

Draft Environmental Assessment

FEMA Region 7 Temporary Group Housing Rock Ridge Group Site

EAXX-0240-70-000-1725992586

FEMA DR-4796-IA

Rock Valley, Sioux County, Iowa

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**U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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Kansas City, Missouri**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
APE	Area of Potential Effect
BFE	Base Flood Elevation
BMP	Best Management Practices
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
dba	Decibels
DOT	Department of Transportation
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EHP	Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation
EJ	Environmental Justice
EO	Executive Order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
GHGs	Green House Gases

GIS	Geographic Information System
IHP	Individual Housing Program
IPaC	USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation
MHU	Manufactured Housing Unit
MLR	Multi-Family Lease and Repair Program
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPL	National Priorities List
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
P.L.	Public Law
PLIRP	Petroleum Liability Insurance Restoration Program
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PPI	Pre-Placement Interview
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SOI	Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Protection Program
UFAS	Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

VOCs Volatile Organic Compounds
WOTUS Waters of the United States

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds, and tornadoes beginning June 16, 2024, affected the State of Iowa. President Biden signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-4796-DR-IA) on June 24, 2024, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal assistance to the designated areas of Iowa (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 408 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Individual Households Program (IHP) to provide emergency and temporary housing for eligible disaster survivors whose homes are uninhabitable or destroyed as a result of the declared event.

Significant damage was sustained throughout several counties in northwest Iowa. Record flooding was observed at numerous river points in northwest Iowa, leading to widespread devastating flooding in towns. While many cities were impacted, more widespread flooding took place in Rock Valley, Akron, Hawarden, Spencer, Milford, Cherokee, and Correctionville, Iowa. To provide temporary housing solutions for survivors of these storms and flooding, the State of Iowa requested assistance from FEMA in the form of Direct Temporary Housing (Direct Housing or Housing Assistance) through the IHP. FEMA authorized Housing Assistance under DR-4796-IA for a period of up to 18 months for the following counties: Buena Vista, Cherokee, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Humboldt, Lyon, Monona, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pottawattamie, Sioux, and Woodbury. FEMA's Direct Housing involves a variety of temporary housing solutions, including the Multi-Family Lease and Repair Program (MLR), Direct Lease, and Transportable Temporary Housing Units (TTHUs), which have been approved for implementation in the designated counties.

TTHUs may be provided in the form of recreational vehicles (RVs) or manufactured housing units (MHUs). FEMA determines whether an RV, MHU, or other form of temporary housing will be provided based on the applicant's household composition, the amount of time the applicant expects to require temporary housing, and the feasibility and cost of the available temporary housing options. Private sites are sites provided by an applicant at no cost to FEMA, typically on their property near their pre-disaster residence. FEMA inspects each potential private site to determine if the site is feasible for placing the size and type of TTHU unit that will meet the household's needs.

For commercial sites, FEMA may provide TTHUs when the rules of the commercial site do not violate the Fair Housing Act. Commercial sites are existing manufactured home parks with available pads that FEMA may lease for the purpose of providing Direct Temporary Housing Assistance.

As an option of last resort, when survivors' private lots are not feasible and commercial parks are unavailable or insufficient to meet the housing need, FEMA may construct a 'Group Housing Site' to provide Direct Temporary Housing Assistance in the form of multiple, grouped TTHUs. Group Housing Sites will often involve the lease of land and the installation of TTHUs, including construction of individual TTHU pads; ingress, egress, and circulation roads; any necessary upgrades for individual TTHUs to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act; concrete parking lots;

facility lighting; water, sanitation, and electrical utilities; and a perimeter fence.

The proposed Rock Ridge Group Site would be located at Rock Ridge Drive, Rock Valley, Iowa 51247 (GPS Coordinates: 43.202335, -96.252663). FEMA cannot apply DHS Categorical Exclusion (CATEX) N16 for federal assistance for disaster temporary group housing of less than five acres to this action because the identified tract encompasses 31.41 acres. The proposed development of the lot for use as a Group Site will be confined to the northeastern section of the property, encompassing approximately 17.5 acres.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, (PL 91-190, as amended), and its implementing regulations at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500 to 1508, promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and FEMA's procedures for implementing NEPA (FEMA Instruction 108-1-1). This law and these regulations and procedures require FEMA to consider potential environmental impacts before funding or approving actions and projects. This EA analyzed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development of a manufactured home park for use as a temporary group housing site, to be called Rock Ridge Group Site, as part of an expedited review process. FEMA will use the findings in this EA to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The scope of FEMA's environmental review includes evaluating project alternatives, characterizing the affected environment, identifying potential environmental impacts, and outlining ways to reduce or minimize adverse effects. This EA examines the site-specific environmental impacts associated with building a proposed manufactured home park that would be used for a FEMA Temporary Group Housing Site on land owned by the City of Rock Valley under a no-cost License and Use Agreement with FEMA. The improvements to the property would remain in place indefinitely. This EA was prepared based on a site evaluation, document research, and resource agency information. The public participation period will be brief, as necessitated by the emergency circumstances. Agency coordination and consultation will be deemed complete at the end of the public comment period. FEMA believes that this process will allow for sufficient action analysis and meet the goal of providing timely federal assistance to disaster survivors.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

The objective of FEMA's IHP is to expeditiously provide temporary housing for eligible disaster survivors. FEMA may provide assistance, including direct housing, to individuals and households displaced from their predisaster primary residence or whose predisaster residence has been rendered uninhabitable.¹ As of August 26, 2024, 392 Households within Sioux County meet Pre-Placement Interview (PPI) threshold criteria, of which 45 households have been approved for Direct Housing Assistance. As of August 26, 2024, there are no households currently occupying units under Direct Lease, on a private site, or in a commercial site. This leaves a shortfall of 347 households in Sioux

¹ Stafford Act Section 408

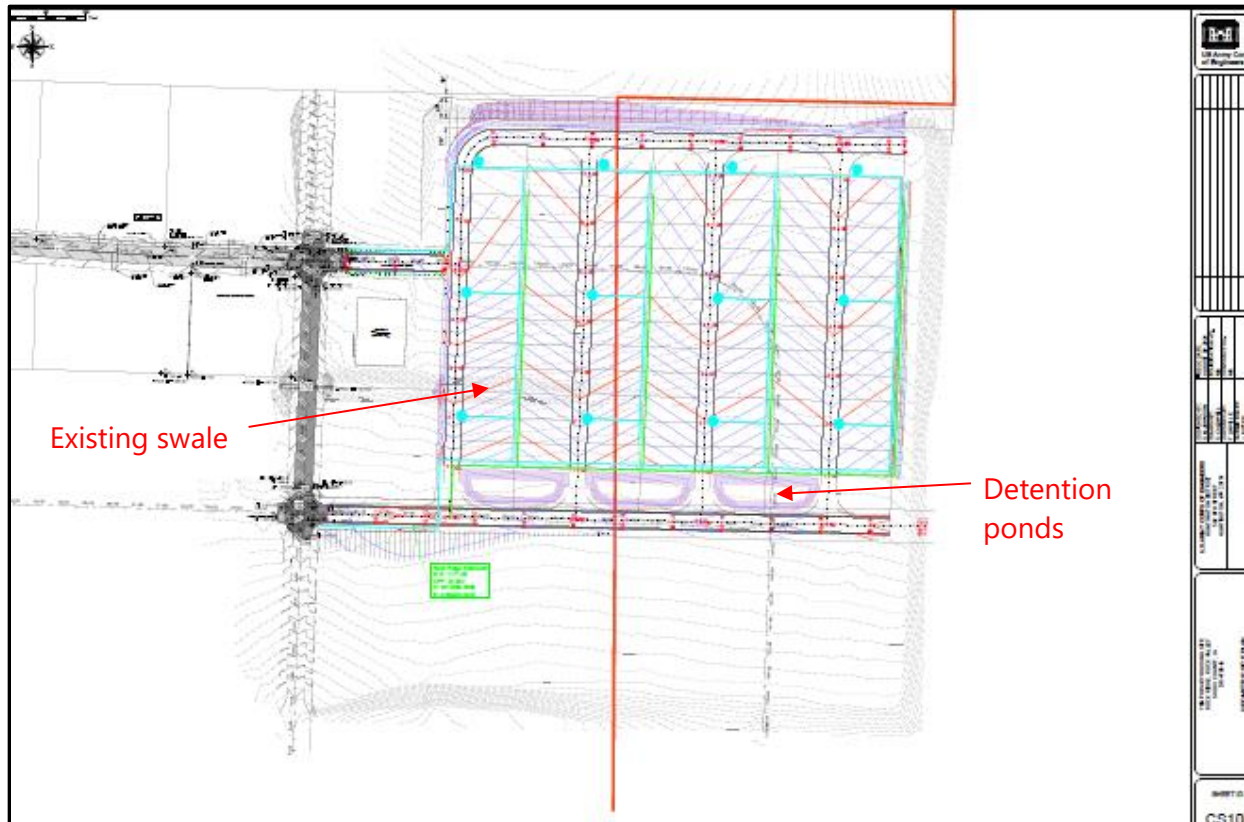
County still in need of assistance.

Some of the demand for housing may be met by repairing and improving existing multi-family housing to be used as temporary housing, placing an MHU on an applicant's private site, or by providing applicants with an MHU placed on an available pad leased in a commercial park. However, these methods may not meet the total requirement for direct housing assistance in Sioux County. Therefore, FEMA has identified the need to develop temporary group housing sites. The need for the project is to provide temporary housing for the remaining unhoused households in Sioux County.

In accordance with federal laws and FEMA regulations, the EA process for a proposed federal action must include an evaluation of alternatives and a discussion of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. This EA 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 also addressed.

3.0 PROJECT LOCATION AND BACKGROUND

The proposed location of the Rock Ridge Group Site would be at the eastern end of Rock Ridge Drive, Rock Valley, Iowa 51247 (GPS Coordinates: 43.202335, -96.252663) within the city limits of Rock Valley. This site consists of an approximately 31.41-acre L-shaped lot identified on plat maps as Parcel 0323351003 in the City of Rock Valley's Rock Ridge Third Addition (Appendix A). It is currently covered in opportunistic herbaceous growth and shows signs of recent agricultural use. The site is surrounded on the north, east, and south by lands in active agricultural use. A family-owned farm borders the proposed group housing site to the east; the farm buildings are at the southwest corner of their acreage, separated from the proposed housing site by a line of trees. A family-owned farm complex is located one half-mile to the southwest on the south side of U. S. Highway 18 (310th Street). The proposed development plan for placement of the MHUs is confined to the northern half of the lot. To the immediate west of the northern extent of the site there is a water tower (owned by the City of Rock Valley). An electrical substation (operated by the Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative), a hotel, and a group of commercial enterprises/warehouses have been constructed within the past 20 years along Rock Ridge Drive and Tower Road to the west of the proposed development. The site was cleared and partially developed in 2020 by the City of Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation for the purpose of expanding the footprint of the adjacent Rock Ridge Business Park. Since at least 2006, the parcel has been identified for development and had been zoned Industrial I-1. Site ownership was transferred from the Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation to the City of Rock Valley on August 8, 2024, with the intention of placing residential units on the site. At the August 22, 2024, City Council meeting, the City of Rock Valley rezoned the lot R-4 (Mobile/Manufactured Housing). The proposed FEMA group housing site would be developed on the northern half of the site. Tie-ins to the extended infrastructure would be created so the City of Rock Valley may, as need is identified, develop the remainder of the site to the maximum extent practicable.



(Figure 1: A concept drawing showing the anticipated placement of up to 84 manufactured housing units, overlaid on an aerial image showing the current site conditions of light agriculture. Units will initially be laid in six columns of eleven, with room to expand to seven columns of twelve. The existing Rock Ridge Drive will be extended eastward, to create the southern edge of development. Up to four access roads will be created leading north, to access the placed MHUs. This image shows utility line placement in green and turquoise, and the outlines of MHU plots in red. Source: USACE)

The site is situated within the eastern bounds of the city limits in a low-density largely rural area. The City of Rock Valley has had land to the east side of the city zoned for industrial development since 2006. This parcel has been zoned as I-1. As of August 22, 2024, the City of Rock Valley rezoned the lot for residential use, permitting the establishment of a manufactured housing development east of the City of Rock Valley and north of U.S. Highway 18 (310th Street). According to the FIRM accessed on FEMA’s Map Service Center website, the entirety of the site is in flood zone X, an area of minimal flood hazard outside the mapped Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

The moderately well drained site slopes gently up from its frontage on U.S. Highway 18; the soil is predominately loam overlaid on loamy eolian deposits made up of glacial outwash, eolian sediments and fine-silty loess. An existing paved road, Rock Ridge Road running west-east, terminates at the western edge of the proposed site. An unimproved gravel extension of the paved Fig Road which extends south from U.S. Highway 18 delineates the western extent of the property. It provides access to the water tower and electric substation, but it is not maintained as part of the City’s transportation grid. It will not be considered for upgrade by the City of Rock Valley, nor will it be used for access to the site during construction activities. Rock Ridge Road will be extended to the eastern extent of the site and will mark the southern extent of the currently proposed construction.

An existing swale bisecting the property toward the south end of the proposed construction is insufficient to provide adequate site drainage once the northern 17.5 acres of the lot have been graded and approximately 40% of the surface has been hardened to accommodate placement of the MHUs and associated infrastructure including roads and parking areas. To comply with local and state stormwater requirements, stormwater runoff from the site will be controlled by newly constructed drainage swales and the addition of three detention ponds designed to provide quality controls dictated by local ordinances. The existing swale will be filled and leveled. It is expected that the capacity of the detention basins will control runoff of up to 40 cubic feet per second, the 10-year outflow level. Runoff will tie into the existing stormwater management system draining south of U.S. Highway 18.

Utilities exist west of the project site and would be extended to the project site to provide service to the proposed MHU installation. Typical site conditions and adjoining properties are depicted in Appendix A.

4.0 ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives considered in addressing the purpose and need stated are the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1) and the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 2), which is to develop the Rock Ridge Group Site to accommodate placement of up to 84 MHUs. Concurrent with the Preferred Action Alternative, other federally assisted housing options are being implemented by FEMA's IHP. These options include minor home repairs, rental assistance, and installing manufactured housing units on private sites or at existing commercial sites. These options have been rapidly depleted, exacerbating the high demand for housing in Sioux County; the remaining alternative is to build an emergency and temporary group housing site where the above options do not provide sufficient capacity to satisfy the demand.

To expedite the group housing site selection process, FEMA has worked closely with local officials and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to identify potential sites outside the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA). Compliance specialists from the USACE and a FEMA historic preservation specialist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for architectural history (SOI Qualified) conducted a site reconnaissance on August 9, 2024. Important factors considered in choosing a site include:

- demand for temporary housing in the area;
- proximity to services and amenities (schools, healthcare facilities, public transportation, etc.) to the proposed group site;
- engineering and construction feasibility;
- access to utilities;
- land use compatibilities;
- property owner lease;
- costs to develop and maintain the site, and;

- environmental and cultural resource sensitivities.

FEMA continues to evaluate alternative sites in Sioux County. Although various alternatives continue to be identified, the amount of needed housing in the City of Rock Valley and the need to place survivors in secure housing as quickly as possible has limited this EA to analysis of one suitable site alternative at this time. The Rock Ridge Group Site was selected for further detailed analysis because it meets basic site feasibility and selection criteria. Other group sites were considered but were deemed infeasible based on factors including proximity to core populations in need of housing assistance, location within a special flood hazard area, property/lot size limitations, access to utilities, and willingness of landowners to sign a lease with FEMA.

4.1 Alternative 1: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, displaced residents would remain without stable housing accommodations. Survivors may, and will, continue to leverage less than desirable housing options, including but not limited to staying with relatives or friends, or in hotels, their damaged dwellings, tents, personal vehicles, places of worship, place of employment, or other temporary locations until they resolve their long-term housing needs. This alternative does not address immediate public health and safety concerns related to unstable accommodations of survivors nor does it provide solutions to ameliorate the overall well-being of the community. In short, the No Action Alternative does not satisfy the purpose and need of the direct housing mission. The No Action alternative will continue to be evaluated throughout this EA and serve as a baseline for comparison of impacts from other action alternatives.

4.2 Alternative 2: Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Preferred Alternative (see Figure 1), FEMA would provide temporary group housing in the form of MHUs for eligible disaster survivors at Rock Ridge Drive, Rock Valley, Iowa 51247 in Sioux County, Iowa (center mass GPS Coordinates: 43.202335, -96.252663). FEMA would provide temporary housing for disaster survivors who would be relocated to the site with an expected occupancy of up to 18 months, or when the IHP ends.

Development at this site would allow displaced residents to remain within relative proximity to their damaged dwellings and communities. Access to their workplaces, schools, childcare, places of worship, familiar food and shopping services, laundry facilities, playgrounds, and pet areas within reasonable commuting times would be retained.

The Preferred Alternative would involve the initial placement of up to 66 MHUs at the project site, with utility connections installed to handle up to 84 MHUs at a later date. Development of the site would require the installation of utilities, construction of gravel roadways and parking lots, placement of stone-base and concrete for pads, pathways, residential parking, and associated appurtenances. The following specific site development components would be included with this project:

- Site preparation would include clearing and grading the lot, removal of woody vegetation and debris, and filling in the swale bisecting the site from its western extent;
- Existing infrastructure for water, sewer, and electrical services on Rock Ridge Road would be extended onto and throughout the site;
- New water lines and hydrants accessible for all units would be installed on the property;
- A storm water drainage system would be developed according to local and state stormwater requirements and tied into existing infrastructure south of U.S. Highway 18 (310th Street);
- Up to three above ground storm shelters, approximately 500 square feet each, will be constructed as a safety measure to provide shelter in the event of severe weather events;
- All MHUs installed will meet Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard (UFAS) requirements; 100 percent of the on-site essential services and facilities (such as mailbox kiosk) would be ADA compliant; and
- Erosion control would be established during the construction period and a perimeter fence would be constructed around the project site.

FEMA would operate and maintain the site during the term of construction activities after which oversight of the Group Site would be the responsibility of the City of Rock Valley. The housing stock will be turned over to local interests after the completion of FEMA's Direct Housing mission. It is anticipated at this point that the group housing site will become a permanent manufactured home park in Rock Valley. Relevant construction exhibits related to this alternative can be found in Appendix B.

4.3 Alternatives Considered and Dismissed

Pursuant to NEPA, this EA is required to consider and analyze the potential environmental impacts of the Preferred Alternative, No Action Alternative, and additional reasonable alternatives when applicable. Reasonable alternatives are defined as technically and economically feasible and meeting the purpose and need for the proposed action as described in section 2.0 of this EA. Evaluation of the following alternatives are subject to screening criteria (selection standards) which are suitable for the proposed action. These criteria may include requirements or constraints associated with operational, technical, environmental, budgetary, and time factors. Those alternatives determined to be unreasonable are dismissed from detailed analysis in this EA.

The Rock Valley Group Housing Site was selected for further detailed analysis because it meets both the basic site feasibility and selection criteria. Two additional group housing sites, (1) Rivers Bend Campground and (2) C&J Trailer Park, were considered but are being dismissed from this review.

4.3.1 Rivers Bend Campground

The 94-acre River Bend Campground at 2433 300th Street, Rock Valley, Iowa, contains up to 74 slips

which could accommodate recreational vehicles. This area is mapped in a Zone A (1.0 percent annual flood hazard) Special Flood Hazard Area. Fifty-seven of these slips were winterized, and the remaining slips could be adversely affected by below-freezing temperatures in winter. This location was selected as one of two temporary non-congregant sheltering locations in Rock Valley by the State of Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD). Up to 74 slips were made available for placement of TTHUs, which would remain in place up to 180 days to provide temporary housing relief. Because 44 CFR Part 9.7 (b)(1) requires the federal agency to avoid floodplain locations unless they are the only practicable alternatives, the Rivers Bend Campground alternative was dismissed during the evaluation process.

4.3.2 C&J Trailer Park

The C&J Trailer Park, at 605 10th Street, Rock Valley, Iowa, contained up to 28 manufactured homes on its 10.22-acre lot, based on aerial imagery from approximately May 2021. This area is mapped in a Zone A (1.0 percent annual flood hazard) Special Flood Hazard Area. Because of its location within the floodplain, many of the existing pads had been elevated above the known Base Flood Elevation of 1239.1 feet. Despite being elevated, several of the homes in this area were damaged to the extent that survivors requested housing assistance. This location was selected as one of two temporary non-congregant sheltering locations in Rock Valley by HSEMD. Up to 40 slips were made available for placement of TTHUs, which would remain in place up to 180 days to provide temporary housing relief. Like the Rivers Bend Campground, C&J Trailer Park is located in a mapped floodplain; 44 CFR Part 9.7(b)(1) requires that unless it is the only practicable alternative, the federal agency avoid action in that location. Because of that requirement, coupled with recent flood related damage to existing housing stock at that site, the C&J Trailer Park alternative was dismissed during the evaluation process.

4.3.3 Rationale for Alternatives Considered and Dismissed

The rationale for dismissing these two sites is based on several factors, including feasibility of placement of winterized MHUs, pad sizes required for placement of full sized MHUs, the location of sections of these facilities within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) and integration of the goal of avoiding direct and indirect support of floodplain development as directed in EO (Executive Order) 11988 (Floodplain Management). With appropriate mitigation measures, these two alternatives are being used by the State of Iowa for shorter-term Non-Congregant Sheltering to address the total demand for post-disaster housing in Sioux County. In contrast, the Preferred Alternative could be developed wholly outside of the floodplain.

4.4 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.

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.

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

The Impact Scale and Criteria Analysis reviews the potential impacts of the intended action for both positive and negative effects and for both short- and long-term impacts. The impact analysis in this EA evaluates the potential environmental direct and indirect impact of the No Action Alternative and the Preferred Alternative. A summary table of the potential impacts of Alternative 1 and 2 is provided in Table 4.5.2 below.

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

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
Physical Resource: Geology and Soils, and Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, soils in this area have been heavily disturbed since 2006 due to plans for economic development. The land has not been reliably cultivated and would not represent a loss of significant farmland acreage. Creation of a housing site here does not lead to a loss of prime or unique farmland within Sioux County.
Physical Resource: Air Quality and Clean Air Act (CAA)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, construction activity generated fugitive dust would be controlled using standard construction best management practices (BMPs), including watering of exposed surfaces, and enclosing or covering stockpiled material. Adherence to Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR) air quality standards and regulations during the construction and operation of the group site would be followed.
Physical Resource: Climate Change	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, the creation of the Rock Ridge Group Housing Site will not meaningfully increase greenhouse gasses or fugitive dust in the surrounding area. Changes to these levels will be confined to the period of construction activities. Establishment of a group housing site does not substantively change current housing levels in the community as its construction largely replaces lost housing stock.
Water Resources: Clean Water Act (CWA) and Surface Water	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, use of best management practices (BMPs) during construction to minimize impacts would be implemented, appropriate permits would be acquired, and guidelines such as installation of silt fencing around the construction site, would be followed to minimize stormwater impacts. Disturbed soil would be protected with seed or sod and fill material stored on-site would be appropriately covered. A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required for Alternative 2. the project proponent or their contractor would coordinate

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
		with the Iowa DNR and Sioux County regarding required permits prior to initiating work.
Water Resources: Clean Water Act (CWA) and Surface Water	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, use of best management practices (BMPs) during construction to minimize impacts would be implemented, appropriate permits would be acquired, and guidelines such as installation of silt fencing around the construction site, would be followed to minimize stormwater impacts. Disturbed soil would be protected with seed or sod and fill material stored on-site would be appropriately covered. A National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required for Alternative 2. the project proponent or their contractor would coordinate with the Iowa DNR and Sioux County regarding required permits prior to initiating work.
Water Resource: Floodplain Management (EO 11988)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>	For Alternative 2, FEMA would coordinate with the local Floodplain Administrator to ensure project complies with the no adverse impact principle.
Water Resource: Protection of Wetlands (EO 11990) and Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, a stormwater management system would be designed so the project would not cause adverse effects to water quality or affect off-site flooding impacts. Neither would resultant runoff cause or contribute to violations of surface water standards, including any anti-degradation provisions, and any special standards. The project proponent or their contractor would be responsible for obtaining and complying with any permits required by applicable regulatory agencies.
Water Resource: Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) and Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA)	Alternative 1: <i>Not Applicable</i> Alternative 2: <i>Not Applicable</i>	Neither CZMA nor CBRA regulatory requirements are applicable to this assessment because there are no coastal resources governed by either Act in Iowa.

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
Water Resource: Drinking Water and Groundwater	Alternative 1: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i> Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, any potential hazardous materials used, and any hazardous wastes generated during construction would be managed in accordance with applicable environmental compliance regulations to prevent releases to groundwater.
Biological Resource: Fish and Wildlife	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, noise generated during construction activities would be restricted to daylight hours, limiting the duration of disturbance to wildlife.
Biological Resource: Vegetation	Alternative 1: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, any vegetative debris generated during the construction activities would require coordination with Iowa DNR for staging and disposal activities. No invasive species were observed at the site. BMPs will be used to prevent introduction of invasives during construction.
Biological Resource: Threatened and Endangered Species	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>	This location does not contain suitable habitat for any federally listed species which may be found in Sioux County, IA. Although the USFWS IPaC report identifies the Northern Long-eared Bat as possibly present in the Action Area, a site-specific analysis conducted under the USFWS <i>Range-Wide Indiana Bat & Northern Long-Eared Bat Survey Guidelines</i> has determined that there would be no effect to the species. No Threatened or Endangered Species would be expected to be found in the project's Action Area.
Biological Resource: Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>	This location does not contain suitable habitat for foraging or roosting for migratory birds, and construction activities are not anticipated to disrupt migratory patterns.
Biological Resource: Magnusson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act (MSA)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>	Protections under Magnusson-Stevens do not require consideration as there is no Essential Fish Habitat in Iowa; the site is inland and no impacts to these conservation areas would be created.

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
Biological Resource: Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA)	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternate 2: <i>No Impact</i>	For Alternative 2, the site is over 660 feet away from the nearest known Bald Eagle nest (1.7 miles from the site). Site development will have no potential to affect Bald and Golden Eagle nesting as there is no suitable nesting habitat for either species near the site.
Cultural Resource: Historic and Archaeological Resources	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact; No Historic Properties Affected</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact; No Historic Properties Affected</i>	<p>For Alternative 2, in the event that archaeological deposits (soils, features, artifacts, or other remnants of human activity) are uncovered during the work, the project shall be halted. The contractor and or responsible party shall immediately stop all work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. The contractor and or responsible party shall inform the FEMA Region 7 Regional Environmental Officer (REO) immediately, will secure all archaeological finds, and will restrict access to the area. The REO will consult with the Iowa State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and other potential consulting parties including Native American Tribes and the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA). Work in sensitive areas may not resume until an archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards determines the extent and historic significance of the discovery and consultations are completed. Work may not resume at or around archaeological deposits until the contractor and or responsible party is notified by the REO. Noncompliance with this requirement may jeopardize the receipt of federal assistance including funding.</p> <p>Upon discovery of suspected human remains during construction, including bone or other remains suspected to be human, ground-disturbing activities shall immediately cease within 50 feet of the discovery. The construction contractor or responsible party (“on-site responsible person”) will immediately notify the State Medical Examiner (SME), and the appropriate local law enforcement agency in</p>

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
		<p>accordance with Section 523I.316.6 of the Iowa Code, and the FEMA Region 7 Regional Environmental Officer (REO), will secure all remains, and restrict access to the area. Photographs and or video of the discovery shall be prohibited. The REO will notify the Iowa SHPO, and the University of Iowa’s Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) Bioarchaeology Program Director, Indian tribes, and other interested parties within 24 hours of the discovery. If there is uncertainty as to whether remains are human or of non-human origin, the OSA’s Bioarchaeology Program Director shall be contacted to make the determination. In cases where human remains are determined to be Native American, FEMA shall also consult with the appropriate Tribal representatives. Additionally, FEMA shall follow the guidelines outlined in the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) Policy Statement Regarding the Treatment of Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects (February 23, 2007) and the OSA’s Unanticipated Discoveries Plan for Human Remains, that outlines procedures recommended in the event of an unanticipated discovery of human remains during construction associated with projects for which standard Section 106 consultation has occurred between a federal agency and the SHPO. Noncompliance with this requirement may jeopardize the receipt of federal assistance including funding.</p>
<p>Socioeconomic Resource: Land Use</p>	<p>Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i></p>	<p>For Alternative 2, the land will be developed in accordance with site plans. The project area has been scheduled for development since 2006. Recent nearby development has included installation of water utilities, a hotel, and the anticipated relocation of a city maintenance shop. The land has not been regularly cultivated and would not represent a loss of significant farmland acreage.</p>

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
Socioeconomic Resource: Noise	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, adherence to the Sioux County noise ordinance would be followed during the construction and operation of the proposed group site. Noise generated from the construction activities described in Alternative 2 would be intermittent, heard only during daytime, and only for the duration of the project activities.
Socioeconomic Resource: Transportation and Traffic	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Minor Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, access to the site will be accomplished by extending Ridge Road at the south of the site and Tower Road at the north. These actions are within the City of Rock Valley’s long term development plans so although a permanent alteration, the long-term effects will be minimal. The contractor would coordinate with the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) and the city of Rock Valley to ensure project complies with all applicable standards.
Socioeconomic Resource: Hazardous Materials/Wastes & Solid Waste	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, FEMA would require any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during implementation of the proposed project to be disposed of and handled in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. The project proponent or their contractor would be responsible for obtaining any permits, or authorizations, if required, prior to handling and disposal of hazardous or solid waste.
Socioeconomic Resource: Occupational Health and Safety	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>Negligible Impact – Not Significant</i>	For Alternative 2, occupational health and safety risks would be minimized as all personnel on site during construction activities would wear and use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow all applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and procedures. A health and safety plan would be developed and implemented prior to construction. 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.

Resource and Resource Type	Environmental Consequence	Environmental Protection Measures and Required Permits
Socioeconomic Resource: Utilities	Alternative 1: <i>No Impact</i> Alternative 2: <i>No Impact</i>	For alternative 2, all utilities will be tied into existing infrastructure at the west end of the project site.
Socioeconomic Resource: Environmental Justice (EO 12898), and Protection of Children from Environmental Health and Safety Risks (EO 13045)	Alternative 1: <i>Moderate Adverse Impact – Significant</i> Alternative 2: <i>Moderate Beneficial Impact – Significant</i>	For Alternative 1, not creating housing would leave affected survivors in less-than-ideal living conditions, exacerbating human health and safety, and would adversely impact socioeconomic indicators. For Alternative 2, creation of a group housing site would result in a beneficial impact as displaced survivors would have access to safe, secure and sanitary housing. Environmental Justice screening does not identify a statistically significant population of low-income or minority populations in the area.

5.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

5.1 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

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

The underlying geologic foundation in the Rock Ridge Action Area is dominated by the Colorado group (also known as the Fort Benton group) a shale series of Upper Cretaceous (between 100.5 and 66 million years ago) vintage, predating the Cenozoic, or “recent life” Period (between 66 million years ago and today). This group is roughly composed intermittently of calcareous shale, inoceramite limestone lenses, and noncalcareous shale, all marine in origin.

The Action Area is located in the Northwest Iowa Plains landform association. According to data contained within the OSA I-Sites Pro online geographic information system (GIS) and database for archaeology in Iowa’s Soil Map, the soil association is comprised of the Bolan and Dickman series. These soils are common to Sioux County (Soil Survey of Sioux County, 1990) and both series were developed from alluvial and eolian deposition. These soils tend to have a 12–14-inch loamy, organic rich A horizon. This A horizon overlies a loamy blocky B horizon, and a friable sandy textured C horizon composing the parent material. These soils tend to have considerable slope that approaches 14 percent in some areas.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey soil data, accessed August 10, 2024, soils underlying the subject site consist entirely of loam soils: Ida silt loam, Dickman sandy loam and Galva silty loam soil. These soils are considered farmlands of statewide importance. The majority of the site is moderately eroded, well drained Bolan loam 2-9 percent slope with a moderate surface runoff index. Bolan parent material found in the northern extent of the site is indicated as loamy eolian deposits; glacial outwash, eolian sediments and fine-silty loess are the parent materials for soils in the southern extent. (Appendix C).

The NRCS soil map identifies the location as prime farmland. 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. A recent trend in land use has been the loss of prime farmland to other uses. This puts pressure on marginal lands which cannot be easily cultivated. Marginal lands are subject, to a greater degree than prime farmland, to erosion or drought and are generally less productive.

The purpose of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (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) Part 4201(b)). For the purposes 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 (directly or indirectly) to non-agricultural use and are implemented or assisted 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. Using the impact rating form, the federal agency undertaking the project then determines whether and how to move forward, based upon an assessment of the project's impacts. 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, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on geology or soils and there would be no change in land use.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the construction and operation of the proposed group site would disturb soils during grading, paving, and facility construction activities and would irretrievably convert a tract of land previously zoned for agricultural use from cultivation to residential use. However, soils in the area have been previously disturbed. As early as the City of Rock Valley identified this 33.4-acre tract for future expansion of the Rock Valley Business Park, a light industrial/commercial development at the eastern edge of the City. The proposed Group Housing Site is within the city limits and had been zoned as I-1 (Light Industrial) in anticipation of future development. As of August 22, 2024, the City has rezoned the area to R-4 residential use, to permit the establishment of manufactured housing development. To determine if the federal action of constructing a group housing site on the tract would be the catalyst for conversion to non-agricultural use, a representative of FEMA's Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (EHP) staff contacted the Sioux County representative of the NRCS on August 27, 2024 for technical assistance in resolving FPPA. The guidance received was that because the lot is within the incorporated limits of Rock Valley and had been slated for development since 2006, there was no trigger for a review under the FPPA. The creation of a group housing site, or indeed any development on this plot, would not meaningfully decrease the prime and unique farmland within Sioux County. The overall conversion of this property within City limits does not trigger FPPA analysis and will not lead to loss of prime or unique farmland within Sioux County. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on soils. The impact would not be significant.

5.1.2 AIR QUALITY AND CLEAN AIR ACT (CAA)

The CAA requires the U.S. 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 (CO), lead, nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide (SO₂). Areas meeting the quality standards for the criteria pollutants are designated as being in attainment. Areas which do not meet the air quality standards for one of the criteria pollutants are designated as being in nonattainment for that standard. Sioux 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. According to EPA's Greenbook accessed on August 10, 2024, Sioux County has never recorded a year of being in nonattainment.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on air quality.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the construction of the group site 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. The primary phases of construction that would affect the ecological environment and human health occur during earthwork and foundation activities. Fugitive dust generated by construction vehicles and equipment operations on dirt surfaces would be the primary source of particulate matter generated during construction activities. To a lesser degree wind action on stockpiled materials will temporarily elevate ambient particulate matter levels. Fugitive dust generated from the proposed action would consist primarily of nontoxic particulate matter and would be controlled at the site using BMPs, including watering of exposed surfaces and enclosing or covering stockpiled material. As the distance from the site increases, sensitivity to dust soiling effects on people and property decreases; beyond 150 feet from the source, there are *de minimis* effects.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) production associated with the operation of construction machinery and CO₂ emissions generated by curing concrete would increase during construction activities; construction related VOC emissions are more closely associated with use of building materials such as tile adhesive, roofing materials and paints which would not be required by placement of MHUs on the prepared sites. The limited construction window and the restrictions for daylight only operation of machinery on site would not be expected to have a minor and transitory effect on local air quality.

Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a minor adverse 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. Executive Order 14057, signed in 2021, sets goals for reduction of directly (scope 1) and indirectly (scopes 2 and 3) controlled GHGs by 2030 with the aim of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Temporary increases in carbon emissions are inherent in construction activities. Although there will be permanent increases in GHGs in the project area, the net increase will be negligible. The development of a Group Site to house residents displaced by the declared disaster will have a negligible impact on the City of Rock Valley's population. According to current guidance from the CEQ, unless the proposed action's direct annual emissions would be greater than 25,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, a quantitative analysis and disclosure of GHG emissions is not warranted.

While Sioux County is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, analysis across multiple risk factors indicate that such impacts are projected to be minor. In Sioux County the projected risks from climate change include an increased probability of higher temperatures with the related risk of decreased air quality. Sioux County has better air quality than 68% of Iowa's counties; the majority of properties in the county are at minor risk for poor air quality days over the next 30 years. Likewise, there will be a minor increase in flood risk as annual precipitation is expected to rise. Projected over the next 30 years, it is expected that operational risk of flooding to infrastructure including hospitals, power stations, police stations, fire stations and airports, as well as the risk to commercial and residential sectors will remain minor; an expected moderate increase in risk to road flooding is predicted.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no effect on greenhouse gases.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the construction of the group site would generate short-term construction equipment exhaust emissions. Pollutants that would be emitted from the internal combustion engine exhaust of construction vehicles, equipment, domiciles, and resident vehicles include certain criteria pollutants, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and certain GHGs. The EPA has estimated the average person produces approximately 9.41 metric tons (20,750 pounds) of carbon a year. Factors such as how much the individual drives, their car's mileage-per-gallon, the home's average temperature, energy sources, and waste all contribute to this estimate. With the estimated 114 occupants of the proposed group site (averaging 2.5 occupants per MHU), the group site is expected to produce approximately 1,073 metric tons of carbon annually. This would not exceed the EPA's annual 25,000 metric ton CO₂ equivalent threshold. Annual construction, and residential 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 and operation of a group site of this scale.

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 401 of the CWA requires certification of all Federal licenses and permits in which there is a “discharge of fill material into navigable waters.” The certification process is used to determine whether an activity, as described in the Federal license or permit, would impact established site-specific water quality standards. A water quality certification from the issuing state, the Iowa DNR, is required prior to the issuance of the relevant Federal license or permit. 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). The most common Federal license or permit requiring certification is the USACE CWA Section 404 permit.

A review of the USACE database revealed no previous actions on the site. A visual investigation by USACE staff on July 27, 2024, concluded that there are no streams or wetlands on the property; the 600 linear foot drainage swale constructed circa 2016 is entirely within uplands and exhibits ephemeral flow which could not be considered a Relatively Permanent Water. The nearest perennial water body, Rogg Creek, curves around the site – it is 910 feet from the eastern extent and to the south it is located 2,500 feet from the site. There are no WOTUS in the project area so there would be no trigger for permitting requirements associated with Section 404 of the CWA related to any discharge from construction activities. To grade the site in preparation for placement of the MHUs, the existing drainage swale will be filled in; storm water runoff will be directed to designed drainage channels leading to three detention ponds at the south extent of the proposed development and further drained to existing stormwater handling channels south of U.S. Highway 18.

The NPDES program was established under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act and regulates wastewater discharges from point sources. NPDES regulations require construction sites resulting in greater than one acre of disturbance obtain a permit from EPA, or the corresponding state agency where the permitting role has been assumed by the state. In Iowa, an NPDES stormwater construction permit is required from Iowa DNR for any proposed project which would disturb at least one or more acres of land and for those discharging stormwater to surface waters of the state. As part of an NPDES permit, the proponent of a project is required to prepare and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which outlines BMPs and engineering controls to be used to prevent and minimize erosion, sedimentation, and pollution during construction. The appropriate SWPPP and

NPDES permits and certifications would be obtained by the project proponent or contractor prior to construction.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, there would be no impacts to surface waters.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, impacts to water quality would be expected to be minor. There are no WOTUS on the site. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented during site development to minimize sediment migration from the site. Surface water runoff would be mitigated through the use of siltation controls such as silt fencing or compacted berms around the construction site to minimize the erosion and runoff of materials into adjacent wetland areas and/or waterways. Any disturbed soil would be protected with seed and straw or sod after construction to decrease the amount of soil eroded by rainfall and runoff. If fill material is stored on site, the contractor would provide appropriate cover to prevent runoff. To control stormwater runoff, the project proponent or their contractor would be required to design drainage features so surface water flow would not cause nuisance flooding during heavy rainfall events. The drainage system would be required to meet all applicable requirements. Additionally, the project proponent or their contractor would obtain any necessary 401 Water Quality Certification, SWPPP, and NPDES permits and/or self-certifications prior to the commencement of any work. These actions are designed to prevent any degradation of water quality resulting from any silt-laden runoff from the construction site. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would not have significant impacts on surface waters.

5.2.2 FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT (EO 11988)

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” or the area with a 1.0 percent annual chance flood hazard is the area covered by water in the event of a flood that has a one percent annual chance of being equaled or exceeded in magnitude in any given year. The “500-year floodplain” or 0.2 percent annual chance flood hazard is the area covered by water in the event of a flood that has a 0.2 percent annual chance of being equaled or exceeded in magnitude in any given year. The 1.0 percent annual chance flood hazard (Zone A/AE) and 0.2 percent annual flood chance (Shaded X) floodplains are mapped on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).

Based on the effective FEMA FIRM panel that covers the area of the proposed Rock Valley Group Site (19167C0234D effective 8/2/2022), the project is located outside the 1.0 percent annual chance flood hazard floodplain, in an area of minimal flood hazard (Appendix D). No proposed MHU sites

will be located within the regulatory floodplain.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no effect on the floodplain.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Based on FIRM Panel Number 19167C0234D, effective August 2, 2022, the proposed project site under Alternative 2 is located outside the regulatory floodplain. The eight-step decision making process, as described in 44 CFR Part 9 for projects within, or that have the potential to impact, a floodplain, was completed (Appendix D). Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 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. Iowa DNR regulates dredging and filling in wetlands and surface waters, and activities in uplands which generate stormwater runoff or otherwise alter surface water flows.

The proposed Rock Ridge Group Site location was identified by the Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation as part of a planned future development in eastern Rock Valley. From 2006 onward, the parcel was zoned as I-1 industrial. It was sold to the City of Rock Ridge on August 8, 2024, and it was rezoned R4-Mobile/Manufactured Residential at the City Council meeting on August 22, 2024.

Presently, the proposed Rock Ridge Group Site location is under cultivation although the predominant vegetation is vetches, purslane, evening primrose, common sunflower, and various grasses. Small shrubs and common sunflowers grow along the margins of the swale that bisects the western half of the site. There are no hydric soils in the project area and little to no herbaceous hydric vegetation except highly opportunistic species commonly found in disturbed areas. There are no wetlands associated with the site.

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 no WSRs located in Iowa.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on wetlands.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, no short- or long-term impacts to water resources would be expected. According to the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory Map, accessed August 10, 2024, no designated wetlands were identified within the proposed group site area. Based on field observations made by USACE field surveyors on August 9, 2024 and by FEMA EHP field staff on August 19, 2024, and on information provided within the National Wetlands Inventory map, Alternative 2 would not affect any wetland areas (Appendix E). According to the National Wild and Scenic River Program website, accessed on August 10, 2024, no designated Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the vicinity of the proposed action. Therefore, Alternative 2 would have no impacts on wetlands.

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.

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.

There are neither Coastal Zone Management Areas nor designated units of the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS) in the State of Iowa.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on coastal resources.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the construction of the Rock Ridge Group Site would not be located within a designated unit of the CBRS nor is it within an area regulated by Coastal Zone Management requirements. Therefore, alternative 2 would have no effects on 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, Sioux County, Iowa, is not underlain by a sole source aquifer. Sole source aquifers are designated by the EPA as the sole or primary source of drinking water within a defined area. Rock Valley’s potable water is obtained from five (5) shallow wells which tap alluvial aquifers located between 49 and 81 feet deep.

The proposed group site is in a mostly rural incorporated area at the far eastern edge of the City of Rock Valley. A review of the Iowa DNR GP6 Well Siting Tool accessed August 10, 2024 indicated there are no documented occurrences of contaminated ground water proximate to the site, nor are there any active drainage systems within a half mile of the site’s center mass. To date, no NPDES wastewater or storm water permits relating to the site have been issued.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impacts on current drinking water or ground water.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

The Rock Ridge Group Site’s potable water would be fed from pre-existing municipal water supply sources. The group site will include the installation of underground utilities, tied-in with existing Sioux County underground utilities, located west of the proposed site. Under Alternative 2, the construction of the Rock Ridge Group Site will not require dewatering so construction activities would not have an impact on local groundwater quality or flow.

Because the City of Rock Valley intends to supply water to the proposed group site, no new ground water or aquifer sources have been identified near the project site. The City of Rock Valley has determined that the water usage of the proposed development to its fullest capacity of 84 MHUs is sustainable under the City’s existing water resource capabilities. By tying into existing municipal utilities, 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.

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 negligible impacts on groundwater.

5.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

5.3.1 FISH AND WILDLIFE

Biological resources include native or naturalized plants and animals and their habitats (such as wetlands, forests, and grasslands). This EA does not cover adverse impacts to species or habitats of concern over relatively large areas, or if disturbances cause reductions in population size or distribution. FEMA used potential physical impacts such as habitat loss, noise, and impacts to water quality to assess the effects of the Action Alternatives on biological resources.

The subject site is primarily a fallow field, surrounded on the north, east, and south by agricultural fields and a few scattered farm related structures and private residences. There is considerably more developed infrastructure to the west including a water tower, electrical substation, and a group of commercial establishments. Paved roads border the site on the south (U.S. Highway 18/310th Street) and the west (Rock Ridge Road and Tower Drive). The site is likely to support wildlife habitat and use in its current state; commonly found wildlife historically have shown to adapt to the changes on the land so extirpation of any currently resident species would not be expected. Resident wildlife is expected to include common and nuisance species including, but not limited to, squirrels, lizards and other reptiles, frogs, coyotes, skunks, rats, birds, and mice. No aquatic resources of significance are present on the site.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no impacts on fish and wildlife.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the site would be modified by the installation of utilities on the site, construction of gravel roadways and parking lots, placement of stone-base and concrete for trailer pads, residential parking, and associated appurtenance to facilitate placement of 84 MHUs and up to three 500 square feet above ground safe rooms on the site. While many common wildlife species would be driven away from the group site during construction and day-to-day operations, the long-term occurrence of nuisance species is expected to increase modestly with the presence of food and solid waste produced by the residents of the group site. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a minor adverse impact on wildlife. The impact would not be significant.

5.3.2 VEGETATION

The subject site, as described in previous sections, has been historically used as cropland. Aerial imagery indicates the site has continually been under cultivation since the earliest (1938) image.

Presently, the site is planted in corn although growth lags significantly behind that in adjacent irrigated fields; no vegetation higher than two feet tall had established itself on this site as observed by FEMA EHP field staff on August 19, 2024. Vegetation includes vetch, purslane and wild carrot species and other opportunistic herbaceous flora. A swale bisecting the western half of the site contains slightly more species diversity; however, no wetland-obligate plants were observed.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. If the area lies fallow, it could result in the introduction and colonization of invasive plant species, which typically out-compete native species in disturbed habitats. Invasive species will be discussed in greater detail in Section 5.3.7 of this document. The No Action alternative could potentially result in minor long-term adverse impacts to native species. The impact would be negligible.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action alternative, the site would be modified by the installation of utilities on the site, construction of gravel roadways and parking lots, placement of stone-base and concrete for trailer pads, residential parking, and associated appurtenance to facilitate placement of up to 84 MHUs and up to three 500 square foot above ground safe rooms on the site. Natural revegetation of the site would be severely impeded by the construction of the group site and associated daily activities of the residents. Because occupation of the site is expected to be permanent, this impact is to be expected. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have an adverse effect on native vegetation. The impact would not be significant.

5.3.3 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 establishes a federal program to conserve, protect and restore threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats. ESA specifically charges federal agencies with the responsibility of using their authority to conserve threatened and endangered species. All federal agencies must ensure any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of an endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction of critical habitat for these species.

The proposed project site parcel was surveyed on August 5, 2024, by a USACE representative and again on August 9, 2024, by members of FEMA’s EHP staff, for the presence of any federal or state listed threatened or endangered species. The only fauna observed on the site was an amphibian; bird species were observed on adjacent properties.

Based on the habitat conditions and species data from the USFWS and Iowa DNR List of Animals (571 IAC chapter 77.2) and List of Plants (571 IAC chapter 77.3), the species with the highest likelihood to occur on this site is the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The Monarch

Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is listed as a candidate species that may be present at the site. There is no designated critical habitat within the proposed project site.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on threatened and endangered species or critical habitat.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

According to the USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) website, accessed August 10, 2024, the proposed group site location associated with Alternative 2 was reviewed for a list of threatened and endangered species in the project area. There are nine (9) identified species and 21 migratory bird species that could be present within Sioux County; however, the proposed group housing site location does not contain suitable habitat for any of the listed species. The complete IPaC report can be found in Appendix F. Based on the habitat conditions and species data from USFWS and Iowa DNR, the species with the highest likelihood to occur on this site is the endangered Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is listed as a candidate species for this site, which means the species is under consideration for listing as a threatened or endangered species. Additional species listed for the wider Sioux County are Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), Rufa Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), Pallid Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*), Topeka Shiner (*Notropis topeka*), Scaleshell Mussel (*Leptodea leptodon*), Western Regal Fritillary (*Argynnis idalia occidentalis*) and the Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*). None of these species would be found in the vicinity of the action area as site conditions are not conducive to the presence of these species.

The project site is vegetated by a variety of low-growth pioneer herbaceous species with sparsely scattered trees along the periphery of the site. A search of the USFWS Critical Habitat online mapper, accessed August 10, 2024, identified no designated critical habitats are located within the proposed project area.

The proposed group site is within the known range of the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The USFWS publication *Range-wide Indiana Bat and Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) Survey Guidelines* (revised 3/20/2024), was reviewed on August 10, 2024, to determine the potential effect to the NLEB and the FEMA's responsibility under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The analysis using the Northern Long-eared Bat Assisted Determination Key (D-Key) is as follows:

- Proposed project or land use change is partially or wholly within the range of the NLEB.
- No potential NLEB suitable summer habitat exists within the project area.
 - Suitable summer habitat for the NLEB consists of a wide variety of forested/wooded

habitats where they roost, forage, and travel and may also include some adjacent and interspersed non-forested habitats such as emergent wetlands and adjacent edges of agricultural fields, old fields, and pastures. This includes forests and woodlots containing potential roosts (i.e., live trees and/or snags ≥ 3 inches Diameter at Breast Height (dbh) that have exfoliating bark, cracks, crevices, and/or cavities), as well as linear features such as fencerows, riparian forests, and other wooded corridors. These wooded areas may be dense or loose aggregates of trees with variable amounts of canopy closure. NLEB seems to prefer intact mixed-type forests with small gaps (i.e., forest trails, small roads, or forest-covered creeks) in forest with sparse or medium vegetation for foraging and commuting rather than fragmented habitat or areas that have been clear cut (USFWS 2015, p. 17992).

- Individual trees may be considered suitable habitat when they exhibit characteristics of suitable roost trees and are within 1,000 feet of other forested/wooded habitat. As there are no trees on the parcel and no forested/wooded habitats of sufficient size adjacent to the parcel, the parcel has been deemed unsuitable summer habitat for the NLEB.
- The NLEB has also been observed roosting in human-made structures, such as buildings, barns, bridges, and bat houses; therefore, these structures should also be considered potential summer habitat. A single water tower at the northwest corner of the proposed project site is the only structure where bats may be present. None were observed on site visits by USACE surveyors on July 27, 2024, or by FEMA EHP staff on August 9, 2024.
- Determination: No Effect. The NLEB has no designated critical habitat. The project is located within NLEB territory but lacks suitable summer or winter habitat. Based on the guidance in the USFWS' *Range-wide Indiana Bat and Northern Long-eared Bat Survey Guidelines*, no further Probably Absent surveys are recommended.

FEMA has made the determination that, based on the scope of work and lack of suitable habitat at the proposed site, the proposed Rock Ridge Group Site would have no effect to federally listed species and would not adversely modify critical habitat. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have no impacts on threatened and endangered species or critical habitat.

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), 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 Iowa is in the Central flyway zone for migratory birds. According to the USFWS IPaC database, accessed on August 31, 2024, 21 migratory bird species were identified as being potentially present within Sioux County; only two of which could occur within the project vicinity. the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) each of which have a designated breeding season that falls within the anticipated six weeks of construction. Although, species wide, the Bald Eagle's breeding season is from October 15 to July 31, in Iowa it has been observed as extending from approximately December 1 to May 1. The Black-billed Cuckoo breeding season extends from May 15 to October 10. Of the remaining nineteen (19) migratory bird species, ten (10) have breeding seasons outside of the anticipated construction window, and nine (9) are recognized to breed elsewhere (Appendix F).

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, no potential effects or “take” would occur. There will be no destruction or adverse modification of the surrounding habitat. The No Action Alternative would have no impact on migratory birds or associated habitat.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, minor short-term impacts to species within the project area have the potential to occur during construction activities. The project area is not ideal nesting habitat for either Bald Eagle or Black-billed Cuckoo. Bald Eagles typically nest near the top of old growth trees or snags, or cliff faces with a broad area of view, generally within one mile of shallow water suitable for foraging. The Black-billed Cuckoo prefers to nest in thickets of deciduous trees, in shrubs and tangles, often along the edges of marshes and woodlands. The proposed project site does not offer breeding habitat suitable for either of the two migratory species known to nest within the vicinity of the proposed development. Neither does it provide optimal foraging and is not located within a designated critical habitat.

The following migratory bird species that may be present within the action area have breeding seasons outside of the construction period: Bobolink (breeds May 20 to July 31), Chimney Swift (breeds March 15 to August 25), Eastern Whip-poor-will (breeds May 1 to August 20), Grasshopper Sparrow (breeds June 1 to August 20), Henslow's Sparrow (breeds May 1 to August 31), Kentucky Warbler (breeds April 20 to August 20), Prairie Loggerhead Shrike (breeds February 1 to July 31), Red-headed Woodpecker (breeds May 10 to September 10), Upland Sandpiper (breeds May 1 to August 31), and Wood Thrush (breeds May 10 to August 31). Work is not anticipated to impact these species.

Although the IPaC report generated August 31, 2024, indicates the following migratory bird species

may be present in the Action Area, none are known to have breeding habitat in the Action Area: American Golden-plover, Golden Eagle, Hudsonian Godwit, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Rusty Blackbird, Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Short-billed Dowitcher. Neither construction activities nor occupation of the site once construction is complete are anticipated to affect these species.

Therefore, take of a migratory bird species is not anticipated with this alternative. Alternative 2 may result in short-term minor impacts to migratory birds or their associated habitat but the effects are not significant.

5.3.5 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" (meaning to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue), possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or their parts, feathers, nests, or eggs.

According to the Iowa DNR Yearly Eagle Status Report and the USFWS IPaC website, accessed on August 10, 2024, no documented bald eagle nests are located within or adjacent to the project area. Although species wide, the breeding season for the Bald Eagle begins as early as October 15, general nesting and hatching season for bald eagles in the state of Iowa is from approximately December 1 to May 1, outside the predicted construction dates for this project. Should there be delays in construction and it overlaps with Iowa Bald Eagle nesting season there is minimal probability that nesting pairs would be affected. They prefer to nest in tall trees with a wide view near a shallow water source for foraging. The closest reported Bald Eagle nest is located along the Rock River, approximately 1.8 miles from the project area, well beyond the 660 feet buffer zone recommended in "The National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines". The project area is further unsuitable for Golden or Bald Eagle nests, due to the lack of large trees and the closest water source over a mile away.

Golden eagles inhabit tundra, grasslands, forested habitat and woodland-brushlands, south to arid deserts and avoid nesting in urban habitat, but none have been reported in the area per the USFWS IPaC website. Because species' preferred habitat is inconsistent with the habitat at the project location, the presence of a Golden Eagle is unlikely to occur within the project area.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed group site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, there would be no impact to Bald or Golden Eagles.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

The Alternative 2 project area is not within the vicinity of a known Bald Eagle nest nor is the area suitable Golden Eagle habitat. No impact to these species or associated habitat is anticipated.

5.3.6 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 include preventing overfishing and ensuring a safe and sustainable supply of seafood. The State of Iowa is landlocked. The project area is not located near an estuarine or marine wetland, as confirmed through reviewing the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory Map, accessed August 10, 2024.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed group site would not be constructed and operated; further, there are no waterbodies at or near the project location. Therefore, there would be no impact on fisheries or breeding habitat.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

The project area for Alternative 2 is not located in or near any water bodies and is not near or in an Essential Fish Habitat; therefore, there would be no impact on fisheries or breeding habitat.

5.3.7 INVASIVE SPECIES

Executive Order 13112, signed February 3, 1999, called upon executive departments and agencies to take steps to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, and to support efforts to eradicate and control invasive species that are established. Executive Order 13751, signed December 5, 2016, updated EO 13112 to define invasive species as “with regard to a particular ecosystem, a non-native organism whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human, animal, or plant health.” Federal agencies are directed to prevent the introduction, establishment, and spread of invasive species.

According to the Iowa DNR, there are 33 invasive plants, shrubs, and trees found throughout the state. These are autumn olive, yellow starthistle, exotic bush, cheatgrass, common buckthorn, crown vetch, bull thistle, Canada thistle, chimes elm, common burdock, Dame's Rocket, garlic mustard, honeysuckle, kudzu, multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, Japanese barberry, Queen Anne's lace, salt cedar, wild parsnip, purple loosestrife, Russian olive, spotted knapweed, winged burning bush, giant hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, leafy spurge, musk thistle, privets, reed canary grass, Siberian elm, Tree of Heave, winged Euonymus, white mulberry, velvet leaf, sericea lespedeza, common teasel, and knapweed. The unifying characteristic of each of these plants is the easy spread of seeds, and their prodigious growth due to few native control agents in Iowa. Crown vetch was observed on the proposed construction site during site visits by USACE surveyors July 27, 2024, and by EHP field staff on August 9, 2024.

According to the Iowa DNR, there are nineteen (19) invasive aquatic species, both flora and fauna

found throughout the state. As there are no water resources present in the project area, these species were not considered further.

The emerald-ash borer, having been first identified in Iowa in 2010, does not factor into this project as the site is devoid of ash trees.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, there would be no impact on invasive species.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, FEMA has identified the presence of invasive species present within the project area. The federal agency is directed by EO 13112 to not carry out any action that is likely to promote the introduction or spread of invasive species and to ensure that all feasible and prudent measures to minimize risk of harm are taken in conjunction with the action. The State of Iowa prohibits the introduction, sale or propagation of invasive trees, shrubs, or plants. The project proponent or their contractor will be directed to ensure that any fill material be free of invasive species. Site control and best management practices, including plantings of native species, will be applied to prevent the spread of invasive species within the project area.

5.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

5.4.1 HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The consideration of impacts of federal actions on historic and cultural resources is mandated under both Section 101(b)(4) of NEPA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as implemented by 36 CFR Part 800. Providing Direct Temporary Housing Assistance in the form of constructing Group Sites meets the definition of a Federal Undertaking pursuant to 36 CFR 800.16(y). Accordingly, FEMA is required to comply with Section 106 of the NHPA.

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

The NHPA created the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and defines criteria for determining whether 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 (1) (1-2)). When NRHP-eligible properties are present, federal agencies must assess the effect of the Federal Undertaking on them and consider ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse effects. For the creation of the proposed group site, the area of potential effect (APE) for cultural resources is delineated by the area within which

all construction and ground-disturbing activities would occur and includes the viewshed (or the visual impact) of the proposed project.

FEMA is reviewing this Undertaking for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in accordance with the 2015 Programmatic Agreement Among FEMA, the Iowa SHPO, and the Iowa HSEMD, as amended in 2023 (Agreement). The threshold level for significant impacts to cultural resources under NHPA would be those impacts that adversely affect the historic integrity of 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, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact on historic properties.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, FEMA has determined that the APE for the proposed Federal Undertaking includes the immediate viewshed around the proposed group site and the areas of ground disturbance within the perimeter of the proposed site necessary for the preparation of individual MHU pads. Preparation activities include: trenching for underground utilities, creation of access routes and parking locations, installation of lighting and perimeter fencing and placement and anchoring up to three above ground 500-square foot storm shelters. It also includes grading the site, filling in an existing drainage swale created circa 2016 and creating drainage swales and detention ponds as required by local building codes.

In the interest of fulfilling the Secretary’s requirement of a “good faith effort” to identify historic properties, FEMA SOI-Qualified Historic Preservation Specialists conducted a records search of the NPS NRHP and NHL databases, and a data search of I-Sites, the Iowa OSA Online GIS Database for Iowa Archaeology, to identify any previously recorded archaeological sites or previously evaluated structures within a one-half mile (0.5 mile) radius of the APE. Additionally, FEMA Historic Preservation Specialists conducted an on-site field inspection and in-person interview with landowners on August 9, 2024, regarding historical land use practices within the APE.

There are no properties listed in the NRHP located within the APE or within 0.5 miles of the APE. However, the I-Sites Online GIS Database revealed two previously recorded buildings located within 0.5 mile of the undertaking. These buildings were in active use at the time the survey was recorded; Farmstead Residence (84-00427) and Barn (84-00426). Since the sites were recorded, both have been removed, the house circa 2006 and the barn at some point between 2012 and 2015. The GrandStay Hotel and Suites was built on the site in 2018.

A review of the I-Sites Iowa HILD Layer (Historic Indian Lands) did not reveal the presence of any

previously recorded pre-historic archaeological sites or Native American occupation.

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the APE. Eight (8) archaeological sites within the peripheral area immediately north and west of the APE were recorded by Art Hoppin of Bear Creek Archeology, Inc., of Cresco, Iowa, in 2006. Six (6) of these sites were characterized as surface recovered pre-historic scatter; the remaining two (2) of the sites were characterized as surface recovered historic farmstead scatter. The surface reconnaissance survey component was followed by intensive shovel testing down to sterile soil at each site to detect any subsurface cultural material or stratified deposits. None of the sites produced positive shovel tests or yielded any subsurface cultural material. The surveying archaeologist described six (6) of the sites as completely destroyed. Two sites (2) were described as being in poor condition as a result of cultivation effects. None of the sites were determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register.

Landowner inquiries documented that approximately 2,000,000 cubic yards of soil material have been displaced within the APE as a result of cut and fill operations after the property was purchased by the Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation in 2006. While re-shaping these types of soil is rarely uniform, depth of soil disturbance can be accurately approximated using the parameters of acre feet when related to volumes measured in cubic yards². Clearly with the amount of soil previously moved, the ground within the APE has been disturbed to soil depths of 6 feet or greater of displaced material.

NRCS documented soil series characteristics and previous archaeological surveys suggest a very low potential for the presence of any intact, unrecorded archaeological sites within the boundaries of the direct APE (the proposed housing group site).

The proposed Rock Ridge Group Site location has been impacted by decades of agricultural cultivation, but more importantly, by the massive grading and earthworks in 2007-2008 to prepare the site for future construction and development. These activities have obliterated pre-historic and historic soil profiles and distinct horizons. Intact resources in their historic context could no longer exist to the depth of the proposed excavation for placement of underground utility corridors and base courses for installation of access roads to the pad sites. FEMA has therefore determined that there are no historic properties, as defined in 36 CFR 800.16(l), within the APE.

Due to the previous cut and fill operations to prepare this site, the quantity of displaced fill that was sourced, and the defined scope of work, FEMA has determined that this project would result in No Historic Properties Affected. FEMA submitted consultation to the Iowa SHPO on August 20, 2024. Concurrence with this determination was received on August 21, 2024. The land within the project area has been significantly, and repeatedly, disturbed to a depth to which extant and undisturbed pre-historic and historic resources cannot be reasonably be assumed to remain *in situ* or retain their

² Specifically, 1 acre foot of soil equals 1613.33 cubic yards by volume. Then 2,000,000 cubic yards divided by 1613.33 cubic yards/acre foot equals 1,239.67-acre feet. Then 1239.67-acre feet divided by 6 feet depth equals a *possible* surface acreage effected of 206.61 acres.

historic context. Throughout the 20th Century the land was in cultivation; early in the 21st century massive earthworks were undertaken by Rock Valley's Economic Development Corporation to prepare the land for future development. This, combined with surrounding residential, agricultural, and commercial/industrial growth during the post-contact years have so altered the landscape that the probability of Traditional Cultural Properties within the project area or its viewshed has been significantly reduced.

The project contract will include the following conditions:

- In the event that archaeological deposits (soils, features, artifacts, or other remnants of human activity) are uncovered during the work, the project shall be halted. The contractor and or responsible party shall immediately stop all work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. The project proponent or their contractor shall inform the FEMA Region 7 REO immediately, will secure all archaeological finds, and will restrict access to the area. The REO will consult with the Iowa SHPO and other potential consulting parties including Native American Tribes and the Iowa OSA. Work in sensitive areas may not resume until an archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards determines the extent and historic significance of the discovery and consultations are completed. Work may not resume at or around archaeological deposits until the contractor and or responsible party is notified by the REO. Noncompliance with this requirement may jeopardize the receipt of federal assistance including funding.
- Upon discovery of suspected human remains during construction, including bone or other remains suspected to be human, ground-disturbing activities shall immediately cease within 50 feet of the discovery. The construction contractor or responsible party ("on-site responsible person") will immediately notify the SME, and the appropriate local law enforcement agency in accordance with Section 523I.316.6 of the Iowa Code, and the FEMA Region 7 REO, will secure all remains, and restrict access to the area. Photographs and or video of the discovery shall be prohibited. The REO will notify the Iowa SHPO, and the Iowa OSA Bioarchaeology Program Director, Indian tribes, and other interested parties within 24 hours of the discovery. If there is uncertainty as to whether remains are human or of non-human origin, the OSA's Bioarchaeology Program Director shall be contacted to make the determination. In cases where human remains are determined to be Native American, FEMA shall also consult with the appropriate Tribal representatives. Additionally, FEMA shall follow the guidelines outlined in the ACHP Policy Statement Regarding the Treatment of Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects (February 23, 2007) and the OSA's Unanticipated Discoveries Plan for Human Remains, that outlines procedures recommended in the event of an unanticipated discovery of human remains during construction associated

with projects for which standard Section 106 consultation has occurred between a federal agency and the SHPO. Noncompliance with this requirement may jeopardize the receipt of federal assistance including funding.

Based on the analysis conducted, Alternative 2 would have no impacts on historic properties.

5.5 SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES

5.5.1 LAND USE

Local regulatory bodies, such as municipalities or counties, use zoning as a planning tool for controlling and regulating the function of real estate markets within their jurisdiction. This is typically achieved by dividing land into sections within a jurisdiction and limiting land uses based on categories dictated by a regulatory body. Examples of these categories include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc. Through zoning, local regulatory authorities, and community planners, can direct the particular use, layout, and permitting within their communities to control current use and to plan future development. In most cases, the development of comprehensive plans through a public participation process, as approved by publicly elected officials, will capture local values and attitudes towards planning and future development. Zoning ordinances and land use regulations vary throughout the United States.

The project area for the proposed development of the Rock Ridge Group site is at the eastern edge of the Rock Ridge Business Park on the east side of the City of Rock Valley, identified on their map as a 33.4-acre future addition tract. As a planned future addition to the Rock Ridge Business Park, it was zoned I-1 (Light Industrial). To permit the development of the land as a Manufactured Home Group Site, the subject property was re-zoned to R-4 (Mobile/Manufactured Residential) by the Rock Valley City Council at its meeting on August 22, 2024. The project area is abutted by existing Agricultural Zones to the north and east, and across U.S. Highway 18, to the south. Each of these properties is under active cultivation.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no impact on land use.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the development of the Rock Ridge Group Site would be consistent with the City's Economic Development Plan. No disruption or displacement of planned land use is anticipated. Alternative 2 would have no impact on Rock Valley City Planning.

5.5.2 NOISE

The Noise Control Act was enacted in 1972 (P.L. 92-574). Inadequately controlled noise presents a growing danger to the health and welfare of the nation's population. The major sources of noise

include transportation vehicles and equipment; machinery; appliances; and other products in commerce, climate, or recreation. Sounds that disrupt normal activities or otherwise diminish the quality of the environment are designated as noise. Noise can be stationary or transient, intermittent, or continuous.

Noise, for the purposes of this analysis, is generally categorized as excessive or unwanted sound. The effect of noise on humans includes, but is not limited to, annoyance, sleep disturbance, and adverse health effects. In animals, high noise levels can interfere with communication, reproduction, identifying potential prey or food sources, and induce fear, forcing species to abandon their habitat. In general, animals and humans experience stress when exposed to excessively noisy environments.

Noise/sound intensity is measured in decibels (dB). In residential area exposure to levels exceeding 70 dB is considered disturbing; sound levels above 85 dB are harmful to human hearing. Based on the data presented in the EPA publication, “Noise from Construction Equipment and Operations, Building Equipment, and Home Appliances” (EPA, 1971), the main phases of outdoor construction activities typically generate noise levels approximately 50 feet from the construction site that range from 78 dB to 89 dB. Noise levels are estimated to decrease by approximately 6 dB with every doubling of distance from a noise source.

Neither the city of Rock Valley nor Sioux County have noise control ordinances that limit noise levels at certain times of day or discuss restrictions for noise from construction equipment. The state of Iowa does not have comprehensive state-wide noise regulations.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no impact on noise.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the construction of the Group Housing Site would generate both short-term construction equipment noise, and long-term noise associated with daily activities of group site residents. A temporary increase of ambient noise levels in and around the construction of the group site is expected. The nearest noise-sensitive receptors are residential homes east and south of the project site. Based on typical construction equipment used for projects such as this, *e.g.* excavators, dump trucks, etc., the approximate noise level is anticipated to be 85 dB at a reference distance of 50 feet from the equipment (FHWA reports inventory, 2006). Because the site is largely surrounded by fields and buffered by distance to the south and a tree line to the east, the noise would not have significant impact on local residents. The GrandStay Hotel & Suites is located one-third of a mile (0.33 mile) to the southwest and the Project Youth Daycare is located approximately one-half mile (0.55 mile) to the west from the proposed group site. These facilities would potentially be affected by the increase in noise during construction activities. This noise increase would be confined to daylight hours.

Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have minor short-term adverse impact on local noise during construction activities and long-term elevated levels as the site is occupied. It would be expected that the project proponent or their contractor will require all persons on the site during construction activities to use hearing protection and other Personal Protective Equipment in conformance with any and all relevant Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.

There will be a permanent increase in ambient noise levels when the MHUs are occupied but this is not anticipated to rise beyond the typical 45-55 dB levels expected in a residential area which is well below EPA guidelines for hazardous noise exposure above 70 dB.

Because the anticipated short- and long-term levels of noise are well within established health and safety tolerances, the impact of noise increases on the environment would not be significant.

5.5.3 TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

The Iowa DOT is the Iowa agency responsible for the organization, construction, and maintenance of the primary highway system.

The proposed Rock Ridge Group Site is located on the east side of Rock Valley. The site is surrounded on the north, east, and south by agricultural fields and a few scattered family farms. At the northwest corner of the site there is a water tower owned by the Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation and an electrical substation belonging to Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative takes up a small section at the western extent of the property. Further to the west on Tower Drive and Rock Ridge Road is a group of commercial enterprises, including a hotel and a day care center and light manufacturing operations. Proposed site access to U.S. Highway 18 (310th Street) will be from Rock Ridge Drive and Tower Road located to the west of the site. Rock Ridge Drive currently ends at the western site boundary but will be expanded east into the site and will provide the primary route of ingress and egress. The extant gravel extension of Fig Road north of U.S. Highway 18 is currently used for direct access to the water tower and electric substation. It is not in Rock Valley's transportation system and will not be further developed or used during construction activities.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have no impact to transportation and traffic.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the proposed action would result in the installation of a maximum of 84

MHUs³. Currently, no improvements have been made to the site. The transportation of MHUs onto the project site would be accomplished by the eastward expansion of Rock Ridge Drive at the west central portion of the subject site. The project proponent or their contractor would coordinate with the Iowa DOT and the City of Rock Valley's planning and zoning officials to ensure that the expansion of existing roads, and creation of new access roads, complies with all applicable standards. The expanded Rock Ridge Drive would also provide primary permanent ingress and egress to the site for residents of the MHUs.

Traffic volume in the vicinity of the proposed group site is expected to increase, initially during construction, and permanently during the period of occupancy of the MHUs. The Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) trip-generation manual predicts 4.99 trips per day per unit, or 420 trips per day for 84 units at maximum build-out. The maximum a.m. peak increase would be 0.44 trips per hour per unit, or 37 trips. The maximum p.m. peak increase would be 0.59 trips per unit, or 50 trips. These vehicles will be traveling on Rock Ridge Drive through the industrial area adjacent to truck loading docks. At the intersection of Rock Ridge Road, U.S. Highway 18 (310th Street), a Principal Arterial Road, is improved with a left turn lane eastbound, and a wide shoulder/turn lane westbound. Traffic counts from 2023 indicate 5,100 trips/day Average Annual Daily Traffic on U.S. Highway 18 which is well within the capacity of the roadway.

The local county and municipality would have jurisdiction over the regulation of safe traffic to and from the Rock Ridge Group Site. The proposed construction design would include safe access and parking for each MHU; no shortfalls of safe parking and access are anticipated. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 is expected to have a minor adverse impact to transportation and traffic. This impact would not be significant.

5.5.4 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AND SOLID WASTES

The threshold level for a significant impact from 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.

Hazardous waste is defined as any solid, liquid, or contained gas waste that is dangerous or potentially harmful to humans and the health of the environment. To be declared hazardous, materials are reviewed according to various federal regulations including 40 CFR Parts 302.4 and 355, and 29 CFR Part 1910.1200. Thousands of contaminated sites exist nation-wide because hazardous waste has been dumped, left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed and disposed of. 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 uses the National

³ Buildout at maximum capacity. FEMA expects to install fewer than the 84-unit capacity. As of August 26,, 2024, the expectation is FEMA will install 66 THUs.

Priorities List (NPL), a list of contaminated sites of national priority, to guide the determination of which sites warrant further investigation. According to the NPL, accessed August 10, 2024, the project area does not contain any Superfund sites.

An EPA designated Brownfield site is a property where expansion, redevelopment, or reuse 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. Upon review of the Iowa DNR Contaminated Sites Report, accessed on August 10, 2024, there are no contamination sites with potential environmental concerns identified within a one-mile radius from the target property.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), enacted in 1976, established a framework for the proper management of hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste. This law aims to protect human health, conserve energy and national resources, reduce the amount of waste generated and ensure that waste is managed in an ecologically aware way. The EPA is the primary federal agency charged with oversight of regulations and development of solid waste management guidance; states issue permits to ensure compliance with EPA and state regulations. Because Iowa does not have a state authorized RCRA program, EPA retains responsibility for RCRA enforcement in Iowa.

A review of EPA's NEPA Assist online web map search tool accessed August 10, 2024, indicated there are hazardous waste sites and no sites listed on the NPL within one mile of the project location.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, there would be no change to ambient levels of hazardous materials, hazardous waste, and solid waste and therefore no change in impacts on human health and the environment.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, there would be no anticipated impacts to residents from hazardous materials. Several site visits have not revealed hazardous materials on the site, and reviews of mapped resources do not identify hazardous materials or sites within one mile. A comprehensive Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (Phase I ESA) was conducted in May of 2006 by the Howard Green Company (Project No. 728630J) for the Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation. The Phase I ESA was conducted to in pursuit of qualifying for the innocent landowner defense under CERCLA, and the *bona fide* prospective purchaser and contiguous property owner defenses under the Federal Brownfields Law. The property was also evaluated for potential environmental conditions that could materially impact anticipated future land use of the parcel of real estate. The scope of the investigation encompassed approximately 300 acres of the planned Industrial Park Expansion Properties North of U.S. Highway 18. The proposed Group Site Development is located in the southern portion of the easternmost tract identified in the Phase I ESA as Tract 3. No potential environmental hazards were identified as existing in Tract 3 generally; the document is mute on the

proposed Group Housing Site land. Walkovers of the property by USACE surveyors and by EHP field staff did not identify any unusable equipment, debris or material on site would have to be disposed of in an approved manner and location prior to occupancy. In the event significant items (or evidence thereof) are discovered during implementation of the project, the project proponent or their contractor shall handle, manage, and dispose of regulated, petroleum products, and hazardous materials and/or wastes in accordance with the rules and regulations and to the satisfaction of the governing local, state, and federal agencies. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have a negligible impact on human health or the environment related to the presence/handling hazardous materials or waste.

5.5.5 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

A considerable number of health and safety laws and regulations exist for a wide variety of activities. An exhaustive review of these various rules is beyond the scope of this EA. Regarding worker safety, the U.S. Congress enacted the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 USC § 651 et seq. (OSHA) to assure safe and healthy working conditions.

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 hazard, electricity, or machinery), or biological hazards (such as infectious waste, poisonous plants, ticks, or other hazardous biota). Occupational health and safety concerns could affect both workers and non-workers near the project site. Public safety hazards may include any direct or indirect effects related to the construction or operation of the group site. County, State and Municipal law enforcement and emergency services, as well as the project proponent or their contractors, are responsible for following applicable local, state, and federal regulations such that the proposed action does not significantly adversely affect the general public.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no impact on occupational health and safety.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the proposed action would include hazards common to construction activities such as loud noise, heavy machine operation, debris, electricity, and hazardous material used or encountered during work. To minimize occupational health and safety risks, workers would wear and use appropriate PPE and follow all applicable OSHA standards and procedures. A health and safety plan would be developed and implemented for work by the contractors. 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 surrounding public. Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 would have negligible adverse impact on occupational health and safety. The impact would not be significant.

5.5.6 UTILITIES

This section evaluates the potential impacts of the Action Alternatives on public utilities. A public utility is an organization that maintains the infrastructure for a public service. Any interruption of public utilities can cause public health concerns. A reduction in the reliability of public utility services affects all areas of daily life.

Utilities, for the purposes of this EA are defined as water storage facilities, potable and wastewater treatment plants and delivery systems, supplemental power generation, transmission, and distribution facilities, including, but not limited to, wind turbines, generators, substations and power lines, natural gas transmission and distribution facilities, sewage collection systems and treatment plants, landfills, and communication systems. Potable water, sanitation, and electrical power exist west of the proposed site and would be extended onto the site under the proposed development. Each service provider has confirmed that any increase in demands as a result of installation of a maximum of 84 MHUs on the site is within the capabilities of each entity.

The proposed location of the group site is within the jurisdiction of the City of Rock Valley's Emergency Services. The City of Rock Valley has indicated that responding fire protection and rescue apparatuses are available 2.5 miles west of the subject site. The city also states that the development of the group site will not impact the ability of their Police Department to provide law enforcement services or the Rock Valley Ambulance Service to provide emergency service to the group site and greater community. An e-mail from the City Administrator confirming these capabilities is attached to this EA (Appendix G).

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, the No Action Alternative will have no impact on utilities or emergency services.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

Under Alternative 2, the construction of the group site necessitates provision of potable water, sanitation, and electrical power. The current service range of these utilities terminates west of the subject site. Infrastructure for the proposed group site would be tied into existing Rock Valley utilities to provide service to the maximum of 84 proposed MHUs. Service capacity for these utilities to accommodate the group site exists because the subject site was part of a tract of land at the eastern boundary of Rock Valley purchased by the Rock Valley Economic Development Corporation in 2006 with the intent of future development of the area. All underground utilities that are installed for Group Housing Site use will remain as it transitions from housing units placed to provide safe and secure housing for survivors of DR-4796-IA to more permanent housing stock on land owned by the City of Rock Valley. Based on the review conducted, because development of the area was in the City's long-term plans, Alternative 2 would have no impacts on local utilities and emergency services' availability

and capacity. The impact would not be significant.

5.5.7 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed EO 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, which 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. The CEQ defines “minority” as Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Hispanic. Residents of areas with a high percentage of people living below the federal poverty level as defined by the US Department of Health and Human Services may be considered low-income populations.

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.

On April 21, 2023, President Biden issued EO 14096, Executive Order on Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All, requiring the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, tribal affiliation or disability in agency decision-making and other federal activities that affect human health and the environment. These interrelated executive orders direct FEMA to consider cumulative impacts and to avoid disproportionate adverse impacts on identified populations.

Historically, families and individuals living close to or under the poverty line are more susceptible to homelessness and displacement risk after natural disasters and are more likely to need direct housing assistance.

The proposed Rock Ridge Group Site is in Rock Ridge Valley, Sioux County, Iowa. According to the United States Census Bureau, the population of Sioux County was 36,246 with a total of 13,385 housing units in 2023. The median household income was estimated to be approximately \$81,914 (based on 2018 to 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates). Based on the 2018 to 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, approximately 8 percent of the population in Sioux County lives below the federally defined poverty level.

In Sioux County, the age and gender distribution of the population is summarized by the 2022 Census as: 7.2 percent of the population is 5 and under, 27.2 percent of the population is under 18 years of age, 17 percent of the population is 65 years and over, and 49.7 percent of the total population identifies as female. The racial and national origin distribution is as follows: 96.3 percent of the population is white, 0.9 percent of the population is black or African American, 0.8 percent of the population is American Indian and Alaska native, 0.9 percent of the population is Asian, 0.1 percent of the population is native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, 0.9 percent of the population is two or more races, and 14.5 percent of the total population is Hispanic or Latinx.

Based on the EPA Environmental Justice Screening Tool, accessed August 10, 2024, the proposed Rock Ridge Group Site is located in an area with few environmental hazards or vulnerable populations. For FEMA to make the determination that an environmental justice hazard exists, the indicators must be above the statewide 80th percentile. A one-mile-radius search identified an existing population of 196, which consisted of 18 percent low-income populations and 0 percent people of color populations. Compared to their statewide percentages, low-income population is in the 28th percentile and people of color are in the third percentile. None of the environmental hazards, such as ozone, lead paint, or wastewater discharge, are concentrated above the statewide 80th percentile. exists. The EJScreen review focused on Rock Valley does not show any concentrated environmental health hazards. The full EJScreen report is attached to this EA (Appendix H).

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed Group Housing Site would not be constructed and operated. Therefore, those in need of housing assistance would have to find alternative means of housing. Families in the vicinity of the proposed site who are denied group site housing would have a higher probability of being low-income and minority households. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would have a moderate adverse impact human health. Environmental effects on minority or low-income populations and may result in disproportionate health or safety risks to children. The impact would be significant.

Alternative 2 – Develop the Rock Ridge Group Site with MHUs (Preferred Alternative)

According to the United States 2020 Census Bureau, the population of Rock Valley, Iowa, where the construction of the Rock Ridge Group Site is proposed was 4,059 people. Under Alternative 2, with the establishment of the Group Housing Site, up to 66 households could be temporarily

relocated to the Rock Ridge Group Site area. The potential Group Housing Site population would consist of current residents of the local community who were adversely impacted by the severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds, and tornadoes associated with DR 4796-IA. The overall demand for public and commercial services is not expected to be greater than the pre-disaster demand and potential impacts to those services are expected to be minimal.

Alternative 2 would provide housing relief to the individuals and families directly affected by the declared disaster, enabling them to remain within their community. The availability of federal assistance, including temporary housing for displaced individuals and households, who are statistically more likely represent a significant number of low-income and minority households, is consistent with the intent of EO 12898 and subsequent Executive Orders requiring the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, tribal affiliation or disability in federal activities that affect human health and the environment. All forms of FEMA disaster housing assistance are available to any affected household that meets the conditions of program eligibility; demographics are not among the eligibility criteria. Occupancy of the Group Housing Site by FEMA survivors is expected to last up to 18 months, or when the IHP ends. The City of Rock Valley intends that the site will remain as a permanent addition to the City's housing stock.

The specific demographics of the eligible Group Housing Site occupants are not available at this time because individuals or families eligible for FEMA housing are in the process of being identified. However, the demographic makeup of the group site residents is expected to be similar to that of the community as a whole. According to IHP program policy, survivors should be placed within 50-miles of their damaged dwelling as an effort to keep applicants within their community and within a reasonable commuting distance, defined as, "a distance that does not place undue hardship on an applicant". The availability of temporary housing would result in a positive impact to displaced individuals, regardless of whether they are classified as minority or low income. Establishing this housing site within city limits would enable the affected residents to remain within their community and retain their access to community schools, worship spaces and cultural activities.

Based on the review conducted, Alternative 2 is not expected to have disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental impacts on minority or low-income populations. Activities under Alternative 2 would be expected to have a moderate beneficial impact on local socioeconomic indicators.

6.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The CEQ regulations describe cumulative impacts as the impact on the environment that "results from the incremental impact of the action when added to the 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" (40 CFR 1508.7). In accordance with NEPA, this EA has

considered combined effects of the preferred alternative along with other actions occurring or expected to occur in the vicinity of the proposed project site. Cumulative impacts can be environmental effects that are greater in magnitude, extent, or duration than the direct and indirect effects of the proposed FEMA-associated action when combined with the effects of other current and future actions, regardless of the proponent.

Cumulative impacts associated with past incremental actions by both federal and non-federal parties have had a marked effect on the human and natural environment. Changes to the human environment, including air quality, noise pollution, rising average temperatures, increasing traffic, variable crime rates, the presence of poverty, unhoused persons, and variable socioeconomic disparity can be attributed, in whole or in part, to incremental regional development, human expansion, and policy decisions. Considering the natural environment, past deleterious effects to native plant and animal species have likely occurred. Phenomena such as deteriorating water quality, mass species die off events, and the continued loss and fragmentation of habitat can all be attributed, in whole or in part, to the same incremental regional development, human expansion, and policy decisions.

One of the results of the proposed action is not directly related to the temporary nature of the Group Housing Site but rather is related to infrastructure enhancements which have been designed to be a permanent installation in line with the City of Rock Valley's long term economic development plans. The creation of the Group Housing Site would add up to 84 residential units and associated infrastructure to the City's housing stock. The City's long term plans included development of the parcel; significant cost savings will accrue to the City as FEMA designs and executes the installation of utilities and associated infrastructure required for the installation and operation of the Group Housing Site. Development of the Rock Ridge Group Site with the intent of permanent, rather than short term, housing is an indirect impact associated with the proposed action.

Support of potential development on the site does not constitute a significant deviation from historical rates of development seen in the region. Additionally, considering the no-action alternative, the likelihood of the subject site being developed without federal involvement remains high.

The subject site does not represent a high-quality natural resource or aquatic site, nor does it function as critical habitat for any threatened or endangered species. With the exception of an expected marginal increase in the degradation of the natural environment caused by human activity within the area, the loss of this heretofore undeveloped land carries little negative impact associated with natural resources through the next 10 to 30 years. Additionally, the increase in residential capacity would not likely have a more than minimal adverse effect on future commercial or infrastructure development within the region. The establishment of the Rock Ridge Group Site is to address a need for replacement residential accommodation, not to add to Rock Valley and Sioux County's total housing stock. The modest increase of residential capacity is not a predictor of future development; associated adverse impacts including increases in airborne particulates, noise levels, traffic levels do not deviate significantly from the reasonably expected growth trajectory in the region. The Rock

Ridge Business Park has had, since 2006, a development plan for the lots immediately to the west of the proposed group site. As the subject property was identified for future expansion at that time, creation of the Group Housing Site at this time does not substantively affect ongoing development plans for the eastern part of the City of Rock Valley. Properties to the north, east and south are active farms in private hands, some representing several generations of ownership. There is no evidence that that this will change in the foreseeable future.

As many homes were significantly damaged by the recent severe storms, flooding and tornadoes, the creation of this Group Housing Site is expected to replace, not to meaningfully expand, existing housing stock. The placement of housing in this location does not significantly accelerate the development of the City of Rock Valley, or Sioux County generally. The anticipated impacts associated with the proposed action have a low-to-moderate likelihood of adversely affecting the continued existence of natural resources in the region now and into the future. Although the surroundings within one mile may be further developed in the future as Rock Valley relocates structures out of the floodplain, there is no expected concurrent development planned for this site.

Considering reasonably foreseeable future incremental effects can be difficult. However, one such approach is projecting current trends forward. At present there is no reason to expect more than an incremental and steady variable deterioration of the human and natural environment at a rate within a margin of error of the trajectory already discussed. It is unlikely any adverse phenomena including increases in noise and traffic, loss of native vegetation and extirpation of currently present wildlife species along with incursion of nuisance flora and fauna more readily adapted to proximity to human development and increases in hardened surfaces within the project area will cause meaningful changes outside of long-term incremental improvements contingent on local and regional policy decisions, increased conservation measures and social initiatives to address socioeconomic disparity and general human welfare.

7.0 PERMIT AND PROJECT CONDITIONS

1. Prior to construction, an appropriate SWPPP, Erosion Control Plan, and NPDES permits must be obtained, and the project proponent or their contractor must comply with all conditions prescribed by the permit(s).
2. The appropriate signage must be posted and fencing installed to minimize potential adverse public safety concerns. Appropriate signage and barriers would be in place prior to construction activities in order to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities and traffic pattern changes.
3. Under Alternative 2, the following NHPA Conditions are applicable:
 - a. In the event that archaeological deposits (soils, features, artifacts, or other remnants of human activity) are uncovered during the work, the project shall be halted. The contractor and or responsible party shall immediately stop all work

in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. The contractor and or responsible party shall inform the FEMA Region 7 REO immediately, will secure all archaeological finds, and will restrict access to the area. The REO will consult with the Iowa SHPO and other potential consulting parties including Native American Tribes and the Iowa OSA. Work in sensitive areas may not resume until an archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards determines the extent and historic significance of the discovery and consultations are completed. Work may not resume at or around archaeological deposits until the contractor and or responsible party is notified by the REO. Noncompliance with this requirement may jeopardize the receipt of federal assistance including funding.

- b. Upon discovery of suspected human remains during construction, including bone or other remains suspected to be human, ground-disturbing activities shall immediately cease within 50 ft of the discovery. The construction contractor or responsible party (“on-site responsible person”) will immediately notify the SME, and the appropriate local law enforcement agency in accordance with Section 523I.316.6 of the Iowa Code, and the FEMA Region 7 REO, will secure all remains, and restrict access to the area. Photographs and or video of the discovery shall be prohibited. The REO will notify the Iowa SHPO, and the Iowa OSA Bioarchaeology Program Director, Indian tribes, and other interested parties within 24 hours of the discovery. If there is uncertainty as to whether remains are human or of non-human origin, the OSA’s Bioarchaeology Program Director shall be contacted to make the determination. In cases where human remains are determined to be Native American, FEMA shall also consult with the appropriate Tribal representatives. Additionally, FEMA shall follow the guidelines outlined in the ACHP Policy Statement Regarding the Treatment of Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects (February 23, 2007) and the OSA’s Unanticipated Discoveries Plan for Human Remains, that outlines procedures recommended in the event of an unanticipated discovery of human remains during construction associated with projects for which standard Section 106 consultation has occurred between a federal agency and the SHPO. Noncompliance with this requirement may jeopardize the receipt of federal assistance including funding.
- c. Construction vehicles and equipment will be stored onsite during the project or at existing access points within the right-of-way.
- d. Any changes to the approved scope of work will require submission to, and evaluation and approval by, FEMA, prior to initiation of any work, for

compliance with Section 106.

4. Appropriate BMPs will be implemented during site development to minimize sediment migration from the site into nearby water bodies. Surface runoff will be controlled by using siltation controls such as silt fencing around the construction site to minimize erosion of materials into adjacent wetlands and/or waterways. Any disturbed soil will be protected with seed or sod after construction to decrease the amount of soil eroded by rainfall and runoff. Any fill stored on site will be appropriately covered to prevent erosion. If the project results in a discharge to waters of the State, an NPDES permit may be required in accordance with the Section 401 of the CWA and Iowa DNR Water Quality Certification requirements.
5. Unusable equipment, debris and material will be disposed of prior to occupancy in an approved manner and location. In the event significant items (or evidence thereof) are discovered during implementation of the project, petroleum products, hazardous materials, and toxic waste will be handled, managed, and disposed of in accordance with the requirements and to the satisfaction of the governing local, state, and federal agencies.
6. Construction activities with elevated noise levels will be limited during the hours between 1900 to 0700, unless otherwise approved by the County. Equipment and machinery used during construction will meet all local, State, and federal noise regulations.
7. MHUs shall comply with 24 CFR Part 3280 Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards (“Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] code”).
8. The project proponent or their contractor is responsible for obtaining any required Iowa DNR permits and waivers. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize FEMA funding; verification of compliance will be required at project closeout.
9. Any FEMA units will be installed in compliance with applicable local codes, ordinances and permitting requirements. Any contracted logistics installation entities (installers) for MHU placement will secure all pertinent Federal, state, and local permits and approvals before work.
10. If federally listed threatened or endangered species, or potential threatened or endangered species habitat, are found on or within close proximity to the project site, all work will immediately cease, and the relevant authorities, including FEMA and USFWS will be contacted. Construction will not resume until the appropriate permits are obtained.
11. Before unit occupancy, the responsible program will provide applicants with a Health and Safety Advisory regarding the flood hazard, local emergency evacuation plans and rights-of-entry during an emergency.

12. The responsible program will ensure the local emergency manager has information regarding location of MHU occupants and potential special needs to integrate into local emergency plans.
13. Once the temporary housing need has ended, FEMA expects the MHUs would be disposed of in accordance with the Rules and Policies of FEMA's Direct Housing Program. Furthermore, the project site would be left with the site improvements per the terms negotiated with the City of Rock Valley (landowner).

8.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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

- Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Iowa DNR)
- Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- City of Rock Valley

FEMA issued a disaster-wide initial public notice for DR-4796-IA (severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes) on August 3, 2024 (Appendix I), to notify the public of projects under the Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs that may be occurring within floodplains or wetlands, that could impact historic properties and cultural resources, or that could impact low-income or minority populations.

The public will be notified of the availability of the draft EA for review and comment by posting of the public notice (Appendix J) on the Iowa HSEMD website; FEMA's website; Rock Valley's website; Rock Valley's official social media accounts; the *Rock Valley Bee* and in the *Sioux Center News*, the newspaper of record for Sioux County, Iowa.

Physical copies of the draft EA will be made readily available to the public at:

- Rock Valley City Office, 1303 10th Street, Rock Valley, IA 51247
- Rock Valley Police Department, 1302 Main Street, Rock Valley, IA 51247
- At the proposed project location, Rock Ridge Group Site at Rock Ridge Drive, Rock Valley, IA 51247 (GPS Coordinates: 43.202335, -96.252663)
- FEMA Joint Field Office, 7065 Vista Drive, West Des Moines, IA 50266
- FEMA Region 7 Office, 11224 Holmes Road, Kansas City, MO 64131

The public comment period will be limited, due to the emergency nature of this action and the pressing need to provide temporary housing solutions for survivors of the severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds, and tornadoes associated with presidentially declared DR-4796-IA.

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**Appendices are available for viewing, along with the draft
Environmental Assessment, at:**

Rock Valley City Office, 1303 10th Street, Rock Valley, IA 51247

FEMA Region 7 Office, 11224 Holmes Road, Kansas City, MO 64131

Appendices are available for review upon request from:

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