

Draft Environmental Assessment

**NORTH FOREST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
HOUSTON, TEXAS**

**Prepared for:
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAA	Clean Air Act
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CO	carbon monoxide
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
dB	decibels
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHBM	Flood Hazard Boundary Map
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
gpm	gallons per minute
MEP	Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing
mg/l	milligrams per liter
msl	mean sea level
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NFISD	North Forest Independent School District
NGVD	National Geodetic Vertical Datum
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NO ₂	nitrogen dioxide
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWI	National Wetland Inventory
O ₃	ozone
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
Pb	lead
PM ₁₀	particulate matter less than or equal to 10 microns
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
SO ₂	sulfur dioxide
TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
TPDES	Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
TWDB	Texas Water Development Board
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
THC	Texas Historical Commission
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USGS	U.S. Geologic Survey
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
UST	underground storage tank

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Authority

As a result of heavy rain and flooding in southeast Texas on June 8 and 9, 2001 related to Tropical Storm Allison, President Bush declared a major disaster for 27 counties in Texas (three more counties were added later). The disaster was designated as FEMA-1379-DR-TX. One of the hardest hit areas was in Green Bayou Watershed in Harris County, including the North Forest Independent School District (NFISD), where up to 28 inches of rain fell within a 12-hour period (HCFCD 2004).

As a result of damage sustained during the flooding, the NFISD applied for funding under the Public Assistance Program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In accordance with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 93-288, as amended, FEMA is required to review the environmental effects of the proposed action prior to making a funding decision. In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 10, FEMA has prepared this environmental assessment to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality's implementing regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508. The purpose of this environmental assessment is to analyze and assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action.

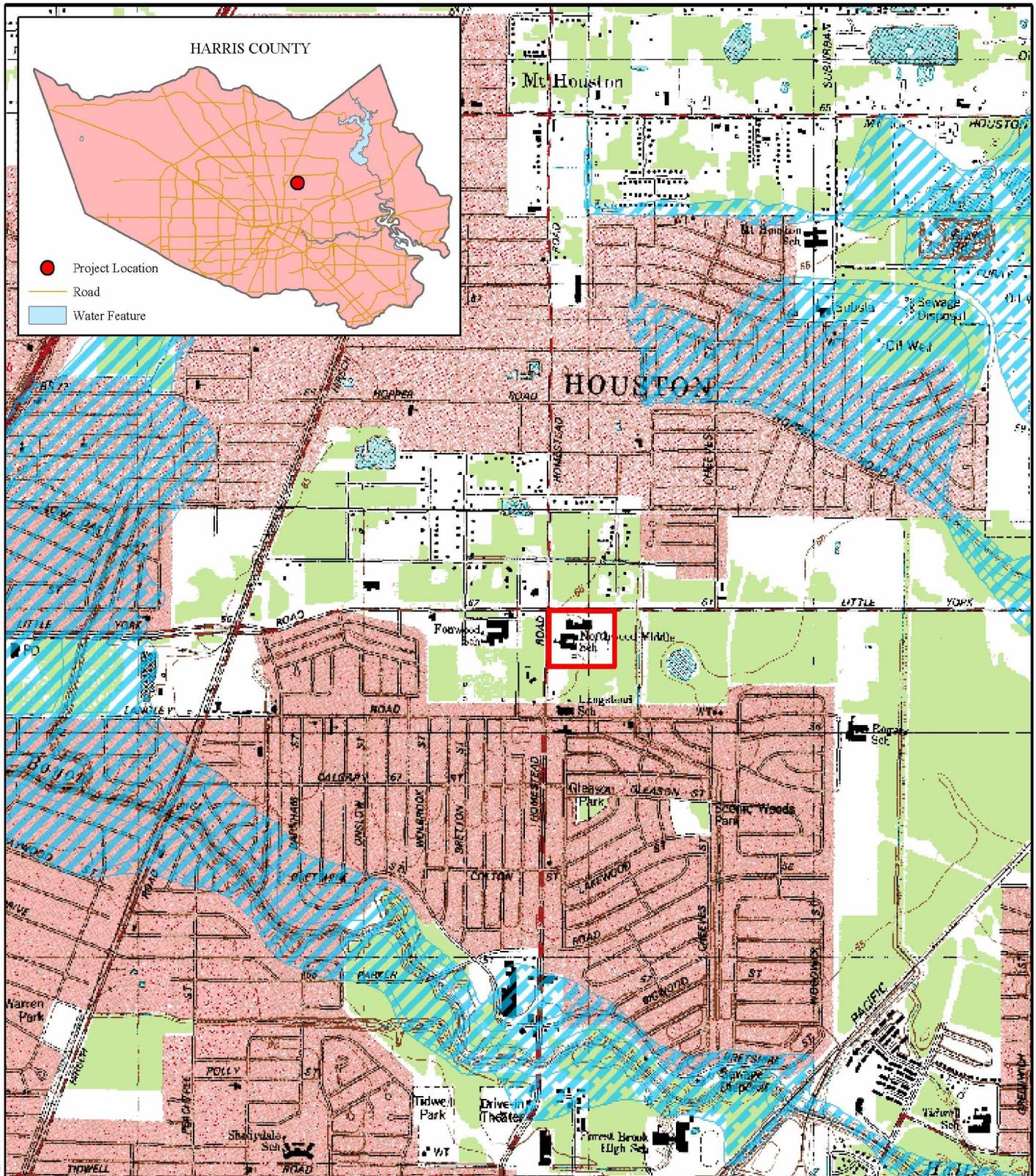
1.2 Project Location

The proposed project is located in the northeast section of Harris County, approximately nine miles north-northeast of downtown Houston (*Figure 1*), within the city limits of Houston. The NFISD operates 16 school facilities including nine elementary schools, four middle schools, two high schools, and one career and technology school. The NFISD also has three support facilities including a closed administrative building, central administrative offices currently housed in a former primary school, and a service center that houses the NFISD's support functions such as transportation, maintenance, security, and food services (TCPA 2004).

On June 8, 2001, flooding caused by Tropical Storm Allison damaged a number of the NFISD's buildings including the administration building. The NFISD administration, working with FEMA, determined that the administration building was a total loss and the administration's offices were relocated to the former primary school. The NFISD Board of Trustees recently agreed to rebuild a new administration building on the Northwood Middle School Campus. The middle school is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Little York Road and Homestead Road (*Figure 1*).

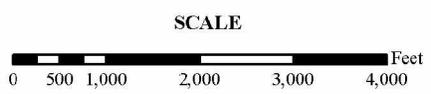
1.3 Project Description

The proposed project involves the construction of a new two-story brick building to the immediate south of the existing middle school building, which would comprise approximately 32,000 square feet of area. The existing main classroom building connected to the school would be demolished and the gymnasium and cafeteria areas would be remodeled as a book depository and general warehouse. A new parking lot would also be constructed to provide adequate parking for the



- Northwood Middle School (Project Area)
- 100-Year Floodplain
- 500-Year Floodplain

FIGURE 1
SITE LOCATION MAP
NORTH FOREST ISD BUILDING
HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS



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 Engineers • Planners • Project Managers

PROJECT NO. 052301400.0001

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2004

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Note: Turner Collie & Braden does not warrant the accuracy of this map, either to scale, accuracy or completeness.
 Source: USGS 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Map of Humble (1982) and Settegast (1982), Texas, FEMA Digital Q3 Flood Data from panels 48201C0685J, 48201C0495J, 48201C0490J, and 48201C0680K.

administrative staff as well as the general public. Sewer and water access would be in compliance with the required city building codes. The proposed project site is not located within a mapped 100-year floodplain (FEMA 1996).

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

The original administrative building for the NFISD was destroyed in the flooding that took place during the declared disaster event in June 2001. The flooding interrupted the administrative operations performed by the NFISD and displaced operations and administrative staff. The original administrative building was approximately 12,000 square feet in area and was declared a total loss. Currently, the administrative offices for the NFISD are temporarily located in the former Langstead primary school facility which consists of approximately 19,000 square feet of area.

The purpose of the proposed action is to allow the NFISD to continue to provide effective administrative and operation services to the NFISD by providing a facility to replace the one lost in the flooding event.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Preliminary Alternatives

Other options for the location of the administrative facility were considered during the early planning stages of the proposed project. Other than the preferred alternative, three other locations were studied for potential expansion and/or new construction. The three other sites considered were the following:

- At the original NFISD administrative building site
- Across from the NFISD Transportation Department
- At NFISD property located on Little York Road between Mesa Drive and Wayside Drive

All three of these options were dismissed due to unknown construction conditions and potential flooding issues. The NFISD, along with FEMA, determined that the most cost effective solution would be to build a new administrative facility on the site of the Northwood Middle School Campus.

3.2 No Action

The No Action alternative would not build a new administrative building for the NFISD. Under this scenario, the NFISD would continue administrative operations for the NFISD in the former Langstead primary school facility or look for other suitable facilities.

3.3 Proposed Action

The relocated administrative facility would be housed in a new, two-story brick building approximately 32,000 square-feet in size. The new facility would be located adjacent to and south of the existing Northwood Middle School at an elevation above the 500-year floodplain. A portion of the existing middle school building on the site would be demolished (to be done without FEMA funds). The construction of the new facility would consist of site preparation (minor grading and/or excavation) and construction of the building. The existing gymnasium and cafeteria areas would be

remodeled as a book depository and general warehouse. A new parking lot would also be constructed to provide adequate parking for the administrative staff as well as the general public (*Site Photographs*).

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

4.1 Geology, Seismicity and Prime Farmlands

The proposed project site is located approximately one-mile to the north of Halls Bayou in Harris County. The area generally consists of relatively flat terrain and is urban in nature (*Figure 1*). The proposed site is located inside the city limits of the City of Houston.

Harris County is located in the Coast Prairie and East Texas Timberlands Land Resource Areas. Average annual precipitation in Harris County is about 46 inches. Climate for Harris County is mainly marine with prevailing winds mostly from the southeast and south. The larger amounts of rainfall in the county tend to occur between May and September (USDA 1976). Elevations in the project area range from 67 feet to 60 feet above mean sea level (USGS 1982).

Because the proposed project involves the construction of a new building, Executive Order 12699, Seismic Safety of Federal and Federally Assisted or Regulated New Building Construction, applies to the proposed project. According to the Executive Order, the construction of the proposed project must use appropriate seismic design and construction standards and practices. The 1997 Uniform Building Code (UBC) and American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Standard 7-95 are the only model codes that are substantially equivalent to Federal recommendations for new building seismic design and construction. According to the National Seismic Hazard Mapping Project, there is currently a low probability of seismic activity within the project area (Frankel, et al. 2004).

The *Soil Survey of Harris County* indicates that the project site occurs within an area mapped as Urban soil association. In general, this association consists of soils that have been altered or obscured by buildings and other urban structures. Therefore, it is not practical to classify Urban soils (USDA 1976).

The Farmland Protection Policy Act was enacted in 1981 (P.L. 98-98) to minimize the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses as a result of federal actions. In addition, the Act seeks to assure that federal programs are administered in a manner that will be compatible with state and local policies and programs that have been developed to protect farmland. The policy of the Natural Resources Conservation Service is to protect significant agricultural lands from conversions that are irreversible and result in the loss of an essential food and environmental resource. The Service has developed criteria for assessing the effects of federal actions on converting farmland to other uses, including a Farmland conversion Impact Rating form AD-1066 that documents a site-scoring evaluation process to assess its potential agricultural value.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no impacts on the soils or geology of the area.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Because the project site is already developed with the Northwood Middle School, demolition and construction of a new administration building would not cause significant disturbance of geology and soils as part of the site preparation work.

The site is relatively flat; therefore, grading needed at the site would be minor. Exposed soils would be subject to erosion; therefore, silt fence and/or other storm water quality best management practices would be utilized during construction (see *Section 4.2*). In general, effects to geology and soils would be minor and temporary in nature. Because the site is within the city limits of Houston and is urban land, the soils do not meet the definition of prime or unique farmland soil and the Farmland Protection Policy Act is not applicable.

4.2 Water Resources

4.2.1 Surface Water

According to information obtained from the Harris County Flood Control District and observations made during the field visit, there is a subtle manmade drainage structure located near the southern boundary of the project site (*Figure 2*). Surface water runoff from the site travels by sheet flow during rain events to this drainage which flows from west to east and into another manmade drainage ditch located offsite about 500 feet away. The drainage flows southerly into Halls Bayou, which is the main receptor of surface runoff in the area and is located about 5,000 feet to the south (*Figure 1*). This section of Halls Bayou is listed as Stream Segment 1006 of the San Jacinto River Basin in the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) *State of Texas Water Quality Inventory*. Halls Bayou flows into Greens Bayou, which eventually flows into the Buffalo Bayou (Houston Ship Channel) and then east-southeasterly into Galveston Bay.

The TCEQ is required, under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, to identify water bodies for which effluent limitations are not stringent enough to implement water quality standards. The TCEQ also develops a schedule identifying Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) that will be initiated for priority impaired waters. Based on the TCEQ's (2002) Section 303 (d) list, this section of Halls Bayou is listed as an impaired waterway segment. The parameter of concern (for which water quality standards are not met) is bacteria.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no impacts on the surface water quality of the area.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Potential impacts to surface waters associated with the construction of the proposed project include the potential for minor erosion and sedimentation during construction activities. During this period, storm water runoff could carry sediment offsite into receiving waters. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be prepared and erosion and sedimentation control measures would be implemented to minimize any detrimental effects to water quality during construction. The project would disturb more than one acre of land; therefore, NFISD would be required to comply with the TCEQ's Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit, Permit No. TXR150000.

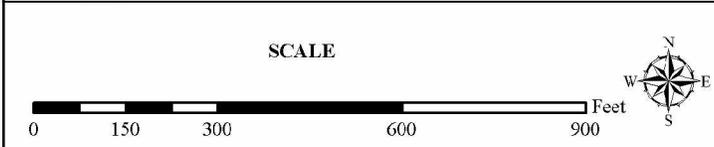
Any adverse effects to water quality associated with the construction of the new facility would be short term and be minimized by the mitigation measures described above. No long-term effects to surface water quality are expected as a result of the proposed project.



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LEGEND	
■ Proposed Building to be Constructed	■ Cleared Vegetation
■ Proposed Parking to be Constructed	— Drainage Structure
■ Existing Building to be Renovated	

FIGURE 2
SITE PLAN AND VICINITY MAP
NORTH FOREST ISD ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
HOUSTON, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS



TurnerCollie & Braden Inc. <small>Engineers • Planners • Project Managers</small>	
PROJECT NO. 052301400.0001	DATE: SEPTEMBER 2004

Note: Turner Collie & Braden does not warrant the accuracy of this map, either to scale, accuracy or completeness.
 Source: Aerial photograph dated 2002. Manmade ditch from Channels, Streams, and Creeks shapefile from Harris County Flood Control District. Buildings and parking to be constructed and/or renovated based on siteplan provided by Don Denmore and dated June 29, 2004.

4.2.2 Waters of the United States including Wetlands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Wetlands are identified as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. In addition, Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) directs federal agencies to take actions to minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands on federal property. A site visit was performed by Turner Collie & Braden, Inc. to identify potential waters of the U.S., including wetlands, on or adjacent to the proposed project site.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on wetlands or other waters of the U.S. and would not require a Section 404 permit.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: An onsite review of the project location did not find any potential areas meeting the definition of waters of the U.S., including wetlands. Waters of the U.S. in the vicinity of the project include Halls Bayou approximately 1,500 feet to the south. This area would not be affected by the proposed project. The proposed project would not impact waters of the U.S., including wetlands, and would not require a Section 404 permit. There are no navigable waters in the area; therefore, Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 does not apply.

4.2.3 Floodplains

Floodplains generally refer to 100-year floodplains as set by FEMA and are delineated on Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) or Flood Hazard Boundary Maps for all communities that are members of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The City of Houston and Harris County are participants in the NFIP.

Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) requires federal agencies to avoid or minimize development in the floodplain except when there are no practicable alternatives. According to the NFIP Flood Insurance Rate Map for Harris County (Map Number 48201C0685 J), the proposed project site is not located within a 100- or 500-year floodplain (*Figure 1*).

Information from the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project website was reviewed to determine if any new floodplain information was available for this watershed and the project site. No information for the project site is currently available (HCFCD 2004).

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would not result in impacts to the 100-year floodplain.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: No adverse effects to the floodplain are expected as a result of the proposed project. Coordination with the City of Houston floodplain manager has been initiated.

4.2.4 Groundwater

Area groundwater use and depths were determined through a review of information on water wells in the vicinity. Data from the Texas Water Development Board show several water wells located in the area of the proposed action. According to available records on wells in the area and Exhibits 14 and 18 of the 27th *Annual Groundwater Report* by the Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District, the upper extent of usable groundwater produced in the proposed project area from both the Chicot aquifer and Evangeline aquifer range in depth from 100 to 200 feet below ground surface (TWDB 2004 and HGCSO 2004).

The City of Houston Public Utilities Division supplies the project site with domestic drinking water. About 70% of the City's drinking water is from surface water treatment plants, and the remaining 30% is from permitted groundwater wells (COH 2003).

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on groundwater.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: No adverse impacts to groundwater quality are anticipated during construction or operation of the proposed administrative building.

4.3 Biological Resources

4.3.1 Flora and Fauna

The site area is located in the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes natural region. The growing season in this region is usually in excess of 300 days. Climax vegetation for this region is classified as post oak savanna or grassland. The project area can be further classified into the Upland Prairies and Woods natural subregion, which is described as woodlands that have developed along alluvial valleys (LBJ 1978). The project site occurs within an Urban region as described by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in *The Vegetation Types of Texas* (TPWD 1984).

The project site has been previously developed, and existing vegetation is dominated by turf grasses with a few scattered shrubs and large trees. The herbaceous layer on the project site is regularly mowed and consists primarily of St. Augustine grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*), bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*), *Paspalum* spp., and various other grasses and herbs that can be characterized as light tolerant and adapted to disturbance. The shrub layer consists of a few landscaped crape-myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) and privet (*Ligustrum* sp.). The trees on the project site consist of loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), water oak (*Quercus nigra*), live oak (*Q. virginiana*), palm (*Sabal* sp.), Chinese tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*), and pecan (*Carya illinoensis*).

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act was enacted to protect fish and wildlife when federal actions result in control or modification of a natural stream or body of water. No streams or other water bodies are located on the project site; therefore, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act is not applicable to the proposed action.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on flora or fauna in the project area.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: The construction of the proposed project would result in minimal clearing of vegetation. Because of the urban nature of the project area, affects to wildlife and habitat would be minimal.

4.3.2 Threatened and Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists one species in Harris County as being endangered—the Texas prairie dawn (*Hymenoxys texana*). In addition, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) is listed as threatened in Harris County (USFWS 2004).

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 provides for the protection of all listed threatened and endangered species from take defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct." Harm is further defined by USFWS to include significant habitat modification or degradation that results in death or injury to listed species by significantly impairing behavioral patterns such as breeding, feeding, or sheltering. Harass is defined by the USFWS as actions that create the likelihood of injury to listed species to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavior patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

The Texas prairie dawn is a wildflower that grows in sparsely vegetated areas on sandy soils at the base of mima mounds and is known to occur on the outskirts of Houston mainly within the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs in western Harris County (TPWD 2004). The project site is located in northeast Harris County, and the topography of the site is relatively flat. The bald eagle occurs along quiet coastal areas, rivers, or lakeshores with large, tall trees (Campbell 1995). Nests are typically located within two miles of a large body of water such as a reservoir or lake (TPWD 1995). The proposed project site has been previously developed and consists mainly of the existing middle school and landscaped grounds. No reservoirs or lakes are located within two miles of the project site. As such, the vegetative community on the project site is not characteristic of these habitats.

Table 1
Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species in Harris County

Common Name	Status	Comments
Prairie Dawn	Endangered	Western outskirts of Houston
Bald Eagle	Threatened	Migratory/Transient species

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on threatened or endangered species.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Consultation with the USFWS was initiated following the declaration of the Tropical Storm Allison disaster. This consultation resulted in a letter outlining the conditions related to Federally-listed Endangered Species and project-specific coordination. According to the letter and maps provided by the USFWS, the project site is not likely to contain habitat for any of the listed species described above; therefore, the proposed

project would not affect any threatened or endangered species or modify critical habitat. Correspondence related to this consultation is included in *Appendix B*.

4.4 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act requires that states adopt ambient air quality standards. The standards have been established in order to protect the public from potentially harmful amounts of pollutants. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six air pollutants. These pollutants include sulfur dioxide (SO₂), particulate matter with a diameter less than or equal to 10 micrometers (PM₁₀), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), and lead.

The EPA has designated specific areas as NAAQS attainment or non-attainment areas. Attainment areas are any areas that meet ambient air quality standards. Non-attainment areas are any areas that do not meet (or that contribute to ambient air quality in a nearby area that does not meet) the quality standard for a pollutant. According to the EPA, Harris County is currently designated as “non-attainment” for the air quality standard set for ozone (EPA 2004).

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on air quality.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Pollutant emissions from construction equipment may result in minor, temporary effects to air quality in the area immediately surrounding the construction activity. Vehicular exhaust emissions would be produced by the operation of diesel engines and other construction equipment. These effects would be localized and of short duration. The contractor would be required to keep all equipment in good working order to minimize air pollution.

After construction, the new administrative building is not expected to degrade area air quality. No new emissions are expected from the proposed building; therefore, the proposed administration building is not subject to any air emissions criteria or permitting.

4.5 Transportation

The proposed project is located near the southeast corner of the intersection of Little York Road and Homestead Road in northeast Houston, about nine miles from downtown. Both Little York Road and Homestead Roads are classified as major thoroughfares (roadways more than three miles long, connects freeways and principal thoroughfares). Major freeways in the area include US 59 to the west and north, Beltway 8 to the east, and Loop 610 to the south (COH 2004).

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on transportation in the area.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Construction personnel and equipment will require access to the site. Although construction traffic may temporarily affect access to the immediate project area, the proposed action is not expected to have a significant affect on transportation along Little York Road or Homestead Road or other local roadways. Because of the relatively small number of employees to be housed at the proposed administrative building, long-term effects on traffic are expected to be minor.

4.6 Noise

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound. Noise levels within and adjacent to the project area would increase during the proposed construction activities as a result of construction and earth-moving equipment. The noise levels generated would be limited to workday daylight hours for the duration of the work. City of Houston noise ordinances (Ord. No. 01-945, § 2, 10-17-01) indicate that noise levels up to 68 decibels are allowable for non-residential properties (COH 2001).

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would not result in impacts to noise receptors in the area.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: The proposed action would result in a slight increase in noise during the construction of the facility. The increase in noise is expected to be minor and short term and is expected to comply with the City's noise ordinance. No permanent changes to noise levels in the area are expected to be associated with the proposed project.

4.7 Cultural Resources

In addition to review under NEPA, consideration of impacts to cultural resources is mandated under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended and as implemented by 36 CFR Part 800. Requirements include the need to identify significant historic properties that may be impacted by the proposed action or alternatives within the project's area of potential effect. Historic properties are defined as archaeological sites, standing structures, or other historic resources listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If adverse effects on historic, archaeological, or cultural properties are identified, then agencies must consider effects of their activities and attempt to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts to these resources.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would have no effect on cultural resources in the area.

Alternative B – Construct Facility: The Northwood Middle School was constructed in 1960 (TCPA 2002). The proposed site has been previously developed, and historical artifacts are not likely to be found during construction. Coordination with the State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO) was concluded with a concurrence of "No Historic Properties Affected." However, if artifacts or other potential historic materials are discovered during construction, work would be suspended and the applicant would contact FEMA and the SHPO.

4.8 Socioeconomic

The City of Houston, population 1,953,631, is the county seat of Harris County (USCB 2000). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Harris County has a population of 3,596,086 and a per capita income of \$21,435 (USCB 2004). The primary industries in Harris County are petroleum refining, manufacturing, energy, aerospace and medical research, and international business (DMN 1997).

The NFISD provides education for about 11,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten to twelve. NFISD, the largest employer in the community, operates 15 schools, food services, and maintenance services while employing nearly 1,500 people. Those employed consist of teachers and staff members including secretaries and paraprofessionals (Schoolnet, Inc. 2003).

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative could possibly have an adverse impact on the NFISD, and consequently the community within the NFISD because the lack of a fully functional administration building could hinder educational processes.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Construction of the proposed project would facilitate and support the economic growth of the NFISD, and consequently the community within the NFISD, by improving and safeguarding the administrative operations that serve the NFISD. In addition, the construction of the new administration building would be expected to create new jobs in the short term.

4.9 Environmental Justice

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, entitled "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations". The Executive Order directs federal agencies to focus attention on human health and environmental conditions in minority and/or low-income communities. The Executive Order's goals are to achieve environmental justice, fostering non-discrimination in federal programs that substantially affect human health or the environment, and to give minority or low-income communities greater opportunities for public participation in and access to public information on matters relating to human health and the environment. It also requires that agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States.

The population within the NFISD is made up of 77% African American, 22% Hispanic, 0.6% white, and 0.8% Asian (Schoolnet, Inc. 2003). From 2002 to 2003, 83.6% of the students within the NFISD were classified as economically disadvantaged. For the same time period, all school districts within Texas had an average of 51.9% of students classified as economically disadvantaged (TEA 2003). The economically disadvantaged classification indicates eligibility for participation in federal and other public assistance programs. This indicator is used to measure family income levels within schools and school districts.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would not have disproportionate impacts on minority or low-income populations in the City of Houston or in Harris County.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Construction of the proposed project would not have an adverse effect on minority or low-income populations. The economically disadvantaged students and the minority-dominated population within the NFISD are expected to benefit from the construction of the administration building.

4.10 Safety

Safety and security issues that were considered in this environmental assessment include the health and safety of area residents, the public at-large, and the protection of personnel involved in activities related to the implementation of the proposed project.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would not likely have an adverse effect on health and safety.

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: The construction of the new administrative building is expected to follow all applicable federal, state, and local safety laws and guidelines. No adverse effects to the health and safety of NFISD students, employees, and others associated with the NFISD are expected.

4.11 Hazardous Materials

Hazardous wastes, as defined by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), are defined as “a solid waste, or combination of solid wastes, which because of its quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics may (1) cause, or significantly contribute to, an increase in mortality or an increase in serious irreversible or incapacitating reversible illness or (2) pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported or disposed of or otherwise managed.” Hazardous materials and wastes are regulated in Texas by a combination of federal laws and state laws. Federal regulations governing the assessment and disposal of hazardous wastes include RCRA, the RCRA Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), Solid Waste Act (SWA), and Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).

A review of selected regulatory environmental databases published by federal and state agencies was conducted to determine the potential for environmental degradation in the project area due to the presence of regulated facilities that are listed as having a past or present record of actual or potential environmental impact. The environmental database report was prepared by Environmental Data Resources, Inc. (EDR). The following is a list of the federal and state databases reviewed for this project: Texas State Superfund, National Priorities List, Delisted National Priorities List, Compensation and Liability Information System (CERCLIS), No Further Remedial Action Planned, Resource Conservation and Recovery Information System (RCRIS), Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Leaking Petroleum Storage Tank (LPST), TCEQ Petroleum Storage Tank (PST), Emergency Response Notification System, TCEQ Spills (SPILLS), TCEQ Municipal Solid Wastes Landfill Sites, TCEQ Closed and Abandoned Landfill Inventory, and TCEQ Voluntary Cleanup Program.

The regulatory review was supplemented with a site reconnaissance of the project area. Visual observation of the project area did not reveal obvious existing or potentially hazardous materials, substances, or recognized environmental conditions. The subject property is not listed on any of the above federal or state regulatory databases. Several regulated facilities are listed in the general area; however, these facilities are located beyond the area affected by the proposed project. Based upon the distance and regulatory status of these facilities, the potential for these facilities to impact the subject property is low. No unlabeled drums, unauthorized dumpsites or other sources of potentially hazardous materials were observed in the project area. No indications of pipelines crossing the project area were noted on the USGS topographic map reviewed for this project (USGS 1982).

Suspect asbestos-containing building materials were observed within the buildings at the subject property.

Alternative A – No Action: The No Action alternative would not disturb any hazardous materials or create any potential hazard to human health since no construction would occur

Alternative B – Build New Administrative Building: Based on the site reconnaissance and review of the regulatory database, no recognized environmental conditions were identified on the subject property or project area. On the basis of this information, the proposed action is not anticipated to affect any known hazardous materials. If hazardous constituents are unexpectedly encountered in the project area during the proposed construction operations, appropriate measures for the proper assessment, remediation, and management of the contamination would be initiated in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations. The contractor would take appropriate measures to prevent, minimize, and control the spill of hazardous materials in the construction staging area. Any hazardous waste generated by the facility will be disposed of according to appropriate laws and ordinances.

Prior to removal or demolition activities of the existing structures on the subject property, we recommend that an asbestos survey be conducted to identify, sample, and analyze suspect friable and non-friable building materials. The Environmental Protection Agency (National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants) and OSHA regulations require that asbestos be properly handled during renovation or demolition.

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVMENT

The public was invited to comment on the proposed action. A legal notice was posted in a local newspaper, The Houston Chronicle, and on the FEMA website. Additionally, the Draft Environmental Assessment was made available for review for a period of 30 days at the Dixon Branch Public Library. A copy of the notice is attached in *Appendix C*.

6.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PERMITS

As part of the development of early interagency coordination related to the response and recovery efforts, state and federal resource protection agencies were contacted. These agencies included the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and Texas Historical Commission. In addition, the Floodplain Manager for the City of Houston and the State Historical Preservation Officer were contacted specifically about the project described in this environmental assessment.

Other than utility permits and/or local building permits, it is not anticipated that other permits or approvals would be needed from any other regulatory agencies.

7.0 CONDITIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

To mitigate impacts from the preferred alternative, the project applicant would be required to:

- Implement appropriate best management practices (BMPs) for storm water management during construction.
- Use conventional site preparation techniques prior to and during construction.
- Ensure that construction activities would observe the appropriate ordinances regarding traffic control, occupational safety regulations, and appropriate noise control measures.
- If artifacts or other potential historic materials are discovered during construction, work would be suspended and FEMA and the State Historic Preservation Officer would be contacted.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of this Environmental Assessment conclude that the proposed construction of the new administrative building would result in no significant environmental impacts to the human or natural environment; therefore, the proposed action meets the requirements of a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) under NEPA and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required.

9.0 REFERENCES

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10.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

Project Manager and Principal Investigator:

Carlos Swonke

Sr. Project Manager

Turner Collie & Braden Inc.

Austin, Texas

Project Setting, Impacts:

Doug Zarker, P.G.

Staff Environmental Specialist

Turner Collie & Braden Inc.

Austin, Texas

GIS, Flora and Fauna, Threatened and Endangered Species:

Scott Ford

Environmental Specialist

Turner Collie & Braden Inc.

Austin, Texas

Appendices

Appendix A
Site Photographs



Photograph 1: East view of the existing middle school building and proposed site of building and parking to be constructed.



Photograph 2: Northwest view of the existing middle school building and proposed site of building to be constructed.



Photograph 3: Southeast view from second floor of existing middle school.



Photograph 4: Inside view of the existing storage facility that will be renovated.

Appendix B
Agency Correspondence

RECEIVED

JUL 12 2004

106

FEMA
TO NR OR ARCHITECTURE

TurnerCollie & Braden Inc.
Engineers • Planners • Project Managers

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

400 West 15th Street
Suite 500
Austin, Texas 78701
Tel: (512) 472-4519
Fax: (512) 472-7519

July 8, 2004

State Historic Preservation Officer
Texas Historical Commission
Attn: ~~Mr. Brad Patterson~~
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, TX 78711

RECEIVED

JUL 12 2004

Division of Architecture

**Re: North Forest Independent School District
Proposed New Administration Building
Northwood Middle School Campus
Homestead Road and Little York Road
Houston, Texas 77016**

Dear ~~Mr. Patterson~~:

As a result of damage sustained during the flooding associated with tropical storm Allison in June 2001, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is considering funding the construction of a new administration building proposed by the North Forest Independent School District (NFISD) in Houston, Texas. On June 9, 2001, President Bush declared a major disaster as a result of flooding in 31 counties in southeast Texas (FEMA-1379-DR-TX). As a result of this disaster and in accordance with 44 CFR, Part 10, FEMA is preparing an environmental assessment for the proposed project to meet the requirements of Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Turner Collie & Braden Inc. (TCB), on behalf of FEMA, is preparing the environmental assessment.

The NFISD is an urban school district located in the City of Houston and covers 33 square miles. The NFISD's Board of Trustees recently agreed to rebuild a new administration building on the Northwood Middle School Campus located at the above address. The former administrative building was determined to be a total loss by FEMA after the June 2001 flood event and the administrative offices were relocated to a former primary school. The proposed project involves the construction of a two-story brick building comprising approximately 32,000 square feet of area. The existing main classroom building connected to the school will be demolished and the gymnasium and cafeteria areas will be remodeled as a book depository and general warehouse. A new parking lot will also be constructed to provide adequate parking for the administrative staff as well as the general public. Sewer and water access will be in compliance with the required city building codes.

The purpose of the proposed construction of the new administrative facility is to replace the former administrative facility that was destroyed in the flooding that took place during the declared disaster event. For purposes of your review, the site is identified on the attached figure.

Turner Collie & Braden Inc.

*North Forest ISD
Proposed New Administrative Building
Northwood Middle School Campus
July 8, 2004
Page 2*

The purpose of this letter is to invite comment from your agency on archeological and historic resources that might be present in the area. Your timely response is greatly appreciated. Should you require any additional information, please contact me at 457-7754.

Sincerely,

Carlos Swonke
Carlos Swonke/AV
Project Manager

Attachment

cc: File

E:\FEMA\DR-1379-Allison\NFISD\Agency\THC_NFISD.doc

NO HISTORIC
PROPERTIES AFFECTED
PROJECT MAY PROCEED

By *[Signature]*
for F. Lawrence Oaks
State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 8-3-04



Federal Emergency Management Agency

Disaster Field Office
FEMA-1379-DR-TX
12300 N. Freeway, Suite 200
Greenspoint Mall
Houston, TX 77060

June 28, 2001

Edith A. Erfling
Section 7 Coordinator
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
17629 El Camino Real Suite #211
Houston, Texas 77058

Dear Ms. Erfling:

The enclosed species consultation summarizes our meeting on June 21, 2001. The meeting was conducted regarding the Presidentally declared disaster following severe flooding from Tropical Storm Allison, FEMA-1379-DR-TX, in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The contents of this document were arrived at through informal consultation with you. Please review and, if acceptable, provide us with your acceptance.

The below items summarize general conditions that will apply to the types of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funded projects that we discussed in our meeting:

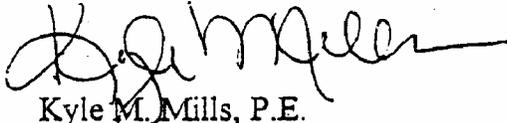
1. Any species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a Species of Concern (SOC) does not require further coordination for this disaster.
2. Further coordination on the Louisiana Black Bear is not required for the counties included in this disaster.
3. Any project that is confined to its predisaster footprint does not require further coordination for this disaster, except for projects located in counties with Bald Eagle nests. Coordination is required for projects taking place during nesting season, October 1st through May 30th, in areas identified on the USFWS maps provided.
4. Consultation on Red Cockaded Woodpeckers and the Louisiana Pine Snake are required only for projects involved in cutting old growth pine trees in areas where these species have been identified on the USFWS maps provided.
5. Projects involving culvert size increases do not require further coordination with USFWS except in Leon County in areas where the Houston Toad has been identified on the USFWS maps provided.

The following species identification maps are requested as follows:

1. Anderson County: new map showing Bald Eagle nest locations.
2. Cherokee County: new map showing Neches River Rose-Mallow.
3. Grimes County: new map showing Navasota Ladies-Tresses.
4. Hardin County: new map showing Texas Trailing Phlox.
5. Harrison County: new map showing Bald Eagle nest locations.
6. Jasper County: revised map showing Navasota Ladies-Tresses.
7. Leon County: new map showing Large-Fruited Sand-Verbena.
8. Madison County: new map showing Navasota Ladies-Tresses and Bald Eagle nest locations.
9. Nacogdoches County: new map showing Bald Eagle nest locations.
10. Polk County: revised map showing Texas Trailing Phlox.
11. Shelby County: new map showing Bald Eagle nest locations.
12. Smith County: new map showing Bald Eagle nest locations.

Enclosed with this letter is our understanding of FEMA's requirements for the threatened and endangered species occurring within the declared disaster area. Should you have any questions, please contact David Wittum or me at (832) 513-4313.

Sincerely,



Kyle M. Mills, P.E.
Environmental Officer
FEMA Region VI

cc: Ben Patterson, DEM Public Assistance Officer
Dan Pomplun, FEMA Public Assistance Officer
Kathy Reimer, FEMA Hazard Mitigation Officer
Edward G. Klaus, Texas Hazard Mitigation Officer



United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Division of Ecological Services
17629 El Camino Real, Suite #211
Houston, Texas 77058-3051
281/286-8282 / (FAX) 281/488-5882



July 11, 2001

Kyle M. Mills, Environmental Officer
FEMA Region VI
12300 N. Freeway, Suite 200
Greenspoint Mall
Houston, TX 77060

Dear Ms. Mills:

This responds to your June 28, 2001 letter which summarizes the general conditions that will apply to the types of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funded projects located in the area declared a disaster area following severe flooding from Tropical Storm Allison.

Please note that the bald eagle winters but does not nest in Anderson, Harrison and Madison counties. The bald eagle may be removed from these counties on your county-by-county list of threatened and endangered species. This list will be used by FEMA to determine if a federally listed species may occur in the vicinity of FEMA funded projects.

The Service agrees that the general conditions as detailed in your letter will ensure that FEMA funded projects will not impact federally listed species.

Per our discussion, I've enclosed the following maps to assist you in your project reviews:

1. Cherokee County: known locations of the Neches River Rose-mallow. This plant is located on the edges of open wetlands.
2. Grimes County: known locations of the plant Navasota ladies'-tresses.
3. Hardin County: known locations of the plant Texas trailing phlox.
4. Jasper County: known locations of the plant Navasota ladies'-tresses.
5. Leon County: known locations of the plant large-fruited sand-verbena and the Houston toad.
6. Madison County: known locations of the plant Navasota ladies'-tresses.
7. Nacogdoches: known locations of bald eagle nest.
8. Polk County: known locations of the plant Texas trailing phlox.
9. Shelby County: known locations of bald eagle nests.
10. Tyler County: known locations of the plant Texas trailing phlox.

Since the bald eagle winters but does not nest in Anderson and Harrison counties, we have not included maps for these counties. The bald eagle nest in Smith County has fallen. Therefore, its location is not a concern and a map for Smith County is not enclosed. Finally, the map of Madison county only shows known Navasota ladies'-tresses locations, as the bald eagle currently does not nest in this county.

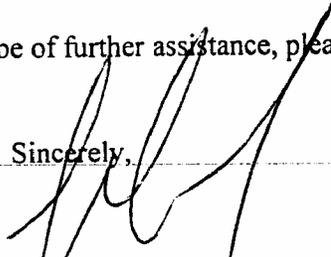
Kyle M. Mills, Environmental Officer

Page 2

The information depicted on these maps and on the maps you received earlier is sensitive and is intended for use by FEMA only.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Edith Erfling at 281/286-8282.

Sincerely,



Act
Carlos H. Mendoza
Project Leader, Clear Lake ES Field Office

Enclosures

	REDISH EGRET (SOC)	SOC- Coordination not required.
GRIMES	NAVASOTA LADIES-TRESSES (E)	Coordination required for projects located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided (usually on road ROW).
	BALD EAGLE (T)	Coordination required only between Oct 1 st & May 30 th nesting season for projects located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided.
	LOUISIANA PINE SNAKE (C)	Coordination suggested only for projects involved in cutting old growth pine trees, (mostly on Forest Service land).
HARDIN	TEXAS TRAILING PHLOX (E)	Coordination required for projects located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided. Coordination is not required if predisaster footprint is maintained (usually found in road ROW).
	BALD EAGLE (T)	Coordination required only between Oct 1 st & May 30 th nesting season for projects located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided.
	RED COCKADED WOODPECKER (E)	Coordination required only for projects involved in cutting old growth pine trees located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided.
HARRIS	PRARIE DAWN (E)	Coordination required for projects located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided for projects occurring outside the predisaster footprint normally found on road, pipeline, and utility ROW in the city of Houston and Harris County.
	BALD EAGLE (T)	Coordination required only between Oct 1 st & May 30 th nesting season for projects located in the areas identified on the USFWS maps provided.
	TEXAS WINDMILL GRASS (SOC)	SOC- Coordination not required.
	HOUSTON MACHAER-ANTHERA (SOC)	SOC- Coordination not required.
HARRISON	BALD EAGLE (T)	Coordination not required per USFWS letter dated July 11, 2001 from Edith Erling. The Bald Eagle winters but does not nest in Harrison county.
	LOUISIANA BLACK BEAR (T)	Will not be adversely affected. Consultation complete.

Appendix C
Public Notice

**Federal Emergency Management Agency
PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment
for the North Forest Independent School District Administrative Building
Houston, Texas
FEMA-1379-DR-TX.

The North Forest Independent School District (NFISD) has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance with the construction of a building to house administrative operations for the NFISD. The original administrative building for the NFISD was destroyed in flooding that took place during the declared disaster event in June 2001. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), the National Historic Preservation Act, and the implementing regulations of FEMA (44 CFR Part 9 and 10), an Environmental Assessment is being prepared to assess the potential impacts of the proposed action on the human and natural environment.

The Environmental Assessment evaluates alternatives that provide for compliance with applicable environmental laws. The alternatives to be evaluated include (1) No Action; (2) The proposed action — Build New Administrative Building.

The draft Environmental Assessment is available for review between September 13 and October 12, 2004, at the Dixon Branch Public Library located at 8002 Hirsch Road, Houston, Texas. The draft Environmental Assessment is also available for review online at the FEMA website <http://www.fema.gov/ehp/docs>.

Written comments regarding this proposed project can be mailed to Carlos Swonke, Turner Collie & Braden Inc., 400 West 15th Street, Suite 500, Austin, TX 78701. Comments should be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 12, 2004.

Appendix D
Hazardous Material Database Search Results

Summary of Regulated Hazardous Material Sites within one-half mile of the Subject Project

SITE NAME	SITE ADDRESS	DATABASE	STATUS/COMMENTS
Hilliam S. ODonnel	Homestead & Langley	UST	5 USTs; permanently Filled-in-Place.
Oil Chemical Marketing Inc.	10950 Homestead	UST	4 USTs; Temporarily out of use.
Quik Food Store	7503 E. Little York	UST LUST	2 USTs in use; continued monitoring of site. Site is hydraulically separate from subject property.

Notes: Table is summary of information provided by EDR on July 20, 2004.

UST – Underground Storage Tank

LUST – Leaking Underground Storage Tank

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