

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT: Causeway Bridge Replacement Project

AGENCY: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500-1508), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) policy and procedures (14 CFR Part 1216 Subpart 1216.3), NASA has made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with respect to its proposed Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) Causeway Bridge Replacement Project, Accomack County, Virginia.

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

- Chincoteague Island Library, Chincoteague, Virginia
- Eastern Shore Public Library, Accomack, Virginia

An electronic copy of the Final EA is available online at:

<https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250-WFF/C-BREAs>.

A limited number of copies of the EA may be obtained by contacting the NASA representative at the address or telephone number indicated below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Shari Miller

WFF Center NEPA Manager

NASA Wallops Flight Facility Mailstop: 250.W

Wallops Island, Virginia 23337

e-mail: Shari.A.Miller@nasa.gov

Phone: (757) 824-2327

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

NASA has prepared an EA to analyze potential impacts on the environment from the proposed replacement of the Wallops Island Causeway Bridge over Cat Creek in Accomack County, Virginia. The existing Causeway Bridge was constructed in 1959-1960 and is beyond the end of its anticipated service life. The Proposed Action evaluated by the EA consists of site preparation, construction and removal of construction access, construction of a new bridge parallel to the north side of the existing bridge on a new alignment, relocation of the existing utilities currently attached

the existing bridge to under Cat Creek via horizontal directional drilling or to the new bridge via suspension, demolition of the existing bridge after the new bridge opens, and ongoing maintenance and operations of the new bridge. This EA is tiered from the May 2019 *NASA WFF Site-Wide Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final Site-wide PEIS)*, which is incorporated by reference into the EA.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was a Participating Agency in preparation of the EA due to its role in design and oversight of the Causeway Bridge construction; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Norfolk District, and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) were Cooperating Agencies due to their permitting authorities.

Alternatives Considered

NASA considered construction of a new bridge and construction of a causeway, which were evaluated using screening criteria. Construction of a causeway did not meet screening criteria and was not carried forward for analysis. The EA evaluates in detail one action alternative (the Proposed Action) and the No Action Alternative.

Under the Proposed Action, NASA would construct a new bridge on a new alignment, demolish the existing bridge within 5 years of the new bridge opening, and provide periodic maintenance and repairs over the 75-plus year life of the bridge. Construction methods and bridge design would be determined during the Design-Build process. Under the No Action Alternative, a new bridge would not be constructed, and NASA and its tenants would continue using the existing Causeway Bridge indefinitely, conducting maintenance and rehabilitation of the existing bridge until structural deficiencies necessitate a full closure.

Environmental Analysis

The EA examines the potential effects of the alternatives on physical, biological, and social resources. Resources evaluated in detail include noise; air quality; toxic substances, hazardous and regulated materials, and waste; health and safety; land resources; water resources (surface water, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, coastal zone, sea-level rise and climate change); vegetation; wildlife; special status species; transportation; employment and income; recreation; and archaeological resources. In summary, the EA concludes that potential effects to these resources are primarily negligible to minor and fall within the bounds of analysis in the Final Site-wide PEIS.

Public Involvement

NASA and FHWA initiated coordination with federal, state, and local government agencies in August 2020 to obtain input on the development of the EA.

NASA notified the public of the availability of the Draft EA for review and comment during a 30-day public comment period through advertisements placed in the *Shore Daily News*, the *Eastern Shore News*, and the *Eastern Shore Post*. Federal, state, and local agencies and members of the public were invited to provide written comments on the Draft EA during a comment period from September 12, 2023, through October 11, 2023. The Draft EA was available on the internet in

Adobe® portable document format (pdf) on the project website at: <https://code200-external.gsfc.nasa.gov/250-WFF/C-BREAs>, and hard copies of the EA were available upon request. A public meeting was held on September 20, 2023, at the WFF Visitor Center. Comments on the Draft EA were received from one individual, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, USACE, and Virginia Spaceport Authority. In preparing the Final EA, NASA considered all comments received on the Draft EA. Between publication of the Draft EA and Final EA, the Proposed Action changed to include relocation of the utilities currently attached to the underside of the existing Causeway Bridge. Prior to construction of the proposed new bridge, NASA would either bury the utilities using the horizontal directional drilling method or suspend them from the new bridge. The Final EA includes an evaluation of the potential impacts from relocating the utilities.

The Final EA and FONSI are available for review on the project website. As with the Draft EA, advertisements of the Final EA and FONSI were placed in the *Shore Daily News*, the *Eastern Shore News*, and the *Eastern Shore Post*.

Related Environmental Reviews

While preparing the EA, NASA and FHWA conducted consultations pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.), and Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.). As such, NASA has met its obligations with respect to these statutes in parallel with the development of the EA. The Design-Build contractor will be responsible for permitting pursuant to the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) and Rivers and Harbors Act (33 U.S.C. 401 et seq.).

Conclusion

In accordance with the Final Site-wide PEIS, NASA prepared the WFF Causeway Bridge Replacement Project EA prior to initiating the Proposed Action. Based on the Final EA, NASA has determined that the environmental impacts associated with replacement of the Wallops Island Causeway Bridge over Cat Creek would not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and that these actions are consistent with the Final Site-wide PEIS. Therefore, a new Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

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David L. Pierce
Director, Wallops Flight Facility

Date