	Alternative B
Aesthetics	0	0
Air Quality	0	-
Community Services	0	0
Cultural Resources	0	0
Economic Activity	0	0
Floodplains or Wetlands	0	0
Geology and Soils	0	-
Hydrology and Water Quality	0	-
Land Use	0	0
Noise	0	-
Potential for Generating Substantial Controversy	0	0
Real Property	0	0
Resident Population	0	0
Solid / Hazardous Waste	0	0
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	0	-
Utilities	0	+
Vegetation and Wildlife	0	-

+ = Beneficial Effect
- = Minimal Effect
-- = Moderate Effect
--- = Severe Effect
0 = No Significant Effect

3.3.18 Conclusion

Based on the information gathered during preparation of the EA, the Proposed Action (Alternative B) would not result in significant impacts to the environment.

3.4 List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BMPs: best management practices
CCP: Comprehensive Conservation Plan
CEQ: Council on Environmental Quality
CFR: Code of Federal Regulations
EA: Environmental Assessment
EO: Executive Order
EISA: Energy Independence Study Act
FONSI: Finding of No Significant Impact
NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act
SHPO: State Historic Preservation Office

USEPA: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Service: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USFWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

4.0 AGENCY COORDINATION/CONTACT LIST

The following agencies and/or persons were contacted during the preparation of this EA:

Federal Agencies
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, New Jersey Field Office

State Agencies
New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection – Historic Preservation Office, Coastal Management Program, Division of Water Supply and Geoscience, Division of Water Quality

Local Agencies
Atlantic County Division of Public Health
Galloway Township
Oceanville Volunteer Fire Department
Bayview Volunteer Fire Department

5.0 REFERENCES

Council on Environmental Quality, Environmental Justice: Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act, Executive Office of the President, Washington, DC, December 10, 1997. 40 pp.

U.S. Census Bureau 2014, American Fact-finder website (http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml), accessed July 2015. Data Sets, Quick Tables were reviewed for national, New Jersey, Atlantic County, and census information.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service. 2015. Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey website (http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm), accessed July 2015.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2010. Enviromapper for Water GIS Mapping Tool. Available at: (http://map24.epa.gov/emr/Default.aspx?clearSessionState=true), accessed July 2015.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2015. The Green Book Nonattainment Areas for Criteria Pollutants. Available at: (http://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/), accessed September 2015.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2004. Comprehensive Conservation Plan, prepared by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, E.B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. 140 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. Environmental Action Memorandum, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Final Environmental Assessment. E.B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. 61 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2013. Banking on Nature. The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation. 365 pp.

6.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

Prepared by:
Eric Schrading (Field Supervisor, New Jersey Field Office) served as the EA preparer, which included field services, providing direction, and technical review of the report. Mr. Schrading is the Field Supervisor for the Service, NJFO, Pleasantville, New Jersey, and has over 21 years of experience in preparing environmental assessment documents.

Virginia Rettig (Edwin B. Forsythe NWR) served as reviewer, which included providing technical information related to the site and construction process. Ms. Rettig is the Refuge Manager of Forsythe NWR.

Figure 1. Vicinity Map of the Proposed Administration Building

Figure 2. Current Site Plan Map

Figure 3. Project Location Map

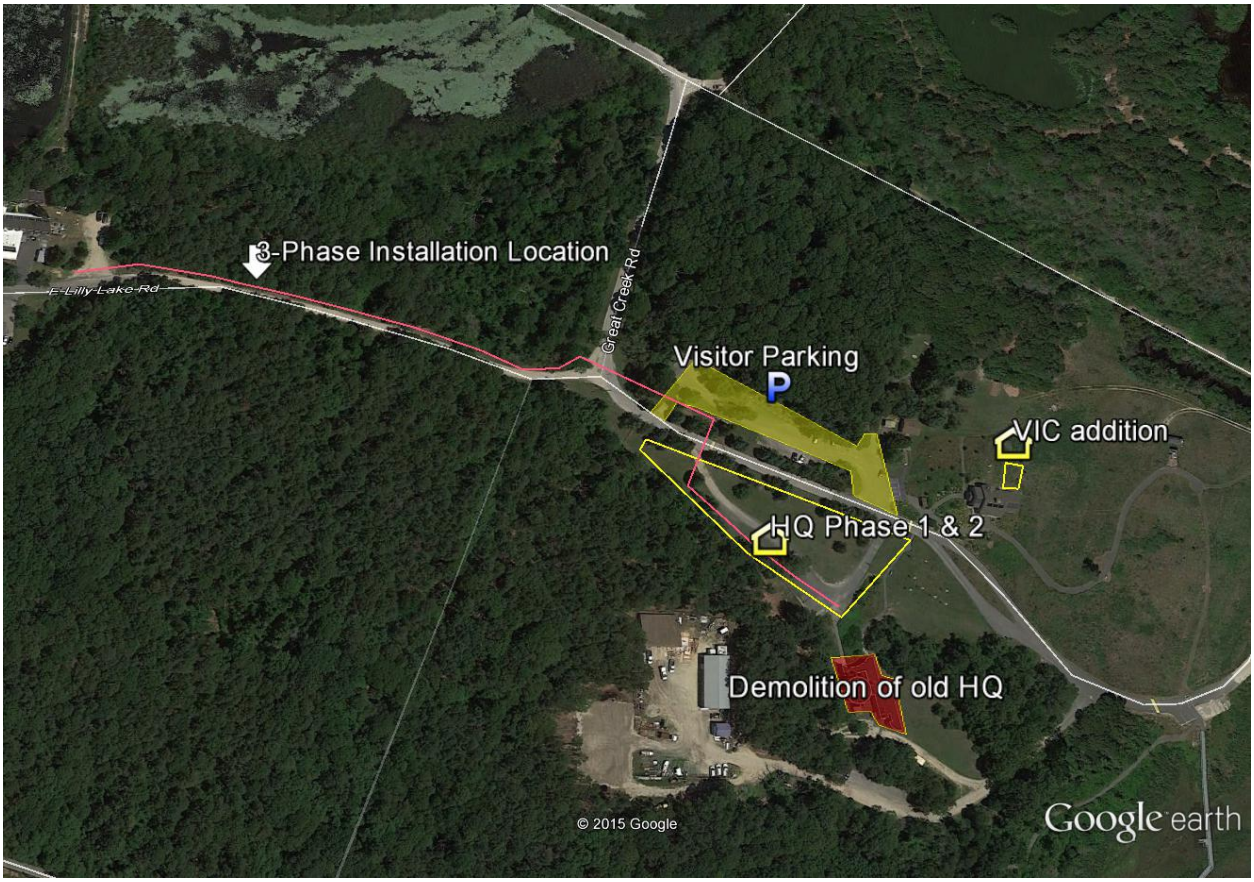


Figure 4. Site Plan of the Proposed Administration Building

Figure 5. Floor Plan for the Proposed Administration Building – Phase 1

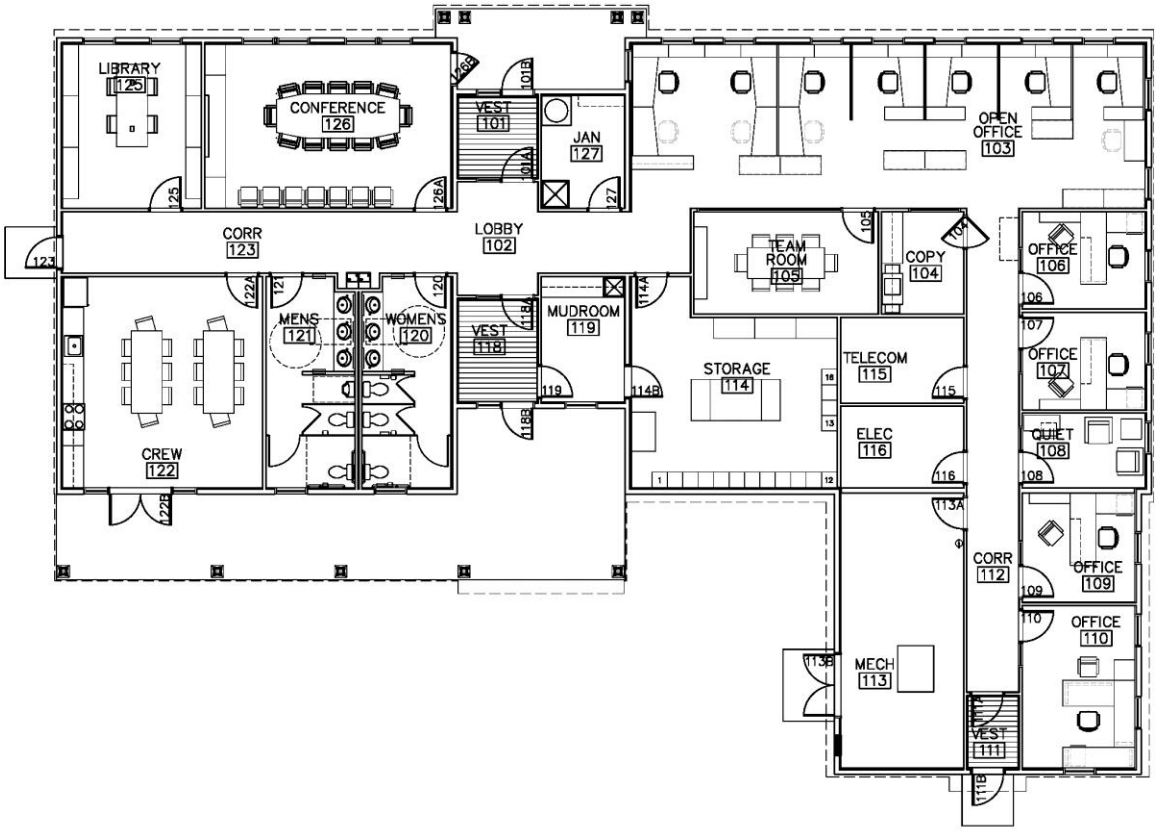


Figure 6. Floor Plan for the Proposed Administration Building – Phase 2

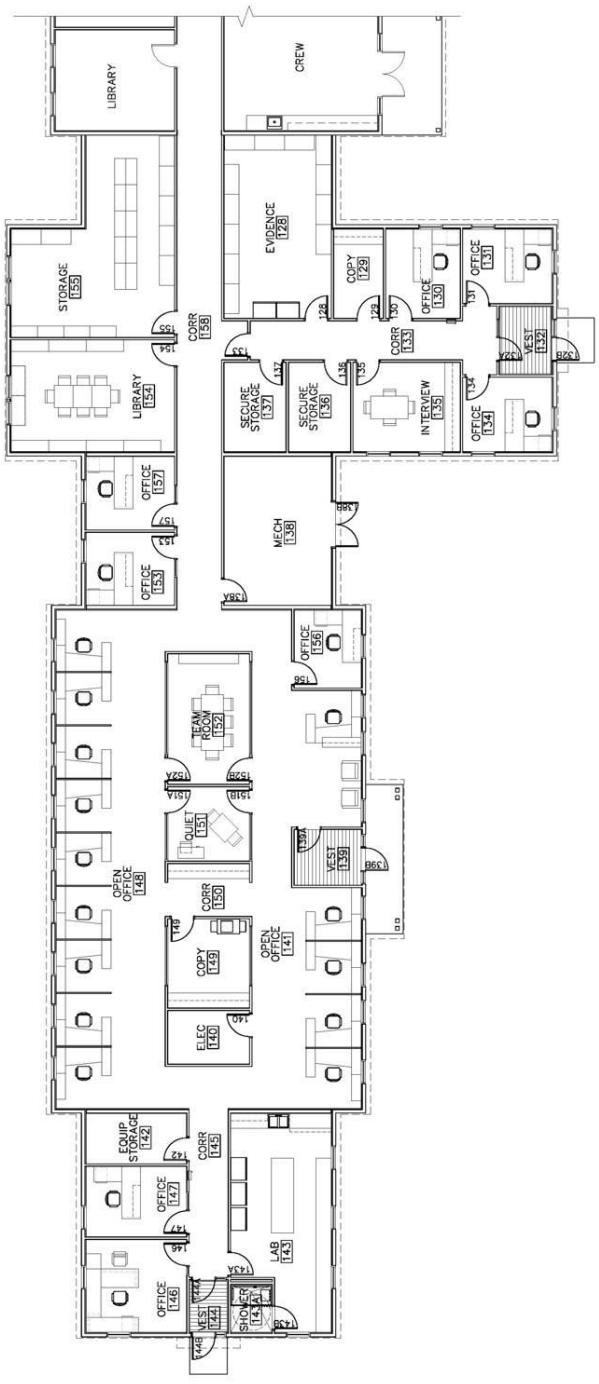
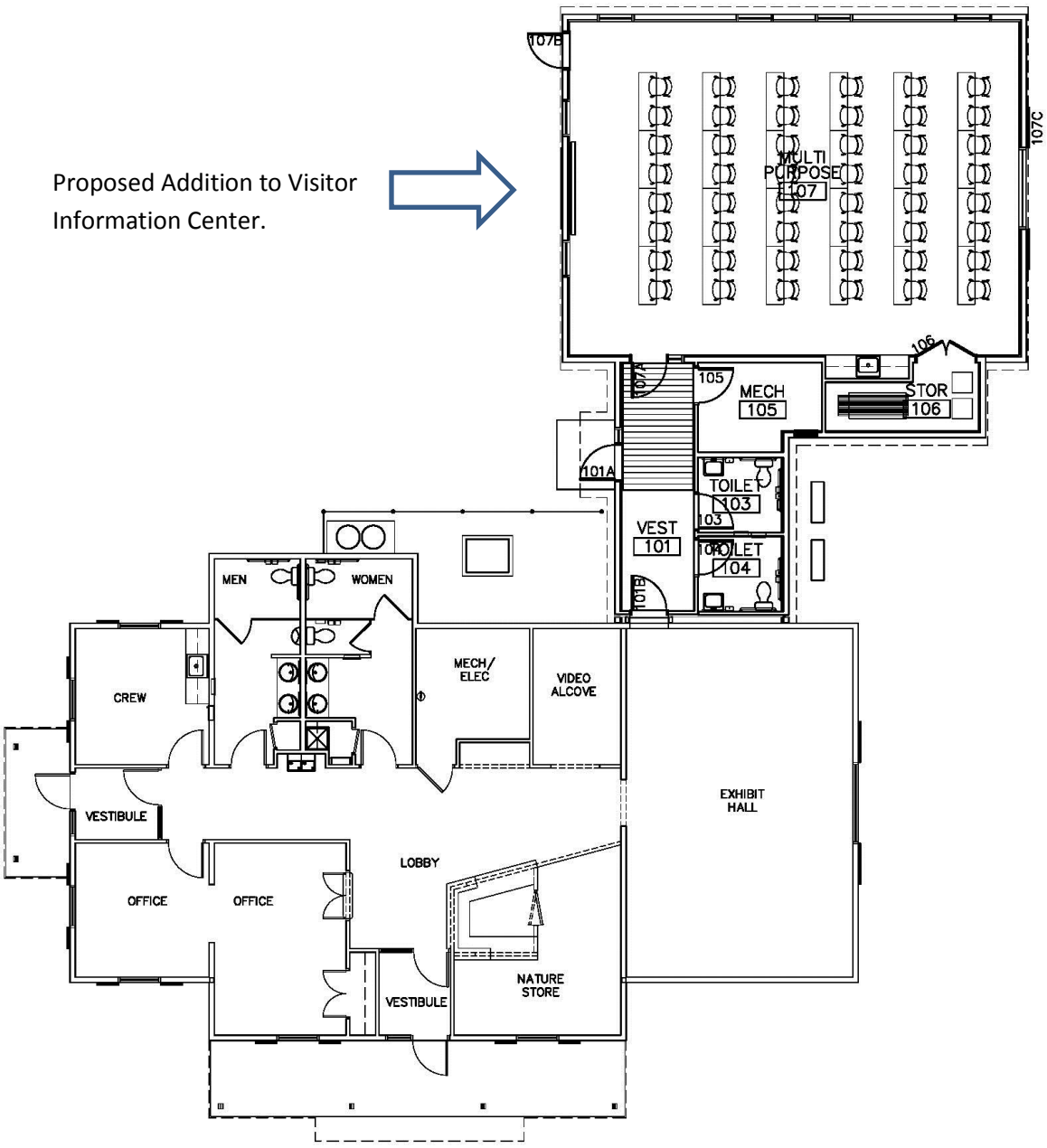


Figure 7. Floor Plan for the Proposed Administration Building – Phase 1 (Multipurpose Room Addition onto Visitor Information Center)



INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

Project Name:	EBF New Headquarters Building Construction Project	**Originating Person:**	Virginia Rettig
Townships:	Galloway	**Telephone Number:**	609-652-1665
County:	Atlantic	**Email Address:**	Virginia_rettig@fws.gov
Date:	10/15/15		

Distance to nearest town: Adjacent to Galloway Township

I. **Region:** 5

II. **Service Activity (Program):** NWRS, Edwin B. Forsythe NWR

III. **Pertinent Species and Habitat:**

A. Listed species and/or their critical habitat within the action area:
Red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), American chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*), Knieskern's beaked-rush (*Rhynchospora knieskernii*), Swamp pink (*Helonias bullata*), Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

B. Proposed species and/or proposed critical habitat within the action area:
None

C. Candidate species within the action area:
Hirst brothers' panic grass (*Dichanthelium (=panicum) hirstii*)

D. Include species/habitat occurrences on a map.
We have attached the Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) trust resources list, which includes a map and a list of the species that occur in the area. All work will take place on Edwin B. Forsythe NWR (Refuge). An additional map is included in section VIII.

IV. **Description of proposed action (attach additional pages as needed):**
Construction of the Refuge's new headquarters building is scheduled to begin in winter 2015/spring 2016. Portions of a 6.43 acre area will be cleared for the building and its associated infrastructure. More than 20 trees, primarily pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), Eastern red-cedar (*Juniperus virginia*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), and white oak (*Quercus alba*), will be removed from the work area. No shagbark hickories (*Carya ovata*) or any trees with conspicuous exfoliating bark will be cut. The project also involves expansion of the Refuge's Visitor Information Center and the installation of a below-ground 3-phase power line. The power line will parallel Lily Lake Road for about 900 feet, cross (underground) Great Creek Road and then meet up with a power pole in the existing visitor parking lot. It will then run across the construction area for the new building

[redacted]

parking area (see map). The area to be disturbed is about 5 feet in width. The existing parking areas will be rehabilitated and paved. Additionally, the old headquarters building will be demolished. Work is expected to be complete by the end of 2017.

V. Determination of effects:

A. Explanation of effects of the action on species and critical habitats in items III. A, B, and C (attach additional pages as needed):

Red knots migrate through nearby coastal wetlands east of the proposed work area but do not utilize the upland area where work will occur.

According to IPaC, American chaffseed has been found in Burlington County, NJ. The work area is in Atlantic County and should not affect any American chaffseed populations.

Knieskern's beaked-rush is an obligate wetland species, but this work will not occur in any wetlands. Additionally, Knieskern's beaked-rush is not known to exist on this part of the refuge.

Swamp pink and swamp pink habitat have not been documented on this part of the refuge, so this work will not impact this species.

The action area provides habitat to the northern long-eared bat, but the area has a history of daily disturbance from refuge staff and visitors for more than 70 years. Most of the trees slated to be removed are pitch pines and red cedars. Trees will be removed during the inactive season (October 1 - March 31).

Hirst brothers' panic grass is not known to exist on the refuge, so this work will have no effect on this species.

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects:

Swamp pink, American chaffseed, Knieskern's beaked-rush, and Hirst brothers' panic grass are not known to exist on this work site. However, we will conduct surveys for rare/endangered plants prior to construction.

Red knots do not occur where the work will be conducted.

All precautions will be taken to minimize disturbance to Northern long-eared bats. The trees to be cut within the work area are primarily pitch pine, Eastern red-cedar, red oak, and white oak. Trees will be removed prior to April 1 or after September 30. No shagbark hickories or any trees with conspicuous exfoliating bark will be cut. Construction activities will be conducted outside of the active season. Work will be performed during

daylight hours and will not impact foraging bats. As an added precaution, we will use a 4-lb hammer to strike tree trunks before cutting to frighten away any bats that may be using the trees in the work area as roosts during migration.

The old headquarters building will be demolished in the winter when long-eared bats are no longer active. Because the structure may provide a suitable roost to a maternity colony, biologists inspected the building for indicators of bat presence. No indicators of bat presence were found. Biologists also conducted emergence surveys of potential roosting entry/exit points that could not be inspected. No bats were observed during emergence surveys. Thus, it has been determined that a northern long-eared bat colony is not actively using the structure.

Construction of the 3-phase power line will occur in winter 2015/2016.

VI. Effect determination and response requested: [* = optional]

A. Listed species/designated critical habitat:

Determination	**Response requested**
no effect/no adverse modification (species: red knot, American chaffseed, Knieskern's beaked-rush, swamp pink)	_X_ Concurrence
may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect species/adversely modify critical habitat (species: northern long-eared bat,)	_X_ *Concurrence
may affect, and is likely to adversely affect species/adversely modify critical habitat (species:_____)	____ Formal Consultation

B. Proposed species/proposed critical habitat:

Determination	**Response requested**
no effect on proposed species/no adverse modification of proposed critical habitat (species:_____)	____ *Concurrence
is likely to jeopardize proposed species/	

adversely modify proposed critical habitat
(species:_____) ____ Conference

C. Candidate species:

Determination	**Response requested**
no effect (species: Hirst brothers' panic grass)	X *Concurrence
is likely to jeopardize candidate species (species:_____)	____ Conference

Virginia Petty
Project Biologist/Supervisor (Requestor)

10-21-15
Date

VII. Reviewing ESFO Evaluation:

A. Concurrence X **Nonconcurrence**_____

B. Formal consultation required_____

C. Conference required_____

D. Informal conference required_____

E. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

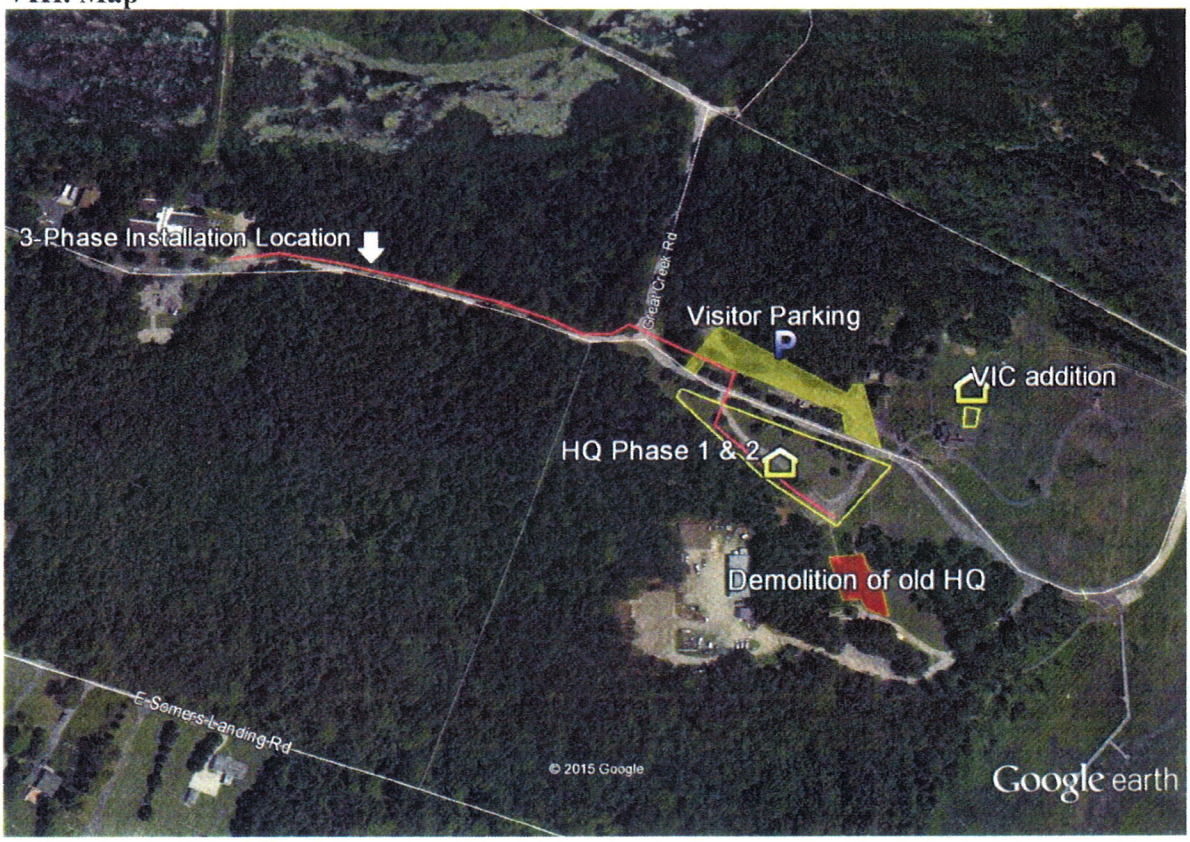
Jeremy Mathson
Endangered Species Biologist (Reviewer),
New Jersey Field Office

10-21-15
Date

Assistant Supervisor, New Jersey Field Office

21 Oct 15
Date

VIII. Map



See attached IPaC printout for an additional map.

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact

COLLOCATION OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge
September 2015

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) proposes to site and construct a building that will house the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Forsythe NWR, refuge) headquarters, the New Jersey Field Office (NJFO) for Ecological Services, and the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) in Galloway Township, Atlantic County, New Jersey. Specific goals of the project are to: (1) meet needs identified in the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Executive Order 13423, and Regional Director's Order No. 06-02 on Collocation for office space; (2) locate the facility near the primary visitation area of Forsythe NWR; (3) provide a meeting space as an addition to the existing Visitor Information Center (VIC); and (4) minimize impacts to wildlife habitat and the environment.

The draft Environmental Assessment (EA), dated xxxxxx, 2015, evaluated two alternatives. The Proposed Action (Alternative B) was found to meet the project goals and objectives by developing a building and VIC addition that will provide office and meeting space to facilitate the operations of Forsythe NWR, the NJFO, and the OLE. The preferred alternative will incorporate solar panels and native vegetation as landscaping, and was found to be compliant with all relevant permits and authorizations. The Council of Environmental Quality regulations on implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require a "No Action" alternative. The No Action alternative is generally either a "no change" or "do nothing" alternative to the Proposed Action. In this case, the No Action alternative (Alternative A) would retain the existing, dilapidated Forsythe NWR office, and require NJFO and OLE to continue paying a combined $200,000/year in rent for their administrative offices. The No Action alternative would not fulfill the purpose and need of the project.

The Collocation of Administration Building Project EA was released for a 30-day public review in xxxxxx 2015. A public meeting was held at the refuge headquarters building and was attended by [*insert relevant information here*]. After reviewing the proposed management actions, and considering all public comments and our responses to them, I have determined that the analysis in the EA is sufficient to support my findings. I am selecting the Proposed Action as presented in the EA to implement construction of a new administration building and VIC addition at Forsythe NWR. I find that there are no significant impacts associated with this project. The project has incorporated design techniques and methodologies to avoid and minimize potential impacts. The project will provide much needed, long-term space for about 34 full-time employees in addition to interns, volunteers, and temporary employees. This project will minimize environmental impacts by conducting construction on previously impacted sites. The project will ensure the greatest potential for providing quality customer service to visitors.

I find that implementation of the Proposed Action will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA, and adheres to all legal mandates and Service policies. As such, I have concluded that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and this Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate and warranted.

_____ _____

Scott B. Kahan, Regional Chief Date
National Wildlife Refuge System
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service