



# **Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment**

*Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Association, Inc.  
Proposed Main Hospital Building Relocation  
FEMA DR-4399-FL  
Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida*

*June 2022*



**FEMA**

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region IV  
Atlanta, Georgia**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APE	Area of Potential Effect
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BPM	Best Management Practice
CAA	Clean Air Act
CATEX	Categorical Exclusion
CBIA	Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990
CBRA	Coastal Barrier Resources Act
CCCL	Coastal Construction Control Line
CDBG-DR	Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, & Liability Act of 1980
CF	Cubic Feet
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CLH	Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Association, Inc.
COVID-19	Corona virus disease of 2019
CWA	Clean Water Act
CUP	Central Utility Plant
CZM	Coastal Zone Management
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DEO	Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EA	Environmental Assessment
ED	Emergency Department
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EO	Executive Order
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPDM	ethylene propylene diene terpolymer membrane
ER	Emergency Room
ERP	Environmental Resource Permitting
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FBC	Florida Building Codes
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection

FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FGI	Facility Guidelines Institute
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Maps
FLUCCS	Florida Land Use, Cover and Forms Classification System
FMSF	Florida Master Site File
FPA	Florida Product Approved
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
FWC	Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation
JCP	Joint Coastal Permit
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MSA	Magnussen-Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NE	Northeast
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOA	Notice of Acceptance
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPDES	National Pollution Discharge Elimination System
NPL	National Priorities List
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWFWMD	Northwest Florida Water Management District
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
NWSRS	National Wild and Scenic Rivers System
OFW	Outstanding Florida Waters
ONRW	Outstanding National Resource Waters
OPA	Otherwise Protected Area
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PA	Public Assistance
PCPP	Petroleum Cleanup Participation Program
PL	Public Law
RAO	Rural Areas of Opportunity
REC	Recognized Environmental Condition
REDI	Rural Economic Development Initiative

RHA	Rivers and Harbors Act
SEA	Supplemental Environmental Assessment
SF	Square Foot
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SR	State Road
Stafford Act	Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
TIA	Traffic Impact Assessment
US	United States
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
UST	Underground Storage Tank
VOC	Volatile Organic Compounds
WOTUS	Waters of the United States
WSR	Wild and Scenic River
WSRA	Wild and Scenic River Act

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Michael impacted Florida between October 7, 2018, and October 19, 2018, bringing strong winds, heavy rains, storm surge, and flooding. President Trump signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-4399-DR-FL) on October 9, 2018, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal assistance to the designated areas of Florida (recipient). This assistance is provided pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), and Public Law (PL) 93-288, as amended. Section 406 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Program to repair, restore, and replace state and local government and certain private nonprofit facilities damaged as a result of the event.

The Calhoun-Liberty Hospital Association, Inc. (CLH), the subrecipient, located in Calhoun County, Florida was designated to receive federal assistance for this disaster. The CLH has applied for funding from FEMA under the PA program and intends to demolish their original main hospital, and relocate and reconstruct a new hospital building as a result of damages incurred from FEMA-4399-DR-FL. The new hospital would meet the current Florida Building Code (FBC) (2020) and the Agency for Health Care Administration's Facility Guidelines Institute (FGI) Guidelines for Design and Construction of Hospitals (2018). Hurricane-resistant standards for products and systems that are used in the design to meet the requirement for designated wind zones(s) or designed beyond the designated wind zone(s) in the State of Florida, shall meet either the Miami-Dade Notice of Acceptance (NOA) for products and systems, or the Florida Product Approved (FPA) requirements (**Appendices A and B**).

The original hospital is located at 20370 Northeast (NE) Burns Avenue, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida (GPS Coordinates: 30.458591, -85.050107), and the proposed location for the new upgraded hospital is located at State Road (SR) 71 South, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida (GPS Coordinates: 30.433266, -85.055042).

The existing hospital facility serves four rural north Florida counties (Calhoun, Liberty, Gulf, and Jackson), and is the only hospital for residents of both Calhoun and Liberty County. The facility is currently operating with significantly decreased capacity and limited vital services. Prior to Hurricane Michael, this designated critical access facility operated as a 25-bed full-service hospital. As a result of damages incurred from Hurricane Michael, the hospital has been significantly limited in providing critical care to the community, and currently operates only 10 out of the licensed 25 inpatient beds in accordance with the American Health Care Association compliance requirements. Additionally, the available wraparound medical services are limited to x-ray and labs, and the hospital's emergency department can only support basic life support illnesses and injuries.



The proposed action presented by CLH does not qualify for use of DHS Categorical Exclusion (CATEX) (N6) for federal assistance for the relocation and realignment of structures and facilities because the proposed project activities to relocate the facility to an undeveloped parcel of land, comprising approximately 14.97 acres, is greater than 1.0 acres as described in the CATEX.

In July 2021, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared by Terracon Consultants, Inc. for CLH to satisfy the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements in conjunction with a United States (US) Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program (CDBG-DR) funding grant (**Appendix C**). Based on this EA, CLH issued a statement of finding of no significant impact and notice of intent to request for release of funds for the HUD grant on their proposed action on June 30, 2021. HUD has delegated the environmental review and compliance process to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), and on November 2, 2021, CLH prepared and submitted the final environmental review document package to the Florida DEO. Per 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 1502.21 (1978, to be found as of September 14, 2020, in § 1501.11), relevant environmental planning and historic preservation information and programmatic analyses may be incorporated by reference into NEPA documents by citing the source and summarizing the materials. Therefore, per 40 CFR § 1502.9, FEMA has prepared this Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) analysis to supplement the findings of the HUD EA to satisfy the agency's NEPA requirements.

This draft SEA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the NEPA of 1969, (PL 91-190, as amended), and its implementing regulations at 40 CFR § 1500 to 1508, promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Recent changes to the CEQ regulations (40 CFR § 1500 to 1508) became effective on September 14, 2020; 85 Federal Register 43304-76 (July 16, 2020). As stated in 40 CFR § 1506.13, the new regulations apply to any NEPA process begun after September 14, 2020. The scoping of the HUD EA, and subsequently the scoping of this SEA, substantively commenced prior to that date; therefore, this SEA conforms to the CEQ NEPA implementing regulations that were in place prior to September 14, 2020, and policies issued by the DHS Directive 023-01, Rev 01, and FEMA Directive 108-1.

## **2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The objective of FEMA's PA Grant Program is to assist the community in recovering from the damage caused by natural disasters. The purpose of the action alternatives presented in this SEA is to bring the CLH's main critical access hospital building back into compliance with codes and standards, allowing CLH to continue to provide critical medical care to four rural north Florida counties. The need for this project is to prevent the main hospital building from failing to meet the local building codes, FBC, and the Agency for Health Care Administration's FIG Guidelines for Design and Construction of Hospitals (2018), which in turn would continue to prevent access to emergency care for residents. The hospital serves as the only critical healthcare facility for two of

the counties and portions of the other areas. The facility's ability to remain functional is critical to maintaining access to medical care for the region and the equity of care for everyone in the surrounding community.

In accordance with federal laws and FEMA regulations, the SEA process for a proposed federal action must include an evaluation of alternatives and a discussion of the potential environmental impacts. This SEA was prepared in accordance with FEMA's regulations as required under NEPA. As part of this NEPA review, the requirements of other environmental laws and executive orders (EOs) are addressed.

### **3.0 PROJECT LOCATION AND BACKGROUND**

The site of the original main hospital building is located at 20370 NE Burns Avenue, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida (GPS coordinates: 30.458591, -85.050107). The site is moderately developed, surrounded mostly by residential housing, houses of worship, and small businesses. CLH offers healthcare for residents of all ages in Calhoun, Liberty, Gulf, and Jackson counties. The facility is currently operating 10 of the 25 state-licensed beds, meeting Agency for Health Care Administration's compliance requirements and offers many medical services to the area.

In October 2018, wind-driven rain and flying debris due to Hurricane Michael removed the roof system of the facility, starting from the southern elevation proceeding north, and destroying the mechanical systems as the roofing system delaminated. As a result of the damage, the entire roofing system was compromised, and the heavy rains infiltrated into the structural, electrical and mechanical systems. An ongoing continuous effort was made to get the facility secured through December 2018. CLH first utilized a temporary roofing tarp, and after failing to keep the facility dry, they ultimately installed an ethylene propylene diene terpolymer (EPDM) membrane, which is a more durable synthetic rubber roofing membrane. The temporary EPDM roofing material continues to be held in place with more than 600 sandbags maintained by CLH.

The result of damages to portions of the hospital were so severe that temporary repairs could not meet Agency for Health Care Administration's standards. The pre-existing hospital facility continues to serve the four rural north Florida counties, but the hospital is currently operating under a significantly decreased capacity, limited vital services, and failing temporary repairs.

The current proposed site of the new main hospital building facility is located at SR 71 South, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida (GPS coordinates: 30.433266, -85.055042). The site is an undeveloped wooded parcel of land located immediately east of SR 71. This location is approximately 1.75 miles southwest of the current location. The new proposed location has historically been undeveloped wooded land with no improvements or infrastructure. No work has been started on this project at the time of drafting this SEA.

## **4.0 ALTERNATIVES**

The alternatives considered in addressing the purpose and need stated are the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), the replacement of the hospital at its original location (Alternative 2), and the Preferred Action Alternative (Alternative 3), which includes demolishing the original main hospital building and constructing a new hospital building at an alternate location to meet both Miami-Dade building codes and Agency for Health Care Administration's health codes and standards.

### **4.1 Alternative 1: No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, the CLH's main hospital building facility relocation and upgrade project would not be implemented. The hospital, significantly damaged from Hurricane Michael, would continue to be at risk of failing to meet structural and hospital code requirements. If the hospital facility is not rebuilt, at least two counties and portions of other surrounding areas would lose emergency healthcare access, as this facility is a designated critical access facility. A course of no-action would detrimentally and perpetually impact the ability of the entire region to get access to emergency and necessary medical care.

### **4.2 Alternative 2: Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under the return to pre-disaster conditions alternative, CLH would demolish and reconstruct the existing 23,330 square foot (SF) main hospital facility at the current location at 20370 NE Burns Avenue, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida.

A cost-benefit analysis completed by CLH indicates it would likely be cost prohibitive to demolish the existing facility in-place and attempt to provide critical-access hospital services through the use of temporary facilities at alternate locations while the reconstruction of the permanent facility is completed at the current location. Additionally, the ability to rebuild the facility to meet both building codes and health compliance requirements would necessitate the expansion of the current facility's footprint, which the current property would be unable to meet within the existing boundaries. For example, for CLH to reconstruct the main hospital building back to its pre-disaster condition without relocation, significant expansion of the interior hallways and patient care rooms would be required to meet Agency for Health Care Administration's and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) code compliance. This reconfiguration of the footprint would likely lead to less available patient beds and available critical and routine medical services for the community.

### **4.3 Alternative 3: Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under the preferred alternative, CLH would construct and operate a larger, new main hospital facility on a currently undeveloped parcel of land, comprising of approximately 14.97 acres, at SR

71 South, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida. The new hospital building would be constructed to meet Miami-Dade building codes and standards, ADA requirements, and the Agency for Health Care Administration's health compliance standards.

The complex would consist of the main 25-bed critical access hospital, connected to the Central Utility Plant (CUP) by a covered walkway, helipad, parking, and stormwater management system. The new hospital would meet the FBC and Agency for Health Care Administration's guidelines. The main hospital would be a 2-story, approximately 63,200 SF brick and metal façade building with three covered drop-off areas: one at the main public entrance, one at the Emergency Department (ED) entrance, and one at the ambulance entrance. The CUP would be in close proximity to the main hospital, and would be a 1-story, approximately 10,000 SF brick, concrete, and metal façade consisting of facilities maintenance, receiving, and general storage areas. The helipad would be located near the ambulance entrance to the ED. It would have an approximately 75-foot by 75-foot lit concrete landing pad with a chain linked fence surrounding the perimeter of the safety area, comprising approximately 115-feet by 115-feet. The fence would have two pairs of gates, with one near the ambulance entrance. The helipad would meet all the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidelines, which would include lighting, striping, and a windsock. Turn lanes on SR 71 South would be added to the project for exiting and entering the hospital complex. There would be 147 parking spaces along with 6 ADA-accessible spaces. Exterior site lighting, signage, lighting and sidewalks would be included in the project. The utilities would be underground and would be connected to the existing and new utilities along SR 71 South. A lift station would also be built on the site. Stormwater would be managed by diverting water from the roof by downspouts to underground piping to the retention area. Paving and sitework would be graded to flow towards the built swells and retention pond. The new main hospital building would be a two-story, approximately 63,000 SF facility with an additional 10,000 SF adjacent service building with a larger parking area and helipad (**Appendix D**). Once construction is complete, and the facility is fully operational, CLH intends to demolish the original hospital facility located at 20370 NE Burns Avenue, Blountstown, Calhoun County, Florida.

#### **4.4 Alternatives Considered and Dismissed**

CLH considered four other alternative locations for the new facility. Some of the factors included in the review of those parcels of land included availability, size, environmental conditions, utilities, and proximity to the original main hospital facility. These sites were dismissed as viable alternatives for a variety of reasons, including size, lack of paved road access, lack of pre-existing utilities, and environmental concerns.

Site 1 (parcel ID 29-1N-09-0000-0062-0500) was not chosen because the parcel is too small for the proposed plans. Additionally, there are no existing utilities, no paved road access, and a telecommunications tower is located at the rear of property and could create issues with the proposed helipad. Site 2 (parcel ID 29-1N-08-001-0032-0100) was not chosen because the parcel is also too small and an abnormal shape. There are also potential environmental concerns with the

nearby ponds that are believed to have supported a sawmill and may be contaminated from those past operations. Site 3 (parcel ID 29-1N-08-0001-0032-0500) was not chosen because the parcel is too small; however, it was initially considered as a possible purchase along with Site 2, but the environmental concerns at Site 2 ultimately resulted in this parcel being rejected from consideration. Site 4 (parcel ID 32-1N-08-0000-0043-0101) was not chosen as the parcel contains a large area of potential wetland, potentially creating an environmental concern and potential inability to build on the site.

#### **4.5 Impact Evaluation**

The CEQ notes: “Effects includes ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial” (40 CFR §1508.8).

When possible, quantitative information is provided to establish potential impacts; otherwise, the potential qualitative impacts are evaluated based on the criteria listed in Table 4.5.1 below.

**Table 4.5.1: Impact Significance and Context Evaluation Criteria for Potential Impacts**

Impact Scale	Criteria
None/Negligible	The resource area would not be affected and there would be no impact, OR changes or benefits would either be non-detectable or, if detected, would have effects that would be slight and local. Impacts would be well below regulatory standards, as applicable.
Minor	Changes to the resource would be measurable, but the changes would be small and localized. Impacts or benefits would be within or below regulatory standards, as applicable. Mitigation measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.
Moderate	Changes to the resource would be measurable and have either localized or regional scale impacts/benefits. Impacts would be within or below regulatory standards, but historical conditions would be altered on a short-term basis. Mitigation measures would be necessary, and the measures would reduce any potential adverse effects.
Major	Changes to the resource would be readily measurable and would have substantial consequences/benefits on a local or regional level. Impacts would exceed regulatory standards. Mitigation measures to offset the adverse effects would be required to reduce impacts, though long-term changes to the resource would be expected.

The impact analysis in this SEA evaluates the potential environmental direct and indirect impact of the No Action, return to pre-disaster condition, and Proposed Action alternatives. A summary table of the potential impacts of Alternative 1, 2, and 3 is provided in Table 4.5.2 below.

**Table 4.5.2: Environmental Consequences and Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits by Environmental Resource**

<b>Resource and Resource Type</b>	<b>Environmental Consequence</b>	<b>Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits</b>
Physical Resource:  Geology and Soils, and Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	Not applicable.
Physical Resource:  Air Quality and Clean Air Act (CAA)	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	Construction and equipment-generated fugitive dust would be controlled using standard construction best management practices (BMPs), including watering of exposed surfaces and enclosing or covering stockpiled material. No permitting anticipated.
Physical Resource:  Climate Change	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	Not applicable.
Water Resources:  Clean Water Act (CWA) and Surface Water	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	Use of BMPs during construction to minimize impacts would be required for Alternatives 2 and 3, appropriate permits would be acquired, and guidelines would be followed to minimize stormwater impacts. A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required for Alternatives 2 and 3.

<b>Resource and Resource Type</b>	<b>Environmental Consequence</b>	<b>Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits</b>
Water Resource:  Floodplain Management (EO 11988)	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>No Impact</i>	Not applicable.
Water Resource:  Protection of Wetlands (EO 11990) and Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR)	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	A stormwater management system would be designed for Alternative 3 to satisfy the Florida Stormwater Quality and Quantity standards so that the project would not cause adverse water quantity or offsite flooding impacts, cause or contribute to violations of surface water standards, including any antidegradation provisions, and any special standards for Outstanding Florida Waters (OFW) and Outstanding National Resource Waters (ONRW). The stormwater management system would be permitted through the Florida Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) program.
Water Resource:  Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) and Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA)	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>No Impact</i>	Not applicable.
Water Resource:  Drinking Water and Groundwater	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	Hazardous materials used and hazardous wastes generated during construction would be managed in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations to prevent releases to groundwater.



<b>Resource and Resource Type</b>	<b>Environmental Consequence</b>	<b>Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits</b>
Biological Resource:  Fish and Wildlife	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	Noise generated during construction on site for Alternatives 2 and 3 would be limited to daylight hours to limit the duration of disturbance to wildlife.
Biological Resource:  Vegetation	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Minor Positive Impact – Significant</i>	Vegetative debris generated during construction activities on site for Alternatives 2 and 3 would require authorization from FDEP for any staging and disposal activities.
Biological Resource:  Threatened and Endangered Species	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>No Impact</i>	Not applicable.
Biological Resource:  Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)	No Action Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>No Impact</i>	Not applicable.
Biological Resource:  Magnusson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act (MSA)	No Action Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 3: <i>No Impact</i>	Not applicable.

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
<p>Biological Resource:</p> <p>Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA)</p>	<p>No Action Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i></p> <p>Alternate 2: <i>No Impact</i></p> <p>Alternate 3: <i>No Impact</i></p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Cultural Resource:</p> <p>Historic and Archaeological Resources</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact; No Historic Properties Affected</i></p> <p>Alternative 2: <i>No Impact – Not Significant; No Historic Properties Affected</i></p> <p>Alternative 3: <i>No Impact – Not Significant; No Historic Properties Affected</i></p>	<p>Consultation letters were sent to the Florida State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and nine Tribes with vested interest in Calhoun County, Florida for Alternatives 2 and 3 on February 2, 2022, with the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If human remains or intact archaeological deposits are uncovered, work in the vicinity of the discovery will stop immediately and all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds will be taken. The applicant will ensure that archaeological discoveries are secured in place, that access to the sensitive area is restricted, and that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid further disturbance of the discoveries. The applicant’s contractor will provide immediate notice of such discoveries to the applicant. The applicant shall contact the Florida Division of Historic Resources and FEMA within 24 hours of the discovery. Work in the vicinity of the discovery may not resume until FEMA has completed consultation with SHPO, Tribes, and other consulting parties as necessary. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities; all work shall stop immediately, and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Florida Statutes, Section 872.05.</li> <li>2. Construction vehicles and equipment will be stored onsite during the project</li> </ol>

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
		<p>or at existing access points within the Applicant's right-of-way.</p> <p>3. Any changes to the approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by, the State and FEMA, prior to initiation of any work, for compliance with Section 106.</p> <p>Concurrence letters were received from SHPO, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation has requested the addition of the following condition:</p> <p>1. Any inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources, human remains, and related Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) items may occur, even in areas of existing or prior development. Should this occur, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation requests that all work cease and our office as well as other appropriate agencies be notified immediately.</p>
<p>Socioeconomic Resource:</p> <p>Land Use</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i></p> <p>Alternative 2: <i>No Impact – Not Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i></p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Socioeconomic Resource:</p> <p>Noise</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact - Not Significant</i></p>	<p>Noise generated from construction activities described in Alternatives 2 and 3 would be intermittent, heard only during daytime, and only for the duration of the project activities.</p>

<b>Resource and Resource Type</b>	<b>Environmental Consequence</b>	<b>Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits</b>
<p>Socioeconomic Resource:</p> <p>Transportation and Traffic</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i></p> <p>Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i></p>	<p>For Alternative 3, CLH completed an abbreviated Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), which satisfies the county and Florida Department of Transportation’s (FDOT) requirements for a driveway connection permit.</p>
<p>Socioeconomic Resource:</p> <p>Hazardous Materials/Wastes &amp; Solid Waste</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i></p> <p>Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 3: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i></p>	<p>Alternative 2 would require following proper handling and disposal of contaminated soils associated with the FDEP Petroleum Cleanup Participation Program (PCPP) contamination area.</p> <p>Any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during implementation of the proposed project for Alternatives 2 and 3 would be disposed of and handled in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. Any permits, or authorizations, if required, would be obtained prior to handling and disposal.</p>
<p>Socioeconomic Resource:</p> <p>Occupational Health and Safety</p>	<p>No Action Alternative: <i>Moderate Negative Impact – Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i></p> <p>Alternative 3: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i></p>	<p>To minimize occupational health and safety risks for Alternatives 2 and 3, workers would wear and use appropriate personal protective equipment and follow all applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and procedures.</p> <p>A health and safety plan would be developed and implemented prior to beginning work. Work areas would be clearly marked with appropriate signage and secured against unauthorized entry. Standard construction traffic control measures would be used to protect workers, residents, and the travelling public.</p>

<b>Resource and Resource Type</b>	<b>Environmental Consequence</b>	<b>Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits</b>
Socioeconomic Resource:  Utilities	No Action Alternative: <i>No Impact</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	Not applicable.
Socioeconomic Resource  Environmental Justice (EO 12898), Equity, and Protection of Children	No Action Alternative: <i>Moderate Negative Impact – Significant</i>  Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Significant</i>  Alternative 3: <i>Moderate Positive Impact – Significant</i>	Not applicable.

## 5.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

### 5.1 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

#### 5.1.1 GEOLOGY AND SOILS, AND FARMLAND PROTECTION POLICY ACT (FPPA)

According to the Florida Geological Survey, accessed February 17, 2022, the landform in which the project area is located is considered Gulf coastal lowlands, and the Florida Stratigraphic Geology of the project area is from the Miocene, within the Neogene Period. Per the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey soil data, accessed February 17, 2022, soils underlying the project area include: Robertsdale fine sandy loam with 0% to 2% slope (National Map Unit 11q49), described as flats on marine terraces; Dothan sandy loam (National Map Unit 2ttkf), described as ridges on marine terraces; Dunbar fine sandy loam (National Map Unit 11q3d), described as flood plains on marine terraces; Duplin very fine sandy loam (National Map Unit 11q3f), described as stream terraces on marine terraces; and Pansey sandy loam (National Map Unit 11q47), described as flats on marine terraces.

Map units 2ttkf and 11q3f are classified as prime farmland, map unit 11q49 is classified as prime farmland if drained, map unit 11q3d is classified as prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season, and map unit 11q47 is classified

as farmland of local importance. Prime farmland is defined as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is available for these uses.

The purpose of the FPPA is to “minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses” (7 United States Code (USC) § 4201(b)). For the purpose of FPPA, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land.

Projects are subject to FPPA requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland to non-agricultural use and are provided assistance by a federal agency or directly undertaken by a federal agency. While the NRCS is the agency responsible for ensuring that the FPPA is implemented, the federal agency assisting or undertaking the project must complete an impact rating form to evaluate potential impacts of the project to farmland. The NRCS provides technical support to the federal agency to determine if the area of potential impacts of the project includes farmland, support in completing the impact rating form, and support in developing alternatives to the proposed project that minimize the irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. The federal agency undertaking the project then determines whether and how to move forward, based upon an assessment of the project’s impacts. Projects are subject to FPPA requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland (directly or indirectly) to non-agricultural use and are implemented or assisted by a federal agency. However, the FPPA excludes land already developed or irreversibly converted and/or land within US Census mapped urban areas.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on geology or soils. The preferred relocation site would remain as prime farmland.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would disturb soils during grading, paving, and facility construction activities. Approximately 1.55 to 2 acres of ground disturbance would be anticipated from the construction activities associated with Alternative 2. Soils in the area have been previously disturbed during construction of the original hospital facility and other development in the area. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a minor impact on soils. The impact would not be significant.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH’s main hospital facility would disturb soils during grading, paving, and facility construction activities. Approximately 14.97 acres of ground disturbance is anticipated from the proposed project activities. Soils in the area have not been previously disturbed. The site consists of wooded undeveloped land that is not currently zoned for agricultural purposes. In a letter dated April 21, 2022 (**Appendix E**), the NRCS confirmed this location is exempt from FPPA considerations since the location is in an urban area according to 7 CFR Part 658. This proposed site is located within the incorporated portion of Blountstown, Florida, and the current zoning classification of Commercial Medical according to the local comprehensive plan and is consistent with the proposed use. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have a minor impact on soils. The impact would not be significant. The project geotechnical report is in **Appendix F**.

#### **5.1.2 AIR QUALITY AND CLEAN AIR ACT (CAA)**

The CAA requires the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish national ambient air quality standards for certain common and widespread pollutants based on standards established under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for the following criteria pollutants: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide. Areas that meet the quality standards for the criteria pollutants are designated as being in attainment. Areas that do not meet the air quality standards for one of the criteria pollutants are designated as being in nonattainment for that standard. Calhoun County is currently classified as being in attainment for all criteria pollutants stipulated under NAAQS. The threshold level for a significant impact to air quality is defined as a violation of an ambient air quality standard or regulatory threshold.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on air quality.

#### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would generate short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions and short-term fugitive dust emissions. These air emissions would vary daily, depending on the level and type of work conducted, and would be limited to the project construction period. Pollutants that would be emitted from the internal combustion engine exhausts of construction vehicles and equipment include certain criteria pollutants, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and certain greenhouse gases (GHGs). Annual construction emissions are expected to be less than the federal

de minimis thresholds for criteria pollutants and VOCs. Construction-related GHG emissions are expected to be negligible in terms of overall quantity and within the range expected for construction of this type and size.

Fugitive dust would be generated by construction vehicles and equipment operations on dirt surfaces and by wind action on stockpiled materials. Generated fugitive dust would consist primarily of non-toxic particulate matter and would be controlled at the sites using BMPs, including watering of exposed surfaces and enclosing or covering stockpiled material. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on air quality. The impact would not be significant.

### **Alternative 3 - Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would generate short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions and short-term fugitive dust emissions. Additionally, emissions would be generated during the initial clearing of the land and the demolition of the original building. These air emissions would vary daily, depending on the level and type of work conducted and would be limited to the project construction period.

Pollutants that would be emitted from the internal combustion engine exhausts of construction vehicles and equipment include certain criteria pollutants, VOCs, and certain GHGs. Annual construction emissions are expected to be less than the federal de minimis thresholds for criteria pollutants and VOCs. Construction-related GHG emissions are expected to be negligible in terms of overall quantity and within the range expected for construction of this type and size. Fugitive dust would be generated by construction vehicles and equipment operations on dirt surfaces and by wind action on stockpiled materials. Generated fugitive dust would consist primarily of non-toxic particulate matter and would be controlled at the sites using BMPs, including watering of exposed surfaces and enclosing or covering stockpiled material. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have a negligible impact on air quality. The impact would not be significant.

#### **5.1.3 CLIMATE CHANGE**

GHGs are emitted by both natural processes and human activities, and their accumulation in the atmosphere regulates temperature. GHGs included carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and other compounds. There are currently no established thresholds or standards for GHGs. However, according to current guidance from the CEQ, a quantitative analysis and disclosure of GHG emissions is not warranted unless the proposed action's direct annual emissions would be greater than 25,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.



### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. This alternative would not involve any construction activities; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on climate change.

### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would result in minor short-term impacts from temporary air emissions due to fuel usage by the construction equipment. These temporary emissions would be expected to be below regulatory standards and would have a minor impact.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH’s main hospital facility would result in minor short-term impacts from temporary air emissions due to fuel usage by the construction equipment. Due to more extensive construction activities occurring under Alternative 3, fuel usage would be required for both the demolition of the original facility and reconstruction of the newly relocated facility compared to solely the restoration as described in Alternative 2. These temporary emissions would be expected to be below regulatory standards and would have a minor impact.

## **5.2 WATER RESOURCES**

### **5.2.1 CLEAN WATER ACT (CWA) AND SURFACE WATER**

The CWA establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States (WOTUS) and regulating quality standards for surface waters. Section 404 of the CWA establishes a program to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into WOTUS, including wetlands. Activities in WOTUS regulated under this program include fill for development, water resource projects (such as dams and levees), infrastructure development (such as highways and airports) and mining projects. Section 404 requires a permit before dredged or fill material may be discharged into WOTUS, unless the activity is exempt from Section 404 regulation (e.g., certain farming and forestry activities).

In Florida, a NPDES stormwater construction permit is required from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for any proposed project that would disturb at least one or more acres of land and those that discharge stormwater to surface waters of the state. As part of this permit, the proponent of the project is required to prepare and implement a SWPPP, which outlines BMPs and engineering controls to be used to prevent and minimize erosion, sedimentation, and pollution during construction.

The threshold level for a significant impact to surface water would be a violation of state water quality criteria, a violation of federal or state discharge permits, or an unpermitted dredge or fill within the boundary of a jurisdictional waterbody or wetland.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility, and no construction activities would be involved. Therefore, there would be no impacts to WOTUS.

### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would require ground disturbance of approximately 5.0 acres. CLH would be required to obtain an NPDES stormwater construction permit from the FDEP and to prepare and implement an associated SWPPP. Consultation with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for permitting, or notification that there is no permit required, would not be necessary. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have minor impacts on surface waters.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would require ground disturbance of approximately 14.97 acres. CLH would be required to obtain an NPDES stormwater construction permit from the FDEP and to prepare and implement an associated SWPPP. Stormwater would be managed at the new facility by diverting water from the roof by downspouts to underground piping, leading to a proposed retention area. Paving and sitework would be graded to flow towards the retention pond, which would create new areas for surface water storage. An existing 1.96-acre water basin currently flows onto the property east of the site and drains to the southeast. The water flow from this basin would be captured by a bypass swale and discharged toward the southeast corner of the property. The proposed on-site stormwater management retention pond has a proposed bottom elevation of 60 feet. An approximately 5-foot-tall berm would be constructed along the northwestern boundary of the stormwater management facility. The pond top elevation would be 65 feet and the existing grade is approximately 60 feet.

The proposed 75,871 SF stormwater management dry detention pond facility would be located on the southern parcel line with an approximate volume of 257,629.96 cubic feet (CF), capable of impounding 5.91 acres per foot of stormwater. The stormwater management facility would be designed to treat the first one inch of rainfall over the contributing basin area and to ensure post-development runoff rates do not exceed the pre-development runoff rates. The basin contributing to the proposed stormwater management facility is 11.50 acres of previously undeveloped wooded

land. The basin consists of 7.31 acres of impervious area and 4.20 acres of pervious area. Existing off-site stormwater flow would be bypassed and not contribute to the stormwater management facility. An existing bypass basin is located along the south and west property lines. The existing stormwater flow patterns for these two areas would remain the same as in the pre-developed state and would discharge toward the southeast. The northern portion of the property currently discharges to the existing FDOT right-of-way, and there would be no increase in water flow.

CLH would follow state and local stormwater and erosion control requirements and would apply for a NPDES stormwater construction permit from the FDEP and to prepare and implement an associated SWPPP. Appropriate stormwater management BMPs would be implemented to prevent sediment intrusion into the adjacent stormwater system, eliminating the potential for the project to potentially impact jurisdictional waters. These BMPs would occur during the entire life of the project. If project activities include stockpiling of soil or fill on-site, the contractor would cover these soils to help prevent fugitive dust from entering stormwater pathways. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have minor impacts on surface waters. An SWPPP can be found in **Appendix G**.

## **5.2.2 FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT**

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management (EO 11988), as implemented in 44 CFR Part 9, requires federal agencies to “avoid to the extent possible the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative.” The 100-year floodplain is the area covered by water in the event of a 100-year flood, which is a flood that has a 1% annual chance of being equaled or exceeded in magnitude in any given year. The 500-year floodplain is the area covered by water in the event of a 500-year flood, which is a flood that has a 0.2% annual chance of being equaled or exceeded in magnitude in any given year. The 100- and 500-year floodplains are mapped on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).

Based on the current FEMA FIRM that covers the area of the Proposed Action, the project locations are located outside of the 500-year floodplain (**Appendix H**). Both proposed project sites are identified on the FEMA FIRM as being within Flood Zone X (un-shaded), which is defined as an area of minimal flood risk.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. The original hospital location is located outside of the floodplain; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on the floodplain.

### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would increase the useful life of the facility. The location is outside of both the 100-year and 500-year floodplain, therefore no short- or long-term effects on the floodplain at this location would be anticipated. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have no impact on the floodplain.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would increase the useful life of the facility. The proposed location is outside of both the 100-year and 500-year floodplain, therefore no short- or long-term effects on the floodplain at this location would be anticipated. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have no impact on the floodplain.

#### **5.2.3 PROTECTION OF WETLANDS (EO 11990) AND WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT (WSRA)**

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands (EO 11990), requires federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands and to avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative.

Section 404 of the CWA regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into WOTUS, including wetlands. Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (RHA) grants the USACE permitting jurisdiction for structures or works in or affecting navigable WOTUS. Florida's ERP program regulates dredging and filling in wetlands and surface waters, and activities in uplands that generate stormwater runoff or otherwise alter surface water flows.

The purpose of the WSRA of 1968 (PL 90 to 542; 16 USC 1271 to 1287) is to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations through the creation of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). River segments are designated part of the system by Congress or, if certain requirements are met, the Secretary of the Interior. Each designated river or segment is administered by a federal or state agency, tribe or local government. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are the four primary federal agencies with responsibility for the NWSRS. There are two WSRs located in Florida, the Wekiva River and Loxahatchee River.

There are no waterbodies located within the proximity of the original hospital location or the proposed new hospital location. According to the USFWS's National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), accessed February 14, 2022, neither location is within a designated wetland (**Appendix I**). According to the FDEP OFW mapper, accessed February 14, 2022, the project area is not within an OFW. The Wekiva River and Loxahatchee River, Florida's only WSRs, are also not located in the vicinity of the project.

The threshold level for a significant impact to wetlands or a WSR would be a violation of federal or state discharge permits.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. Due to the lack of streams and wetlands within proximity of the original hospital location, no short- or long-term impacts to water resources would occur. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on wetlands or a WSR.

### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location is located within a predominantly developed area with no wetlands present, therefore no wetlands are anticipated to be impacted. Consultation with the USACE for permitting, or notification that there is no permit required, would not be necessary. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have no impact on wetlands or a WSR.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility may require permitting from FDEP or the North West Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD). The stormwater management system would be permitted through the FDEP Florida Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) program. Stormwater would be managed by diverting water from the roof by downspouts to underground piping to a proposed retention area on-site. Paving and sitework would be graded to flow towards the built swells and retention pond. Additionally, the proposed hospital location is not within a designated wetland or within an OFW, therefore, Alternative 3 would have a negligible impact on wetlands or a WSR.

## **5.2.4 COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) and COASTAL BARRIER RESOURCES ACT (CBRA)**

The CZMA provides for the management of the nation's coastal resources. The CZMA defines the coastal zones where development must be managed to protect areas of natural resources unique

to coastal regions. States are required to define the area that will comprise coastal zone and develop management plans that will protect these unique resources through enforceable policies of state CZM programs. As defined in the Act, the coastal zone includes coastal waters extending to the outer limit of state submerged land title and ownership, adjacent shorelines, and land extending inward to the extent necessary to control shorelines. Federal as well as local actions must be determined to be consistent with the CZM plans and policies before they can proceed.

The CBRA of 1982 and subsequent amendments are designed to address problems caused by coastal barrier development by restricting most Federal expenditures and financial assistance that tend to encourage such development. Three important goals of CBRA are to minimize loss of human life by discouraging development in high-risk areas, reduce wasteful expenditure of federal resources, and protect the natural resources associated with coastal barriers. The Coastal Barrier Improvement Act of 1990 (CBIA) reauthorized the CBRA and added new units. The CBIA, an addition to the CBRA, designated a new category of lands known as “otherwise protected areas” (OPAs). OPAs are based on areas established under federal, state, or local law, or held by a qualified organization, primarily for wildlife refuge, sanctuary, recreational, or natural resource conservation purposes.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

The No Action Alternative would not involve any construction activities, therefore there would be no impact to coastal resources.

#### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location is not located within an area subject to CBRA and is not along the coast. Therefore, there would be no impact to coastal resources.

#### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH’s main hospital facility would not be located within an area subject to CBRA and is not along the coast. Therefore, there would be no impact to coastal resources.

### **5.2.5 DRINKING WATER AND GROUNDWATER**

The Safe Water Drinking Act, passed in 1974, authorizes the EPA to set national health-based standards for drinking water to protect against both naturally occurring and man-made contaminants that may be found in drinking water. According to the EPA’s Map of Sole Source Aquifer Locations, the City of Blountstown, Florida is not located within an aquifer.

The proposed site for the hospital relocation is located in a rural undeveloped area to the south of Blountstown. Documented occurrences of groundwater contamination near the proposed project site were assessed via FDEP's MapDirect NEXUS database. The database has a user-friendly search interface and can be used to retrieve documents from FDEP's OCULUS archival database, which houses permits and other publicly available documents. Alternatively, users can search the OCULUS database directly. According to FDEP's NEXUS database, the nearest facility with documented groundwater contamination is Mom & Pops, located approximately 800 feet southwest of the site. During a tank closure of three underground storage tanks (USTs) in 1989, an indeterminate amount of petroleum was discovered in the soils and groundwater. The site is currently being monitored and the extent of the contamination has been delineated. The contamination plume and flow of groundwater at the site is towards the southeast, away from the site. The next closest facility with documented groundwater contamination is located northeast of the proposed hospital location, approximately 0.5 miles away.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on groundwater.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would have no effect on groundwater quality or flow. The current hospital facility is connected to underground city utilities including water and sewer. There is no routine groundwater monitoring or testing requirements for the current hospital facility, nor are there wells located on the facility property. Hazardous materials used and hazardous wastes generated during construction would be managed in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations to prevent releases to groundwater. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on groundwater.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would require dewatering as necessary during construction activities and would be conducted using standard methods, therefore it would be anticipated the construction activities would have no effect on groundwater quality or flow. CLH would not utilize groundwater for the new hospital facility's water supply. The new hospital facility would invest in installing underground utilities at the new site that would tie-in with existing city underground utilities in place along SR 71. This underground work would be completed in coordination with the city and during the expansion of SR 71 as outlined in the provided traffic study (**Appendix J**).

CLH does not anticipate any need for the new facility to pump groundwater, therefore no known impact to the water table or aquifer is anticipated. Based on a review of well data provide by FDEP through the MapDirect database, there are no public water supply wells, well fields, or other wells that pump large quantities of water from the aquifer near the project site. With a shift from utilization of groundwater to existing city utilities at the new facility, the proposed site does not appear to be subject to rapid water withdrawal problems that would change the depth or character of the water table or aquifer. Hazardous materials used and hazardous wastes generated during construction would be managed in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations to prevent releases to groundwater. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have a negligible impact on groundwater.

### **5.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

#### **5.3.1 FISH AND WILDLIFE**

The original hospital location is substantially developed, surrounded by a residential apartment complex, rehabilitation center, religious house of worship, and other commercial buildings and roadways. The proposed new hospital location is an undeveloped wooded parcel of land with timber damaged by Hurricane Michael and located southeast adjacent to SR 71, a major roadway in Blountstown. Both sites provide low quality habitat for wildlife based on the type and amount of vegetation they contain. Wildlife usage of each site is expected to be limited to species adapted to urban settings. No aquatic environments are present at either site.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

The No Action Alternative would not involve the rebuilding nor relocation of CLH's main hospital facility. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on fish and wildlife.

#### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would not result in the loss of any vegetated habitat, due to its location in a substantially developed parcel. This area is not considered to be preferred wildlife habitat. Noise generated during construction on site may temporarily disturb wildlife not adapted to urban settings; however, any disturbance experienced by wildlife would be limited to the construction period and would be limited to daylight hours. Loss of aquatic habitat would not occur as a result of this alternative since no waters are present at the site. No short- or long-term impacts would occur as a result of the demolition of the original hospital facility as the site is surrounded by maintained and disturbed land. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have negligible impacts to fish and wildlife.



### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would result in the loss of approximately 14.97 acres of vegetated habitat; however, the vegetation present on site are planted pine for agricultural purposes and are not natural forestlands. Additionally, Hurricane Michael destroyed much of the crops on site. Noise generated during construction on site may temporarily disturb wildlife, however, any disturbance experienced would be limited to the construction period and would be limited to daylight hours. Loss of aquatic habitat would not occur as a result of this alternative since no waters are present at the site. No short- or long-term impacts would occur as a result of the demolition of the original hospital facility as the site is surrounded by maintained and disturbed land. No short- or long-term impacts are anticipated as a result of the construction of the new hospital facility in the new proposed location. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have negligible impacts to fish and wildlife.

#### **5.3.2 VEGETATION**

Minimal vegetation exists at the original hospital facility due to it being previously developed, with most of the vegetation consisting of maintained landscaping. Although the six-acre site is now predominantly grass sod following the devastating winds of Hurricane Michael in 2018, the vegetation remaining at the original hospital facility includes Bermuda grass sod, shrubbery including boxwood hedge plant (*Buxus sempervirens*), American arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*), and juniper hedge plants (*Juniperus communis*). There are a mix of oak trees best described as live oaks and scrub oaks along with a cluster of sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*) trees.

The vegetation existing on the new proposed site is planted pine for agricultural purposes and not natural forestlands. The vegetative community on the parcel, as defined by the Florida Land Use, Cover and Forms Classification System (FLUCCS), is described as hardwood-conifer mixed uplands. The canopy is comprised mainly of loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), water oak (*Quercus nigra*), sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and live oak (*Q. virginiana*). Dominant species found in the sub-canopy and shrub layer include sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*), red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*), catbriar (*Smilax spp.*), blackberry (*Rubus sp.*), and young oaks. The groundcover consists mainly of leaf litter with bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum var. pseudocaudatum*), grasses (*Panicum spp.*), and seedlings of the canopy and understory species. The canopy layer, particularly the pines, had significant damage from Hurricane Michael in 2018, snapping most of the trees in half.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

The No Action Alternative would not involve the rebuilding nor relocation of CLH's main hospital facility and would not involve the removal of vegetation nor the disturbance of soils; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on vegetation.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would not result in the removal of any vegetation, as the location is already substantially commercially developed. Minimal natural habitat is present within the vicinity of the parcel and has been previously altered by human activities. Construction activities would predominantly take place within maintained and previously disturbed areas. Vegetative debris generated during construction activities on site for Alternatives 2 would require authorization from FDEP for any staging and disposal activities. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on vegetation. The impact would not be significant.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would disturb soils during grading, paving, and new hospital construction, which would also result in the removal of the existing natural vegetation within the project area. This alternative would result in approximately 652,000 SF of total cleared vegetation on a currently undeveloped parcel consisted of pine species, which have been damaged from Hurricane Michael. Once construction is complete and the facility is fully operational, CLH intends to demolish the original hospital facility. CLH has not fully identified future land use for the area associated within the footprint of the demolished hospital. The facility would be rendered safe and secure once full operational status is reached at the new facility.

Minimal vegetation exists at the original location due to being previously developed, and the vegetation consists mostly of maintained landscaping. The current state of the damaged trees on the undeveloped parcel currently poses an increased wildfire risk as dead trees can serve as potential fuel loads for wildfires. For example, in March 2022, panhandle Florida experienced a series of devastating wildfires fueled by dry timber debris generated during Hurricane Michael that has not properly been cleared and disposed of since 2018. Therefore, the removal of these trees would have a minor beneficial impact to the nearby areas. Vegetative debris generated during construction activities on site for Alternative 3 would require authorization from FDEP for any staging and disposal activities. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have a minor positive impact on vegetation. The impact would not be significant.

### **5.3.3 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES**

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, the project was evaluated for the potential occurrences of federally listed threatened and endangered species. The ESA requires any federal agency that funds, authorizes or carries out an action to ensure their action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

According to the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) species list, accessed February 15, 2022, the following federally listed species are considered to have the potential to occur in Blountstown: the federally threatened eastern indigo snake (*Drymarcon corais couperi*), the federally threatened wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), the federally threatened Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus (oxyrhynchus) desotoi*), the federally endangered fat threeridge mussel (*Amblema neislerii*), and the federally threatened purple bankclimber mussel (*Elliptioideus sloatianus*). There is no designated critical habitat present at either of the proposed project sites. All project alternatives are not likely to affect any of the species listed above as the project areas (both the original location and proposed location) do not provide suitable habitat for any of these species. The threshold level for a significant impact to threatened and endangered species is defined by the take of an individual protected under the ESA.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on threatened and endangered species.

#### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would not result in any impacts to any species protected under ESA. All ESA-listed species included in the IPaC-generated list for this alternative were removed from consideration of potential effects due to lack of suitable habitat, as the current hospital site is highly urbanized and contains low quality terrestrial habitat. The site also lacks any potential freshwater or saltwater resources; therefore, no habitat for any aquatic species is present at the site. Since no suitable habitat is present within the Alternative 2 project footprint for any listed species, FEMA has determined there is no effect to any ESA-listed species. Based on the analysis conducted, Alternative 2 would have no impact to threatened and endangered species.

#### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would not result in any impacts to any species protected under ESA. All ESA-listed species included in the

IPaC-generated list for this alternative were removed from consideration of potential effects due to lack of suitable habitat at the proposed site. The new hospital facility is an undeveloped parcel of land with pine trees planted for agricultural purposes and not natural forestlands. Additionally, Hurricane Michael has destroyed the crops and vegetation that were previously present. The parcel is covered with damaged vegetation and provides a low-quality terrestrial habitat. The site also lacks any potential freshwater or saltwater resources; therefore, no habitat for any aquatic species is present at the site. Since no suitable habitat is present within the Alternative 3 project footprint for any listed species, FEMA determined there is no effect to any ESA-listed species. Based on the analysis conducted, Alternative 3 would have no impact to threatened and endangered species.

#### **5.3.4 MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT (MBTA)**

The MBTA of 1918 provides a program for the conservation of migratory birds that fly through lands of the United States. The lead federal agency for implementing the MBTA is the USFWS. The law makes it illegal for anyone to “take” (meaning to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect), attempt to take, capture, or kill, possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to barter, barter, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, export, import, cause to be shipped, exported, or imported, deliver for transportation, transport or cause to be transported, carry or cause to be carried, or receive for shipment, transportation, carriage, or export, any migratory bird, any part, nest, or egg of any such bird, or any product, whether or not manufactured, which consists, or is composed in whole or part, of any such bird or any part, nest, or eggs.

The entire state of Florida is considered a flyway zone for migratory birds. According to the USFWS IPaC database accessed on February 15, 2022, six migratory bird species were identified as being potentially present within the project area, and 6 of the species have a designated breeding season which could occur within the project vicinity.

#### **Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative**

Alternative 1 would not involve any construction activities, therefore there would be no potential for effects and a “take” would not occur since there would be no destruction or adverse modification of the surrounding habitat.

#### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, minor short-term impacts to species within the project area could potentially occur due to construction activities. The project area is not suitable for nesting habitat, is not optimal for foraging, and is not located within a designated critical habitat, therefore take of a migratory bird species is not anticipated with this alternative.

**Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, minor short-term impacts to species within the project area could potentially occur due to construction activities. The project area is not ideal nesting habitat due to the damaged trees and vegetation, is not optimal for foraging, and is not located within a designated critical habitat, therefore take of a migratory bird species is not anticipated with this alternative.

**5.3.5 MAGNUSON-STEVENSON FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT (MSA)**

The MSA is the primary law governing marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters and is meant to foster long-term biological and economic sustainability of our nation's marine fisheries. Key objectives of the MSA are to prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, increase long-term economic and social benefits, and ensure a safe and sustainable supply of seafood. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Mapper online tool can be used to determine designated EFH for species, however, none are expected to be impacted by any of the proposed project alternatives as the work would be completed outside of the water. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) - Fish and Wildlife Research Institute hardbottom habitat data can also be used to determine the nearest hardbottom habitats from a project location, but none of the project areas are located near an estuarine or marine wetland. Additionally, no salt marshes or seagrass habitats are located near the project areas.

**Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative**

Alternative 1 would not involve any construction activities; further, there are no waterbodies at or near the project location. Therefore, there would be no impact on fisheries or breeding habitat.

**Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

The project area for Alternative 2 is not located in or near any waterbodies and is not near or in EFH; therefore, there would be no impact on fisheries or breeding habitat.

**Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

The project area for Alternative 3 is not located in or near any waterbodies and is not near or in EFH; therefore, there would be no impact on fisheries or breeding habitat.

### **5.3.6 BALD AND GOLDEN EAGLE PROTECTION ACT (BGEPA)**

The BGEPA (16 USC 668 to 668c), enacted in 1940, prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from "taking" bald and golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. Like the MBTA, the law makes it illegal for anyone to "take," possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or their parts, feathers, nests, or eggs. "Take" is defined as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb."

According to the FWC Historical Bald Eagle Nesting Areas mapper and the Audubon Florida EagleWatch Nest Application, accessed on February 17, 2022, no documented bald eagle nests are located within the project area. The general nesting season for bald eagles in the southeast is from about October 1 to May 15. Golden eagles inhabit tundra, grasslands, forested habitat and woodland-brushlands, south to arid deserts and avoid nesting in urban habitat. Due to the species habitat being inconsistent with the habitat of the project location, the presence of a golden eagle is unlikely to occur within the project area and no impacts are expected.

#### **Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative**

Alternative 1 would not involve any construction activities, therefore there would be no impact to bald or golden eagles.

#### **Alternative 2 – Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

The Alternative 2 project area is not within the vicinity of a known bald eagle nest nor is the area suitable for golden eagle habitat, therefore, the alternative would likely have no impact to these species.

#### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

The Alternative 3 project area is not within the vicinity of a known bald eagle nest nor is the area suitable for golden eagle habitat, therefore, the alternative would likely have no impact to these species.

## **5.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **5.4.1 HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Cultural resources include historic architectural properties (including buildings, structures, and objects), prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, historic districts, designed landscapes, and

traditional cultural properties. The primary federal statutes that apply to cultural resources are NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended.

The NHPA created the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and criteria to determine if cultural resources are eligible for listing in the NRHP. The NHPA defines historic properties as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object that is listed in, or eligible for listing in, the NRHP (36 CFR 800.16). When NRHP-eligible properties are present, federal agencies must assess the effect of the undertaking on them and consider ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse effects.

The area of potential effect (APE) for cultural resources is limited to the area within which all construction and ground-disturbing activities would be confined and the viewshed of the proposed project. A literature review of the Florida Master Site File (FMSF) was conducted in February 2022. The literature review focused on the APE and included a 1-mile buffer around the APE. One cultural resource investigation occurred within portions of the APE; however, no historic resources were identified within the APE. PaleoWest conducted a Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment Survey of the proposed new hospital location. Hagerty Consulting, on behalf of CLH, submitted the report to the Florida SHPO on January 21, 2021. Concurrence from SHPO was received on February 3, 2021, with a finding of No Historic Properties Affected.

FEMA submitted a formal consultation to the SHPO on February 2, 2022. The Programmatic Agreement between FEMA and the Florida SHPO signed September 10, 2014, and the Duration Amendment, effective September 2, 2021, does not include Programmatic Allowances addressing the potential new ground disturbance associated with the property lot clearing, grading, and new construction, nor the demolition of buildings over 45 years old.

The threshold level for significant impacts to cultural resources under NHPA would be those impacts that adversely affect any historic property that is eligible for or listed in the NRHP under Section 106 or has been identified by a federally recognized tribe as a sacred site or traditional cultural property.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on historic properties.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Alternative 2 would involve the demolition and reconstruction of CLH's main hospital facility at its original location. Demolition activities under Alternative 2 were included in the consultation letter sent to SHPO on its effect determinations for the proposed activities under Alternative 3 via

letter dated February 2, 2022; however, activities related to the reconstruction of the hospital in its original location would require additional consultation if Alternative 2 were to be chosen as the preferred alternative. In this letter, FEMA concluded that no properties listed or considered eligible for listing in the NRHP are located within the APE, resulting in a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. FEMA specified the following conditions for the treatment of fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries during ground disturbing activities within the project area:

- If human remains or intact archaeological deposits are uncovered, work in the vicinity of the discovery will stop immediately and all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds will be taken. The applicant will ensure that archaeological discoveries are secured in place, that access to the sensitive area is restricted, and that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid further disturbance of the discoveries. The applicant's contractor will provide immediate notice of such discoveries to the applicant. The applicant shall contact the Florida Division of Historic Resources and FEMA within 24 hours of the discovery. Work in the vicinity of the discovery may not resume until FEMA has completed consultation with SHPO, Tribes, and other consulting parties as necessary. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities; all work shall stop immediately, and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Florida Statutes, Section 872.05.
- Construction vehicles and equipment will be stored onsite during the project or at existing access points within the Applicant's right-of-way.
- Any changes to the approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by, the State and FEMA, prior to initiation of any work, for compliance with Section 106.
- Inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources, human remains and related NAGPRA items may occur, even in areas of existing or prior development. Should this occur, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation requests that all work cease and our office as well as other appropriate agencies be notified immediately.

The Florida SHPO concurred with the findings of No Historic Properties Affected in a letter dated 03/21/2022. FEMA also consulted with nine federally recognized Tribes on the proposed activities under Alternative 2 via letter dated February 2, 2022. In an email dated February 4, 2022, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians provided concurrence with the findings of No Historic Properties Affected and the conditions FEMA included. In a letter dated March 9, 2022, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation provided concurrence with the determination of No Historic Properties Affected and stated that in the event of inadvertent discoveries of human remains and related NAGPRA items occur, all work shall cease and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation office as well as other appropriate agencies shall be notified immediately. No other responses were received from the other federally recognized tribes and their concurrence is assumed. Based on the analysis



conducted and the conditions required for fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries, Alternative 2 would have no effect on historic properties.

**Alternative 3 - Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Alternative 3 would involve the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility. FEMA consulted with the Florida SHPO on its effect determination for the proposed activities via letter dated February 2, 2022. In this letter, FEMA concluded that no properties listed or considered eligible for listing in the NRHP are located within the APE, resulting in a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. FEMA specified the following conditions for the treatment of fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries during ground disturbing activities within the project area:

- If human remains or intact archaeological deposits are uncovered, work in the vicinity of the discovery will stop immediately and all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds will be taken. The applicant will ensure that archaeological discoveries are secured in place, that access to the sensitive area is restricted, and that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid further disturbance of the discoveries. The applicant's contractor will provide immediate notice of such discoveries to the applicant. The applicant shall contact the Florida Division of Historic Resources and FEMA within 24 hours of the discovery. Work in the vicinity of the discovery may not resume until FEMA has completed consultation with SHPO, Tribes, and other consulting parties as necessary. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities; all work shall stop immediately, and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Florida Statutes, Section 872.05.
- Construction vehicles and equipment will be stored onsite during the project or at existing access points within the Applicant's right-of-way.
- Any changes to the approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by, the State and FEMA, prior to initiation of any work, for compliance with Section 106.
- Inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources, human remains and related NAGPRA items may occur, even in areas of existing or prior development. Should this occur, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation requests that all work cease and our office as well as other appropriate agencies be notified immediately.

The Florida SHPO concurred with the findings of No Historic Properties Affected in a letter dated 03/21/2022. FEMA also consulted with nine federally recognized Tribes on the proposed activities under Alternative 3 via letter, dated February 2, 2022. In an email dated February 4, 2022, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians provided concurrence with the findings of No Historic

Properties Affected and the conditions FEMA included. In a letter dated March 9, 2022, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation provided concurrence with the determination of No Historic Properties Affected and stated that in the event of inadvertent discoveries of human remains and related NAGPRA items occur, all work shall cease and the Muscogee (Creek) Nation office as well as other appropriate agencies shall be notified immediately. No other responses were received from the other federally recognized tribes and their concurrence is assumed. Based on the analysis conducted and the conditions required for fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries, Alternative 3 would have no effect on historic properties. Based on the analysis conducted and the conditions required for fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries, Alternative 3 would have no effect on historic properties.

## **5.5 SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES**

### **5.5.1 LAND USE**

The project area consists of CLH's original main hospital facility and the proposed undeveloped land parcel that would serve as the new location of the facility. The original hospital location consists of a developed parcel, surrounded by an apartment complex, rehabilitation center, and a religious house of worship facility. The original site also has an existing asphalt paved road, rights-of-way, and a parking lot for the hospital facility.

The proposed location for the new main hospital facility is an undeveloped wooded parcel located off SR 71 South. The south-adjacent property to the proposed new location was formerly a car dealership, with the building and parking lot remaining on-site. Located approximately 0.50 miles southeast to the proposed location, there is an auto repair shop and religious house of worship. The new hospital location is south of the main commercial corridor along Highway 20 through the City of Blountstown. There is existing man-made agricultural timberland in the area as well as some residential properties.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, existing conditions would be maintained and CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on current land use.

#### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would not result in a change in project footprint, and therefore would not adversely affect the land use within or adjacent to the project area. Therefore, Alternative 2 would have a no impact on current land use.

**Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH’s main hospital facility would change the land use of the undeveloped parcel. Approximately 14.97 acres of new ground disturbance would occur as a result of this alternative. The parcel previously had a zoning classification of R2 (Residential Low-Density), which is an area characterized by low density development. However, the parcel currently has been reclassified and is now a zoning classification of Commercial Medical, which is consistent with the proposed use. Although substantial new ground disturbance would occur, the parcel is currently covered with damaged vegetation that is contributing to the parcel’s potential wildfire fuel load. Removing this vegetation and relocating the main hospital facility at this location is not anticipated to adversely affect the land use within or adjacent to the project area. The proposed development would be a significant change in land use compared to the existing land uses in the area, since it would involve a larger facility footprint than the existing buildings in the rural community of Blountstown. The development is anticipated to bring more traffic and residents to the area, but since it is located along a state highway and within the city limits of Blountstown, it is considered to be in an appropriate location. The city currently does not have any adopted architectural or design standards and the nearby land uses to the proposed project are not consistently designed. Therefore, Alternative 3 would have a minor impact on current land use.

**5.5.2 NOISE**

Noise is unwanted sound. Sound levels are measured in decibels (dB). A-weighted sound measures emphasize the frequency range of human hearing and are expressed in terms of A-weighted decibels (dBA). In general, animals and humans are stressed by noisy environments. The effects of noise on humans include annoyance, sleep disturbance, and health impacts. In animals, high noise can interfere with communication, reproduction, identifying food sources, and can induce fear, forcing species to abandon their habitat. The primary source of ambient noise in the project area is vehicular traffic.

Based on the data presented in the US EPA publication, *Noise from Construction Equipment and Operations, Building Equipment, and Home Appliances* (USEPA, 1971), the main phases of outdoor construction typically generate noise levels that range from 78 dBA to 89 dBA, approximately 50 feet from the construction site. Noise levels are estimated to decrease by approximately 6 dBA with every doubling of distance from a noise source. The threshold level for a significant noise impact is defined as a permanent increase in noise or prolonged periods of nighttime noise in noise-sensitive areas.

### **Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility; therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no noise-related effects. Noise would continue to be generated by vehicles and equipment operated by hospital staff and visitors; however, no construction activities would occur, therefore no additional new noise would be generated. Based on the review conducted, the No Action Alternative would have negligible noise-related effects. The impact would not be significant.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise levels in and around the construction site. Minor short-term impacts on noise levels resulting from the use of construction equipment in the project area would be expected. Noise levels are anticipated to have no impact on residences as there are no residential properties in the vicinity of the project area. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have minor noise-related impacts. The impact would not be significant.

### **Alternative 3 - Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would result in minor short-term impacts on noise levels resulting from the use of construction equipment in the project area would be expected. Noise levels are anticipated to have no impact on residences as there are no residential properties in the immediate vicinity of the project area.

Due to the greater extent of work proposed under this alternative, the impacts are expected to be greater than impacts described under Alternative 2 due to a longer construction period. Noise generated from construction would be intermittent, heard only during daytime, and only for the duration of the project activities. With Alternative 3, future facility repairs are expected to be less frequent as the facility would be upgraded and more resilient against future storm events. After the construction activities are complete for this alternative, there would be no long-term effects on noise levels in the area. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have minor noise-related impacts. The impact would not be significant. A Noise Assessment Report is located in **Appendix J**.

## **5.5.3 TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC**

CLH's original main hospital facility is located on Burns Avenue and includes two parking areas and multiple vehicular access points to the facility. The facility is located approximately 0.30 miles

west of SR 69, a main asphalt-paved roadway. The proposed location for the new main hospital facility is an undeveloped wooded parcel located east of SR 71 South.

Calhoun County Transit is the Community Transportation Coordinator for Calhoun County, Florida. Transportation services are provided to the general public by way of a reservation system. Currently, transportation is offered under two programs to include the Medicaid Recipient Program and the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. Transportation services are provided by way of a reservation system and provided only to those who pre-qualify for either the Medicaid or Non-Medicaid Program. Transportation appointments are arranged 24 hours in advance, before transportation is needed. Emergency transportation is provided 24 hours per day, and reservations should be made 3 days in advance.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility; therefore, vehicular access to and from the facility would not change, and there would be no traffic interruptions as a result of demolition or construction activities. The No Action Alternative would have no impact to transportation and traffic.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would occur. Due to reconstruction of the facility within its original footprint, no widening or change in the nearby and adjacent roadways would be expected. Traffic interruptions would be intermittent, localized, and temporary and limited to the construction period. During active construction periods, construction workers would direct traffic through and around the construction area. Additionally, construction vehicles may generate an increase in traffic to the area; this increase is anticipated to be short-term and limited to the duration of the construction period. Alternative 2 would not add or remove sources of vehicle traffic outside the construction period, therefore, this alternative would have no effect on long-term traffic levels in the area. During construction, access to the original main hospital facility would be closed to the public, reducing traffic loads for the duration of construction. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 is expected to have a minor short-term impact on transportation and traffic.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would occur. The proposed project driveways along SR 71 would be located 0.15 miles north of Chipola Road. SR 71 is classified as a 2-lane undivided rural arterial highway with a posted speed of 55 miles per hour. There is no vertical roadway curvature, and minimal horizontal roadway curvature in the

vicinity of the project. A traffic study was performed by MPH Transportation Planning, Inc. in association with the HUD EA. The abbreviated Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) study (**Appendix K**) satisfied the county and FDOT requirements for a driveway connection permit. Analysis of the data provided by FDOT, combined with project traffic estimates, demonstrated this alternative does not create adverse transportation impacts along SR 71. The minimal A.M. and P.M. peak hour project turn volumes would not require a right or left turn lane at the project entrances.

Traffic interruptions would be intermittent, localized, and temporary and limited to the construction period. During active construction periods, construction workers would direct traffic through and around the construction area. Additionally, construction vehicles may generate an increase in traffic to the area; this increase is anticipated to be short-term and limited to the duration of the construction period. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 is expected to have a minor impact on transportation and traffic. The impact would not be significant.

#### **5.5.4 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND SOLID WASTES**

Hazardous materials are declared hazardous through various federal regulations including 40 CFR Parts 302.4 and 355, and 29 CFR Part 1910.1200. Hazardous waste is any solid, liquid, or contained gas waste that is dangerous or potentially harmful to humans and the health of the environment. Thousands of contaminated sites exist nation-wide due to hazardous waste being dumped, left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed and disposed. In response, Congress established the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) on December 11, 1980. CERCLA, commonly known as Superfund, was enacted to allow EPA to clean up contaminated sites. The EPA utilizes the National Priorities List (NPL), the list of contaminated sites of national priority, to guide the determination of which sites warrant further investigation. According to the NPL, accessed February 15, 2022, the project area does not contain any Superfund sites.

An EPA designated Brownfield site is a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. A Brownfield area is a contiguous area of one or more Brownfield sites.

The threshold level for a significant impact to hazardous materials and waste would include a release of hazardous materials or waste, or a violation of local, state, or federal regulations pertaining to hazardous materials or waste.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. CLH is responsible for managing any associated hazardous materials and wastes, including measures to prevent releases, in accordance with applicable environmental compliance

regulations. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on hazardous materials, hazardous waste, and solid waste.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Alternative 2 would involve demolition of the original facility and subsequently required soil remediation due to pre-existing soil contamination on-site. CLH previously had two underground fuel storage tanks (USTs). One 500-gallon UST installed in the 1980s was abandoned in place in the late 1990s, and one 1,000-gallon diesel UST was installed in 1959 to support the emergency generator. The diesel UST was removed from the site in 1998, and due to contamination found on site, the site became eligible for participation in the FDEP Petroleum Cleanup Participation Program (PCPP) in 1999. As of January 2019, CLH has requested suspending proposed remediation site work pending a decision on construction in the area of the petroleum discharge due to the significant damages sustained by the facility during Hurricane Michael and consideration of demolition of the facility. If Alternative 2 was chosen, proper handling and disposal of the contaminated soils would be required.

Alternative 2 would also involve the use of typical construction-related hazardous materials during reconstruction of the facility. Handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste during construction and demolition activities, including measures to prevent releases, would be conducted in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations. Non-hazardous solid waste generated during construction would be disposed of at an offsite landfill, recycled, or reused as appropriate. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on hazardous materials, hazardous waste, and solid waste.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Alternative 3 would involve the use of typical construction-related hazardous materials. Handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste during construction and demolition activities, including measures to prevent releases, would be conducted in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations. Non-hazardous solid waste generated during construction as well as during the eventual long-term operation of the new hospital facility would be disposed of at an offsite landfill, recycled, or reused as appropriate. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have a negligible impact on hazardous materials, hazardous waste, and solid waste.

## **5.5.5 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Occupational health and safety hazards could include chemical agents (such as asbestos or lead), physical agents (such as noise or vibration), physical hazards (such as slip, trip, and fall hazards,

electricity, or machinery), or biological hazards (such as infectious waste, poisonous plants, ticks, or another hazardous biota). Occupational health and safety concerns could affect both workers and other non-workers near the project site. CLH employees and contractors are responsible for following applicable OSHA regulations and for conducting their work in a manner that does not pose any risk to other workers or the public. The threshold level for a significant impact to occupational health and safety would be exposure of workers to health and safety hazards without proper protection or creating health and safety hazards that could affect the public.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. The current condition of the original main hospital facility would continue to remain a general health and safety risk. In January 2019, the Agency for Health Care Administration approved the facility to permanently close approximately 25% of the hospital so that the remaining partial inpatient beds could be reopened. However, more than 50% of the property was damaged from Hurricane Michael, and it has been determined the current structure cannot be remediated to meet building code requirements. The No Action Alternative is not practicable as Calhoun and Liberty County, as well as portions of other areas, would lose healthcare access provided by this designated critical access facility. Additionally, since early 2020, CLH has experienced continuously increased strain on its facility due to the global coronavirus diseases of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have a moderate negative impact on general health and safety. The impact would be significant.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Occupational health and safety hazards under Alternative 2 would include those common to construction and demolition activities, such as loud noise, heavy machinery, debris, electricity, and hazardous materials used or encountered during work. To minimize occupational health and safety risks, workers would wear and use appropriate personal protective equipment and follow all applicable OSHA standards and procedures. A health and safety plan would be developed and implemented for work. Work areas would be clearly marked with appropriate signage and secured against unauthorized entry. Standard construction traffic control measures would be used to protect workers, residents, and the travelling public. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on occupational health and safety.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Occupational health and safety hazards under Alternative 3 would include those common to construction and demolition activities, such as loud noise, heavy machinery, debris, electricity,



and hazardous materials used or encountered during work. To minimize occupational health and safety risks, workers would wear and use appropriate personal protective equipment and follow all applicable OSHA standards and procedures. A health and safety plan would be developed and implemented for work. Work areas would be clearly marked with appropriate signage and secured against unauthorized entry. Standard construction traffic control measures would be used to protect workers, residents, and the travelling public. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 3 would have a negligible impact on occupational health and safety. The impact would not be significant.

### **5.5.6 UTILITIES**

Existing utilities at the original hospital facility include underground infrastructure supporting water, sewer, and natural gas services provided by the city. The current site also has underground telecommunication service lines, which includes phone, cable, and internet access. Planned utilities at the proposed new hospital facility location include underground water, sewer, and natural gas which would be provided by the City of Blountstown. The proposed new hospital facility would tie into existing city underground infrastructure along SR 71 during construction of the new required turn lane. Natural gas and electricity are already available at the proposed site. The proposed site would also have underground telecommunication service lines that includes phone, cable and internet access. The threshold level for significant impact to utilities would be an exceedance of the existing utility service capacity.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. The hospital facility would continue to be maintained by CLH in its current state. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact to existing utilities.

#### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Under Alternative 2, the demolition and reconstruction of the existing main hospital facility at its current location would likely require an adjustment to the existing water, sewer, and utility services due to requiring upsizing to meet building codes and standards. Based on the analysis conducted, Alternative 2 would have a minor impact on utilities.

#### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Under Alternative 3, the relocation and construction of CLH's main hospital facility would require the installation of new water and electric utility service infrastructure to connect the existing utilities to the new facility at the proposed location. The utilities would be underground and connected to the existing utility right-of-way along SR 71 South. Based on the analysis conducted, Alternative 3 would have a minor impact on utilities.

### **5.5.7 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

EO 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, directs federal agencies to address and avoid disproportionate environmental and human health impacts from federal actions on minority populations and low-income populations. All federal agencies must analyze the environmental effects, including human health, social, and economic effects, on minority and low-income communities. The impacted area includes all areas of the scope of work for the proposed project, any staging areas or hauling routes, and any areas outside of the immediate project area that may be impacted indirectly by the proposed project.

In January 2021, President Biden issued EO 13985, Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce, and EO 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, to further address the need to achieve environmental justice and equity across the federal government. These new executive orders direct federal agencies to renew their energy, effort, resources, and attention to implement environmental justice and underscore the administration's commitment to environmental justice.

Guidelines for the protection of children are specified in EO 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risk (Federal Register, Volume, 62, Number 78, April 23, 1997). This EO requires that federal agencies make it a high priority to identify and assess policies, programs, and standards addressing disproportionate adverse risks to children resulting from environmental health or safety risks.

In 2020, the population of Calhoun County was 13,648 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Based on the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates for 2016 and 2020, children 18 years and younger in Calhoun County are 20.1% of the population; minorities (African American, Native American, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, Hispanic or Latino, or a mix of these races) are 27% of the population; and families below the poverty level (with household income below \$25,000 per year) are 13.8% of the population. Additionally, 6.9% of the population is 65 years and over, the total labor force is 4,884 people, the median household income is \$38,037, and the per capita income is \$19,512 (US Census Bureau, 2022).

Liberty County and Calhoun County are considered Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO) and Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) designated communities as they are small in population and have been adversely affected by extraordinary economic events or natural disasters. The strong winds of Hurricane Michael devastated the forestry and logging industries contributing to the top industry employment concentrations in this region. The pine species grown in North Florida are a long-term investment that can take 20 to 25 years to mature for harvest. Therefore, it will likely be at least two decades before forestland cleared and replanted will be ready for harvest, and the jobs associated with this industry will be lost for the foreseeable future.

The threshold level for a significant impact to environmental justice is disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations. The threshold level for a significant impact to protection of children is disproportionate environmental health or safety risks to children.

### **Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative**

Under the No Action Alternative, CLH would not rebuild nor relocate their main hospital facility. The hospital would continue to operate at decreased capacity due to unmet structural and hospital code requirements, which could lead to the eventual closure of the facility. The closure would lead to job loss for those working at the hospital, and the surrounding communities would lose access to an emergency medical care facility. If the No Action Alternative is taken, the hospital would fail to serve its purpose as the primary healthcare facility in both Calhoun and Liberty County. Public health and well-being, as well as critical emergency medical services, would continue to be impacted, which would negatively affect the local economy and community. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations and would result in disproportionate health or safety risks to children.

### **Alternative 2 - Replacement of the Main Hospital Facility at the Original Location**

Alternative 2 would not directly change the number of residents in the local area. The current demographics, including number of persons living in housing, number of children attending schools, and demand for emergency services (medical, police, and firefighting) in the area would remain the same. The community would be served by a new facility, but at a reduced capacity due to the limited number of services and available patient beds due to constraints from current construction and building code requirements. The construction work under Alternative 2 would have a minor, short-term, beneficial impact on the local economy by providing temporary jobs but would have a negligible long-term impact on the total labor force and employment in the region due to the minimal number of jobs created by the reconstruction. However, Alternative 2 would not have a disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations, and Alternative 2 would not result in disproportionate health or safety risks to children.

### **Alternative 3 – Construction of the Main Hospital Facility at an Alternate Location (Preferred Alternative)**

Alternative 3 would not directly change the number of residents in the local area. The current demographics, including number of persons living in housing, number of children attending schools, and demand for emergency services (medical, police, and firefighting) in the area would remain the same. The replacement hospital would include new healthcare capabilities beyond the

scope of the current facility, thereby creating new permanent jobs for the local community in addition to the temporary jobs created by the construction of the new facility. This may include opportunities for new professional staff, such as doctors and nurses, along with support staff to assist with administrative tasks and hospital operations and maintenance. Due to the remote nature of this rural area, it is anticipated these positions would be filled by the local community, and especially for those residents impacted by jobs lost in the timber industry since 2018. Additionally, the construction of the new hospital would improve the overall primary healthcare services for residents in Calhoun and Liberty County. Public health and well-being, as well as critical emergency medical services, would be restored as well as accommodate more residents at the new, larger facility.

Under Alternative 3, the development of this new hospital would increase access to new and improved healthcare services for low- and moderate-income individuals. The location of the new hospital on SR 71 was chosen based on its proximity to Highway 20, which is the main thoroughfare that runs east and west through Liberty and Calhoun Counties. In addition, SR 71 runs north to Marianna in Jackson County and south to Wewahitchka in Gulf County. Therefore, this location is intended to be readily accessible for all communities within the service area. Alternative 3 would not have disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations. Activities under Alternative 3 would not result in disproportionate health or safety risks to children.

## **6.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Per the CEQ regulations, cumulative impacts refer to the impact on the environment that “results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taken place over a period of time.” In accordance with NEPA, this SEA considered the combined effect of the preferred alternative and other actions occurring or proposed in the vicinity of the proposed project site.

Rural hospitals typically have inherent challenges and risks when it comes to providing community healthcare. These include socioeconomic vulnerability of patients coupled with the ongoing struggles to retain physicians, nurses, and support staff. Since Hurricane Michael in 2018, CLH operates at less than 50% capacity and many of its critical services have been outsourced (such as x-rays services) as a result of damages to the facility. The loss of revenue for the hospital since Hurricane Michael in 2018, combined with the increased demand for critical healthcare services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020, has created significant staffing and financial challenges for CLH. The current in-patient care occupancy is limited to 10 beds. The Emergency

Room (ER) functions as the hospital's main entrance, creating challenges for maintaining social distancing and keeping the healthy patients and visitors isolated from those that are ill.

CLH has provided specialized care to over 100 hospitalized COVID-19 patients as of April 2022. ER and clinic visits since 2020 have increased significantly due to residents exhibiting COVID-19-related symptoms, and approximately 10% of the county's population has been treated as of April 2022. The hospital's oxygen system was destroyed by Hurricane Michael in 2018, requiring CLH to relocate at least 60 patients to other hospitals in the area since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. The relocation of the facility to the new proposed site would significantly improve access to healthcare for this community and allow for more patients and critical services.

In addition to infrastructure damages in Calhoun County as a result of Hurricane Michael, there was an estimated \$11 million loss in commercial crops and agriculture. The proposed project would occur in an area currently zoned as Commercial Medical in anticipation of the proposed development, with surrounding land uses including a mix of commercial and residential. The project would result in the development of approximately 14.97 acres of undeveloped wooded land previously used in the commercial timber crop industry. However, CLH has serviced Calhoun and Liberty County and portions of Jackson and Gulf County since approximately 1960. The hospital is a critical need for the entire region as it serves as the primary healthcare facility and provides jobs in these communities. By relocating and expanding the facility to accommodate for more residents and services, including new and improved healthcare services, the low-income and minority populations of these rural areas would directly benefit from the proposed project. Therefore, converting a small portion of land previously utilized for timber crops to the new facility would provide a long-term benefit to the community.

It is anticipated the proposed action would have short-term impacts to noise levels, air quality, and traffic patterns at and near the proposed project location. However, it is expected the proposed action would not have long-term negative impacts on any of these resources in the project area, as these short-term impacts would be a result of construction activities, which would be temporary. In consideration of the overall impact of the proposed project in relation to impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities, the proposed action is not expected to have significant adverse cumulative impacts on any resource.

## **7.0 PERMIT AND PROJECT CONDITIONS**

1. Under Alternatives 2 and 3, prior to construction, an appropriate SWPPP, Erosion Control Plan, and NPDES permit must be obtained, and CLH must comply with all of the conditions prescribed by the permit.
2. If necessary, appropriate dewatering permits are required prior to dewatering activities and CLH must comply with all of the conditions prescribed by the permit.

3. Under Alternative 2 and 3, SHPO and NHPA Conditions are applicable:
  - a. If human remains or intact archaeological deposits are uncovered, work in the vicinity of the discovery will stop immediately and all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds will be taken. The applicant will ensure that archaeological discoveries are secured in place, that access to the sensitive area is restricted, and that all reasonable measures are taken to avoid further disturbance of the discoveries. The applicant's contractor will provide immediate notice of such discoveries to the applicant. The applicant shall contact the Florida Division of Historic Resources and FEMA within 24 hours of the discovery. Work in the vicinity of the discovery may not resume until FEMA has completed consultation with SHPO, Tribes, and other consulting parties as necessary. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities; all work shall stop immediately, and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Florida Statutes, Section 872.05.
  - b. Construction vehicles and equipment will be stored onsite during the project or at existing access points within the Applicant's right-of-way.
  - c. Any changes to the approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by, the State and FEMA, prior to initiation of any work, for compliance with Section 106.
  - d. In the event of inadvertent discoveries of human remains and related NAGPRA items occur in areas of existing or prior development, work shall cease and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and other appropriate agencies shall be notified immediately.
4. Handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials and waste during construction activities, including measures to prevent releases, must be conducted in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations.
5. All debris staging sites shall be authorized by FDEP. The subrecipient shall ensure that all debris is separated and disposed at permitted facilities or at a disposal site or landfill authorized by FDEP. The subrecipient is responsible for ensuring contracted staging and disposal of debris also follows these guidelines. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize FEMA funding; verification of compliance will be required at project closeout.
6. The subrecipient is responsible for obtaining any required FDEP ERP permits and waivers. Compliance with FDEP requirements constitutes compliance with Florida CZM. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize FEMA funding; verification of compliance will be required at project closeout.

## 8.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The following agencies were contacted during the preparation of this EA:

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Florida Division of Historic Resources (SHPO)
- Florida State Clearinghouse

FEMA issued a disaster-wide initial public notice for Hurricane Michael on December 13, 2018 (**Appendix L**), to notify the public of projects under the PA, Individual Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs that may be occurring within floodplains or wetlands. The public will be notified of the availability of this SEA for review and comment by posting of the public notice (**Appendix M**) on FEMA’s website, CLH’s website, and near the proposed project locations, and a hard copy of the SEA will be made available at the original main hospital facility, located at 20370 Burns Avenue, Blountstown, Florida 32424. The public comment period ends after 30 days from the date of initial posting.

## 9.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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## 10.0 REFERENCES

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**Appendices are available for review upon request to  
FEMA-R4EHP-FLORIDA@fema.dhs.gov**