

## **Finding of No Significant Impact for Troup County Communications Tower, City of Hogansville, Troup County, Georgia**

### **Introduction**

The project constructed a new 340-foot (ft) guyed radio transmission/receiving tower in Troup County, Georgia. The Troup County Communications Tower, City of Hogansville, Troup County, Georgia Environmental Assessment (EA), further referenced as the Hightower EA, provides an analysis of potential environmental impacts associated with the use of grant funds issued by the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program, administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, to construct this tower and install associated equipment.

### **Scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA)**

The Hightower project would apply funds issued by the PSIC Grant Program. The PSIC Grant Program was developed to assist State, local, tribal, and non-governmental agencies in developing interoperable communications as they leverage the newly available spectrum in the 700 megahertz (MHz) band. As a condition of the PSIC Grant Program, grantees must comply with all relevant Federal legislation, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

The NTIA has specified that PSIC grant funds must be used for projects that would improve communications in areas at high risk for natural disasters and in urban and metropolitan areas at high risk for terrorism threats, and should include pre-positioning or securing of interoperable communications for immediate deployment during emergencies or major disasters. Investments receiving PSIC funds can range from the installation of new large-scale infrastructure (e.g., communications towers) to the acquisition of mobile/portable handheld radios. As outlined in the PSIC Grant Program's Programmatic EA (February 2009) and Final Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (April 2009), the Hightower project is classified as a transmission and receiving site.

The project strengthened the overall local and regional communications capabilities by providing adequate connectivity and duplicity of communications throughout the local and regional area. The project was designed to improve existing voice communications and improve/expand voice coverage for reliable interoperable communications among first responder organizations within the region. The project is part of a regional 800 MHz communications system that would link several local and State agency users (e.g., Troup County/City of Lagrange Public Safety, Harris County Public Safety, Muscogee County/City of Columbus Public Safety, Georgia State Patrol, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources), as well as multiple smaller secondary users such as public utility providers and public works operations.

The EA examined the Proposed Action to construct a 340-ft guyed tower in Hogansville, Troup County, Georgia. The project included the construction of a 340-ft guyed communications tower with transmission and receiving antennas, feedline, and associated radio frequency components. In addition, a 12-ft by 24-ft equipment shelter supported by a backup generator and associated 500 gallon liquid propane fuel tank were installed at the site. All components are contained within a 40-ft by 40-ft fenced compound. The project site is located on approximately 8.83 acres of property, which is owned by Troup County and used as a treated wastewater spray field operated by the local government public utilities division. The site is primarily flat within undeveloped grassy pasture fields. All equipment not mounted on the tower is housed in a pre-manufactured equipment shelter including four ASTRO 25 800 MHz repeaters, an S2500 router, a GTR8000 extendable site subsystem, and a TRAK 9100 Frequency standard. The total ground disturbance was approximately 14,000 square-feet (0.32 acres).

The EA analyzed existing conditions and environmental consequences of the Proposed Action for the following resource areas: air quality; noise; threatened and endangered species; vegetation and wildlife; topography, geology, and soils; human health and safety; community facilities and services; land use planning and zoning; economy and employment; taxes and revenue; aesthetic and visual resources; archeological resources; historic resources; transportation; telecommunications; electrical power and gas; and waste management.

### **Alternatives Considered**

**Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative.** Under the No Action Alternative, the current emergency services radio system coverage did not be met causing serious limitation on emergency response, funding for interoperable communications and information systems infrastructure would not be released, and infrastructure would neither be developed nor enhanced. The No Action Alternative did not address the needs for Troup County. The No Action Alternative served as the baseline for assessing the impacts of the alternatives in the EA.

**Alternative 2 – Preferred Alternative.** Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) was to implement the Hightower project consisting of a 340-ft guyed radio communications tower and a 12-ft by 24-ft equipment shelter supported by a backup generator and associated fuel tank. All components would be contained within a 40-ft by 40-ft fenced compound. The project site is located on approximately 8.83 acres of property that is owned by Troup County and used as a treated wastewater spray field operated by the local government public utilities division. The total ground disturbance would be approximately 0.32 acres.

The Hightower project met the need for a government-owned facility to contain the variety of antennas and equipment for the enhancement of the regional communications systems and to enable future expansions of the system. The site provided reliable interoperable communications and a significantly increased coverage area for emergency first responders. The site was strategically located, expanding the coverage radius for Troup County, as well as portions of the surrounding counties within the State.

### **Alternatives Considered But Not Carried Forward**

Another alternative site was examined to determine the range of reasonable alternatives to implement the Proposed Action. The alternative site was located on the site of the Hogansville Sportsplex at 2062 Mobley Bridge Road, Hogansville, GA, a recreational park that consists of four baseball playing fields, support structures, and a parking area. Numerous residential structures are located adjacent to the park. Under this alternative, a similar radio communications tower and supporting components would be installed at the park. However due to the proximity of the park to neighboring homes and recreational usage of the park, it was determined that locating a large radio tower at this location would have significant negative impacts and potential risks to the park patrons and the neighbors from aesthetical concerns. Based on these concerns, the proposed alternative was not carried forward as a reasonable alternative to the Proposed Action.

Additionally, a review of self-supporting communications tower in the vicinity were examined to determine the collocation potential. However, analyses of the existing towers determined that there were no viable collocation opportunities in the area. Based on these factors, collocating equipment onto existing towers was not carried forward as a reasonable alternative to the Proposed Action.

### **Recommended Alternative**

Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) to construct the Hightower project was recommended for implementation as it best met the purpose and the need of Troup County to improve and facilitate reliable interoperable communications and increased radio frequency coverage area for emergency first responders. The No Action Alternative did not address the communications needs for Troup County.

### Consultations

Coordination on fish and wildlife issues to meet the Section 7 requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was accomplished through a preliminary review of protected species from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Division of Endangered Species Web site to identify listed and proposed threatened and endangered species, as well as critical habitats that may be located on or near the proposed site. Based on a review of the USFWS Web site, five listed threatened and endangered species were identified for Troup County, Georgia, including the Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Bluestripe shiner (*Cyprinella callitaenia*), Highscale shiner (*Notropis hypsilepis*), Bay Star-Vine (*Schisandra glabra*), and Green Pitcher-Plant (*Sarracenia oreophila*). A review of the site indicated that the area did not provide suitable habitat for any listed threatened or endangered species for Troup County. The site was reviewed by Federal, State and local environmental compliance agencies to address potential issues with migratory bird collisions. These reviews concluded that the Hightower project was not expected to have any impact to threatened or endangered species. The USFWS Athens, Georgia Office concurred with the determination dated on August 28, 2009 that no further action was required under section 7(a)(2) of the ESA for this Proposed Action. No protected species were observed during construction of the Hightower project.

Coordination on historic and cultural resources issues was accomplished with the Georgia Historic Preservation Division to determine whether the construction at the site may generate any short- or long-term indirect impacts to historic and cultural resources or may be located within the viewshed of any historic and cultural resources. An archaeological evaluation was conducted to assess the potential direct effects the Proposed Action may have on archaeological resources. Available literature and records reviewed included the proposed Hightower site included searches of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) files, Troup County historic resource survey files, Troup County Identified Sites files, and Georgia's Natural Archaeological and Historic Resources Geographical Information System internet database. The evaluation identified one recorded historic structure (Resource TP-592/61313) that "appear[ed] not to meet Nat. Reg. Criteria" due to a lack of integrity. The structure was a circa 1935 pyramidal-type cottage that was originally constructed as a duplex. A field visit conducted as a part of the investigation found that Resource TP-592/61313 was no longer present at its recorded location. Large oak trees and an asphalt drive were all that remain to suggest the former presence of a structure. Based on this evaluation, it was concluded that no archaeological resources eligible for inclusion in the NRHP would be affected by the Proposed Action.

In addition, archeological surveys were conducted at the Hightower site including shovel testing and/or surface inspection within the proposed facility compound (five shovel tests), along the proposed and existing portions of the access road (two shovel tests), and at each guy anchor location (three shovel tests) to determine if archeological deposits were present. Soils were screened through 0.64 inch hardware cloth to enhance recovery of artifacts. Shovel testing at the tower site revealed less than 15 centimeters (cm) of reddish-brown clay loam over red clay. Soil profiles and exposed surfaces in the project vicinity suggest heavy erosion of the parent parcel of land. No artifacts, features or other evidence of historic/prehistoric human occupation and use were observed during the archeological surveys.

A letter was submitted on July 28, 2009 to the Georgia Historic Preservation Division related to any potential impacts to historical or archaeological resources within a 0.75 mile area of potential effect (APE) of the site. In addition, appropriate Tribal Historic Preservation Officers of the Federally Recognized Native American Tribes with known ancestral rights to Troup County were consulted to determine the effect from the Proposed Action. Concurrence from all appropriate Native American Tribes was received regarding the Proposed Action.

**Findings and Conclusions**

The Hightower project did not result in any environmental impacts nor did it involve any unusual risks or impacts to sensitive areas. The Proposed Action included the construction of a 340-ft guyed communications tower and associated equipment with ground disturbance activities (totaling 0.32 acres). In accordance with 47 Code of Federal Regulations Section 1.1307(a) (1) through (8), an evaluation was made to determine whether any of the listed Federal Communications Commission (FCC) special interest items would be significantly affected if a tower structure and associated equipment were constructed at the proposed site location. No FCC special interest items were identified.

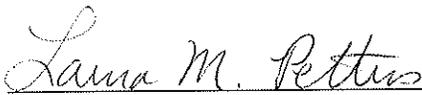
**NTIA Review**

NTIA determined that the September 2011 Hightower EA accurately assessed the individual and cumulative environmental impacts of the guyed communications tower and that the scope, alternatives considered, and content of the EA are adequate.

This FONSI is based on the attached EA, which has been independently evaluated by the NTIA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the project and provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement is not required.

Based on the best available information and NTIA's independent review, NTIA has decided to adopt the September 2011 Hightower EA. The EA is available for public review at [http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/NEPA\\_sub3.html](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/NEPA_sub3.html). This FONSI has therefore been prepared and is being submitted to document environmental review and evaluation in compliance with NEPA. The decision documents for the environmental review of the Proposed Action are attached.

I have considered the information contained in the EA, and supporting documentation, which is the basis for this FONSI. Based on the information in the EA and this FONSI document, I agree that the Proposed Action as described above, and in the EA, had no significant impact on the environment.



Laura M. Pettus

Responsible Program Manager

Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration

11-8-11  
Date

## ADOPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

**Title of document being adopted:** Troup County Communications Tower, City of Hogansville, Troup County, Georgia EA

**Proponent:** Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Troup County Emergency Management Agency

**Location of current proposal:** 52 Hightower Road, Hogansville, Troup County, Georgia

**Agency that prepared document being adopted:** Georgia Emergency Management Agency

**Date adopted document was prepared:** September 2011

**Description of document (or portion) being adopted:** The Hightower project included construction of a 340-ft guyed tower in Hogansville, Troup County, Georgia. The project constructed a 340-ft guyed communications tower with transmission and receiving antennas, feedline, and associated radio frequency components. In addition, a 12-ft by 24-ft equipment shelter supported by a backup generator and associated 500 gallon liquid propane fuel tank were installed. All equipment not mounted on the tower was housed in the equipment shelter, including four ASTRO 25 800 MHz repeaters, an S2500 router, a GTR8000 extendable site subsystem, and a TRAK 9100 Frequency standard. The total ground disturbance was approximately 14,000 square-feet (0.32 acres). The tower and site construction for this Proposed Action did not have any significant environmental impacts or extraordinary circumstances.

**The document is available to be read at:** [http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/NEPA\\_sub3.html](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/NEPA_sub3.html)

**The Department of Commerce has identified and adopted this document as being appropriate for National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) purposes after independent review. The document meets its environmental review needs for approval under the PSIC Grant Program and will accompany the proposal to the decision maker.**

**Name of agency adopting the document:** NTIA

**Responsible Official:** Laura M. Pettus

**Position/Title:** Responsible Program Manager

**Address:** NTIA, Room 4812, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230

**Contact:** Laura Pettus

**Phone:** (202) 482-4509 **Fax:** (202) 501-8013 **e-mail:** [lpettus@ntia.doc.gov](mailto:lpettus@ntia.doc.gov)

**Signed:**

Laura M. Pettus

**Date:**

11-8-11