

FINAL PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF WATSONVILLE WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY PROJECT SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CALIFORNIA HMGP-4482-781-008

POST DATE: 10/23/2023

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) proposes to provide federal financial assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to the City of Watsonville (sub-applicant) in Santa Cruz County, California, to design, build, and install a new Main Electrical Facility (proposed action) within the existing Watsonville Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF). The proposed action would increase the level of flood protection to above the 500-year flood hazard event and increase the level of seismic protection to a 2,475-year return interval event. Pursuant to Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and FEMA's implementing regulations at Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 9, FEMA hereby provides interested parties with a notice of its final decision and an explanation of the alternatives that were considered.

The proposed action will be constructed on a concrete foundation on 24-inch cast-in-place piles with reinforced concrete masonry unit block walls to elevate the building slab and concrete deck to the design elevation above the 500-year Base Flood Elevation (BFE), with additional freeboard of 1.1 feet to account for potential local sea level rise projected by the California Ocean Protection Council's Sea Level Rise Guidance for 2050. The approximate dimensions of the facility will be 5,877 square feet and will include an approximate 1,600 square-foot electrical building, and an elevated concrete deck surrounding the electrical building. A new Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) transformer, and the existing PG&E utility service connection and transformer will be relocated from its current hazard-vulnerable location to the new relocated Main Electrical Facility. Two existing 600 kW emergency standby generators will be replaced by a new 2,000 kW emergency standby power generator, and a new fuel tank that will be installed on the Main Electrical Facility concrete pad. The existing electrical equipment (main switchgear) will be relocated to the electrical building.

The project area is depicted on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), Number 06087C0393E, effective 05/16/2012. The FIRM shows the proposed action lies within Zone AO (DEPTH 1), river or stream flood hazard areas, and areas with a 1% or greater chance of shallow flooding each year, usually in the form of sheet flow, with an average depth ranging from 1 to 3 feet. Average flood depths derived from detailed analyses are shown within these zones. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory Map shows the project is adjacent to wetlands.

Maps of the project area and its location within the floodplain and adjacent to wetlands are available for public inspection. Parties interested in receiving a copy of either map should contact the FEMA Region IX Environmental Officer using contact information provided in this notice.

Four alternatives to the proposed action were considered: Alternative 1: No Action; Alternative 2: Raising standby generator controls; Alternative 3: Conversion to non-diesel fuel; and Alternative 4: Installing new generators in the existing generator footprint. Alternative 1 would result in no action

being taken to mitigate flood hazards and seismic risk. This Alternative is not recommended because the risk of flood hazards, including damage to property and people, would remain. In addition, No Action would increase public health risk and risk to sensitive environmental habitats that surround the WWTF. Alternative 2 included raising the standby generator controls above the 500-year flood hazard level. This Alternative is not recommended because it violates local regulatory requirements of the Monterey Bay Area Resources District (MBARD) which would require the existing generators to be brought up to current emission standards when the controls are modified. Given the age and inefficiency of the existing generators, the cost of this alternative would be approximately equivalent to replacing the generators with new. Therefore, Alternative 2 is not feasible. Alternative 3 included converting the existing generators to a non-diesel fuel source to eliminate the MBARD emissions concerns. This alternative is not recommended because the cost of conversion was similar to the cost of replacing the generators with new generators. In addition, the alternate fuel source is currently a more costly and less readily available resource for the foreseeable future. Therefore, Alternative 3 is not feasible. Alternative 4 considered installing the new replacement generators in the current location within the Energy Recovery Building and installing the equipment compatible with the MBARD emissions and efficiency standards. This alternative is not recommended because the generator pads would need to be relocated and elevated, the exhaust openings in the already seismically vulnerable building would need to be modified which would increase the cost of building rehabilitation and leave insufficient space to meet National Electric Code (NEC) requirements. In addition, the WWTF would be without a standby generator during project construction. Thus, Alternative 4 is not feasible. FEMA has determined that the proposed project is the only practicable alternative available; therefore, the proposed action must be taken at this location in order for the Main Electrical Facility to serve its designed purpose.

The proposed action would have no significant adverse impact on the floodplain and would benefit the area by minimizing the impact of seismic activity and floods on human health, safety, or welfare, and results in an increase to the useful life of a structure or facility. The City of Watsonville has declared that the proposed action conforms to local floodplain standards, and would be responsible for the management, construction, and maintenance of the proposed action.

Additional information about FEMA's proposed action may be requested by writing the FEMA Region IX Environmental Officer at FEMA, 1111 Broadway, Suite 1200, Oakland, California 94607, or fema-rix-ehp-documents@fema.dhs.gov. All requests should be received no later than 15 days after publication of this notice. No action will be taken before this date.