

## **Finding of No Significant Impact for Proposed City of Sidney 300-foot Guyed Telecommunications Tower**

### **Introduction**

The proposed project is to construct a 300-foot (ft) guyed tower in Cheyenne County, Nebraska. The Proposed City of Sidney 300-ft Telecommunications Tower Approximately .6 miles North of Hwy 30 on Haskell Hill Rd Sidney, Cheyenne County, Nebraska Environmental Assessment (EA), further referenced as the Sidney tower 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 associated equipment.

### **Scope of the Environmental Assessment**

The proposed Sidney tower 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).

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 proposed Sidney tower project is classified as a transmission and receiving site.

The proposed Sidney tower project would allow for the following:

- Increased coverage area for emergency responders connected through the communications and information systems of neighboring counties;
- Updated equipment to support new frequencies to improve and expand voice and data coverage;
- Reliable interoperable communications among first responder organizations; and
- Enhanced security and facility control.

The EA examines the Proposed Action to construct the Sidney tower project in Sidney, Cheyenne County, Nebraska. The proposed project would include the construction of 300-ft guyed telecommunications tower and associated equipment that would be enclosed within a 50-ft by 50-ft graveled lease parcel with one 8-ft by 16-ft equipment shelter and a stand-alone emergency backup generator. The parent property is owned by the city of Sidney and has an existing water tower. All new components would be contained within the enclosed compound.

The area of ground disturbance associated with the proposed compound is anticipated to total less than 0.25 acres.

The EA analyzes existing conditions and environmental consequences of the Proposed Action for 11 resource areas: noise, air quality, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, historic and cultural resources, aesthetic and visual resources, land use, infrastructure, socioeconomic resources, and human health and safety.

### **Alternatives Considered**

**Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative).** Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) is to implement the Sidney tower project in its entirety, consisting of a 300-ft guyed tower and associated equipment that would be enclosed within a 50-ft by 50-ft compound with one 8-ft by 16-ft equipment shelter and a stand-alone emergency backup generator. The proposed facility would be located in the city of Sidney in Cheyenne County, NE on a graveled lease parcel owned by the City. All new components would be contained within the compound. The area of ground disturbance associated with the proposed compound is anticipated to total less than 0.25 acres. The proposed project would use existing utilities for power from an existing electrical transmission pedestal. An existing gravel access road would be used for site access for construction and operations maintenance.

The proposed site topography provides natural height resulting in enhanced coverage with the proposed 300-ft guyed tower, thereby greatly reducing any retrofitting that would be required otherwise. The proposed site also provides for additional future expansion to help minimize the number of new towers needed. Ingress and egress would be more conducive to maintenance and future expansion construction work. The proposed site would provide enhanced facility control, reliable interoperable communications, and significantly increased coverage for security and emergency service entities.

**No Action Alternative.** Under the No Action Alternative, the current radio system coverage requirements would not be met causing serious limitation to security and emergency response, funding for interoperable communications and information systems infrastructure would not be released, and infrastructure would neither be developed nor enhanced. Ongoing maintenance activities would continue using current funding sources; however, no new activities would be funded with PSIC grant funding. The No Action Alternative would not address the needs for Cheyenne County and surrounding areas. The Proposed Action would not move forward using PSIC grant funds or any alternate funding sources. The No Action Alternative served as the baseline for assessing the impacts of the alternatives in the EA.

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

Multiple alternative site locations were examined to determine the range of reasonable alternatives to implement the Proposed Action. A review of existing facilities that would require minimal structural retrofitting of an existing tower and other equipment upgrades was conducted; no existing facility sites met this requirement. The proposed site provides a technically appropriate area to locate this facility. Within this area, an extremely limited number of sites were available to pursue. Consideration of existing tower locations in the area and accounting for the future needs of Cheyenne County and surrounding areas did not meet the pre-screen

requirements of increased coverage area for emergency responders, new technology to support frequencies that improve or expand voice and data coverage, improved communications among security and emergency organizations, enhanced security and facility control, and use of cost-effective measures via leasing agreements and systems sharing. Based on these requirements, these alternative locations were not carried forward as a reasonable alternative to the Proposed Action.

There were no viable collocation opportunities that would satisfy the coverage needs of Cheyenne County and surrounding areas. Collocating equipment onto existing towers was not carried forward as a reasonable alternative to the Proposed Action.

### **Recommended Alternative**

Alternative 1 (Preferred Alternative) to construct the proposed Sidney tower project is recommended for implementation and best meets the purpose and the need of Cheyenne County and the surrounding area to improve and facilitate reliable interoperable communications, significantly increase the coverage area for security and emergency response, and provide greater security and facility control. The No Action Alternative would not address the communications needs for Cheyenne County.

### **Consultations**

The Proposed Action is located in Sidney, Nebraska approximately 0.6 miles north of Highway 30 on Haskell Hill Road. Coordination on fish and wildlife issues to meet the Section 7 requirements of the Endangered Species Act 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. A visual inspection of the proposed Sidney tower site revealed no burrows, nests, wetlands, coastal areas or signs of potential habitat of threatened or endangered species. Correspondence with the USFWS Nebraska Field Office dated April 11, 2011 identified that “due to the project type, size, and location, we do not anticipate any impacts to federally listed species, or their critical habitats.” Therefore, it is not likely that the construction of the proposed tower would affect listed species or their critical habitats. In addition, the USFWS Nebraska Field Office stated the proposed project lies within the range of the State-listed species (swift fox and mountain plover) and recommended consultation with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Correspondence from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission dated April 6, 2011 identified that based on a review of the Nebraska Natural Heritage database, aerial photographs, and site photographs, the Commission “determined that the project as described is not likely to adversely affect state-listed threatened or endangered species.” In addition, the Commission reported that the project area is not immediately located within any Nebraska Game and Parks Commission State Park, State Recreation, or State Wildlife Management Areas.

As the proposed Sidney tower is a 300-ft guyed tower, the USFWS provided guidance on avoidance measures to reduce impacts on migratory birds. Impacts on migratory birds could be expected as a result of a collision with operating towers, antennae, and other tall structures, particularly during periods of low visibility and as a result of tower lighting that might be distracting to some species. The probability of collision is difficult to determine

programmatically because of a range of variables that affect the potential for collision and the lack of conclusive data on the causes of collision. Adverse impacts on birds resulting from tower collisions generally occur during foggy or low cloud conditions at lighted towers supported by guy wires. These towers present a greater collision risk than freestanding / self-supporting towers or buildings. Variables such as structure height, design, lighting, seasons, adjacent land features, and migratory patterns would affect the potential and degree of adverse impacts on migratory birds. The potential impact of the proposed Sidney tower on migratory birds would be mitigated using the recommended USFWS guidelines for lighting and marking to minimize bird strike fatalities. It is assumed that lighting and marking would be conducted in a manner as to comply with the USFWS recommendations.

Coordination on historic and cultural resources issues was accomplished with the Nebraska State Historical Society to determine whether the construction of the proposed 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. A consultation letter was submitted to the Nebraska Historical Society related to any potential impacts to historical or archaeological resources within the area of potential effect (APE) of the site. In addition, the appropriate Tribal Historic Preservation Officers of the federally recognized Native American tribes with known ancestral rights to Cheyenne County (i.e., Santee Sioux, Winnebago, Omaha, Ponca Tribal Councils) requesting a review of this project. Follow-up telephone calls were made to confirm that the letters were received. To date, no comments were received. The Nebraska Historical Society noted in a letter dated April 13, 2011 that "a review of our files indicates that the referenced project does not contain recorded historic resources ...Your undertaking, in our opinion, will have no effect for archaeological, architectural, or historic properties."

### **Findings and Conclusions**

The proposed Sidney tower project is not likely to result in any environmental impacts and does not involve any unusual risks or impacts to sensitive areas. The Proposed Action would require construction of a 300-ft guyed communications tower and associated equipment with ground disturbance activities (totaling less than 0.25 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 control cabinets were constructed at the proposed site location. No FCC special interest items were identified.

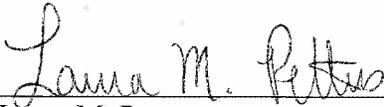
### **NTIA Review**

NTIA determined that the May 2011 City of Sidney Proposed 300-foot Guyed Communications Tower EA accurately assessed the potential individual and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed development including a 300-ft 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 NTIA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the proposed 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 May 2011 EA for the City of Sidney Proposed 300-foot Guyed Communications Tower. 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, would have no significant impact on the environment.

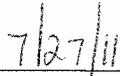


Laura M. Pettus

Responsible Program Manager

Department of Commerce

National Telecommunications and Information Administration



Date

## **ADOPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT**

**Title of document being adopted:** City of Sidney Proposed 300-foot Guyed Communications Tower Approximately .6 miles North of Hwy 30 on Haskell Hill Rd Sidney, Cheyenne County, Nebraska EA

**Proponent:** Nebraska State Administrative Agency / City of Sidney, Nebraska

**Location of current proposal:** Approximately 0.6 miles North of Hwy 30 on Haskell Hill Rd in Sidney (Cheyenne County), Nebraska

**Agency that prepared document being adopted:** City of Sidney, Nebraska

**Date adopted document was prepared:** May 23, 2011

**Description of document (or portion) being adopted:** The proposed Sidney tower project would include a 300-foot (ft) guyed tower and associated equipment that would be enclosed within a 50-ft by 50-ft compound with one 8-ft by 16-ft equipment shelter and a stand-alone emergency backup generator. The proposed facility would be located in the city of Sidney in Cheyenne County, NE on a graveled lease parcel owned by the City. All components would be contained within the compound. The area of ground disturbance associated with the proposed compound is anticipated to total less than 0.25 acres. The proposed project would use existing utilities for power from an existing electrical transmission pedestal. An existing gravel access road would be used for site access for construction and operations maintenance. The tower and site construction for this Proposed Action do 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

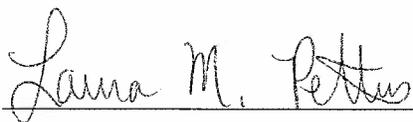
**Address:** NTIA, Room 4812, 1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230

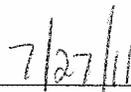
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**Signed:**

**Date:**

  
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