



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD

CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

NOV 01 2011

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF

E-19J

Donald R. Melcher, Jr.  
Project Manager  
General Services Administration, Great Lakes Region  
230 South Dearborn Street, Room 3600  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Re: International Falls Land Port of Entry Improvements Study, Final Environmental Impact Statement, International Falls, Koochiching County, Minnesota. CEQ No.: 20110333

Dear Mr. Melcher:

The Environmental Protection Agency-Region 5 (EPA) has reviewed the U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for improving the existing Land Port of Entry facilities (LPOE) in International Falls, Minnesota. GSA proposes to expand and replace the existing 1.6-acre Land Port of Entry (LPOE) with a new LPOE facility of 15 or more acres that meets the needs of the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), complies with GSA's design requirements, and provides safe and efficient inspection and processing of individuals, vehicles, and freight at the border crossing between Fort Frances, Ontario, Canada, and International Falls, Minnesota.

EPA commented on the Draft EIS (DEIS) for this proposal. EPA identified concerns regarding the potential for adverse impacts to water resources during project operation. We recommended GSA assess and disclose each alternative's potential for providing adequate management and treatment of storm water run-off and inadvertent hazardous materials releases, prior to choosing a preferred alternative. We recommended that the results of this assessment and the proposed treatment methods be discussed in the FEIS, with treatment components identified on the alternatives' site layout plans. The FEIS does not provide this information. Based on our review of the FEIS and the FEIS identified Preferred Alternative, EPA retains its water resources concerns.

The FEIS identifies Alternative 10 as the preferred alternative that best meets CBP's identified needs. FEIS Preferred Alternative 10 has an expanded footprint and includes additional project components from those identified for DEIS Alternative 10. The new project components of Preferred Alternative 10 increase the amount of impervious surface and potential for water resources impacts, in addition to the DEIS Alternative 10 Rainy River impacts. Preferred Alternative 10 new project components include: 1) paving a trailer parking lot for Boise, Inc. and 2) providing a new access road from the trailer parking lot to Highway 11. The proposed new access road would cross First Creek. The FEIS identifies that 0.1 acres of First Creek may be impacted. The FEIS does not identify whether wetlands associated with First Creek would also be impacted.

The FEIS identifies that the preferred alternative would be developed in compliance with Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. Section 438 calls for projects involving a federal facility with a footprint of 5,000 square feet to use site planning, design, construction, and maintenance strategies for the property to maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the property. During final design, GSA would further analyze the location of the piers and opportunities to protect and restore the natural shoreline of the Rainy River. The FEIS identifies that if there is a direct impact to the Rainy River or First Creek, a permit or approval would be required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR). EPA reserves its right to provide further review and comment during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Clean Water Act, Section 404 permitting process for this GSA proposal.

In order to protect wetlands and the water quality in the project area, we recommend GSA consider the following: 1) for the new Boise Inc., access road, use a bridge design that spans across First Creek, its associated wetlands and 100-year floodplain; 2) provide a vegetative buffer of native species (width to be determined after consultation with state resource agencies) between the Rainy River, First Creek, their 100-year floodplains, and any manmade component of the proposal; and 3) direct and pretreat all stormwater runoff from all paved surfaces (parking lots, roadways, bridges) to retention/detention pretreatment facilities located outside of wetlands prior to discharging into the Rainy River and/or First Creek. We recommend GSA identify these water resources protection measures as commitments in their Record of Decision (ROD) for this EIS proposal.

The FEIS identifies that GSA is now committed to achieving a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Gold certification rating, instead of the Silver as identified in the DEIS, for the new LPOE at International Falls. We commend this enhanced commitment to green building practices.

Thank you for forwarding the FEIS for our review. If you have any questions, please contact Virginia Laszewski of my staff at (312) 886-7501 or at [laszewski.virginia@epa.gov](mailto:laszewski.virginia@epa.gov). Please send us a copy of the Record of Decision (ROD) when it is available.

Sincerely,



Kenneth A. Westlake  
Chief, NEPA Implementation Section  
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance