

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC 20405

PBS 1095.8A
November 30, 2023

GSA ORDER

SUBJECT: Floodplain Management

1. Purpose. This Order establishes policy and assigns responsibility within the General Services Administration (GSA) concerning GSA actions that may affect floodplains by issuing the attached PBS Floodplain Management Desk Guide, November 2023.

2. Background. Flooding can severely damage federally owned and leased structures and facilities, resulting in costs and impacts to agency mission and continuity of operations. Floodplain compliance is a component of responsible property management that can reduce the risk of property loss and protect federal agency resources. E.O. 11988, "Floodplain Management" (May 24, 1977), and E.O. 13690, "Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input" (January 30, 2015), require federal agencies to take action to reduce the risk of flood loss and to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and the direct or indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative.

3. Cancellation. This Order cancels PBS 1095.8, Floodplain Management and the companion PBS Desk Guide for Floodplain Management issued in September 2019.

4. Revision. Reestablish requirements and management processes to comply with E.O. 14030, "Climate Related Financial Risk" (May 20, 2021), which reinstates E.O. 13690 (January 30, 2015) that was revoked by E.O. 13807, "Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects" (August 15, 2017). This revision reestablishes the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) for federally funded projects.

5. Scope and Applicability. The Order and the companion Desk Guide apply to all real property management and operation activities for federal buildings under GSA's jurisdiction, custody, or control, including all buildings delegated to other federal agencies by the GSA Administrator, and leased space. For Federally Funded Projects, as defined herein, this Order and desk guide apply to prospective projects for which a source of funding has yet to be identified as of the Effective Date.

6. Responsibilities. The Office of Architecture and Engineering, the Chief Architect, is responsible for the program office that maintains and updates this floodplain policy. The companion Desk Guide provides specific guidance and responsibilities in implementing this policy.

7. Policy. This Order incorporates requirements of the guidelines for implementing E.O. 11988 and E.O. 13690 for GSA activities that may involve floodplains, including real property acquisition through federal construction, purchase or lease, public building design and construction, repair and alteration, facility operation, and disposal of surplus real property. The Order and companion Desk Guide provide updated floodplain management guidance.

8. Attachment. PBS Floodplain Management Desk Guide, November 2023.

9. Signature.

/S/ _____

Elliot Doomes

Commissioner

Public Buildings Service



U.S. General Services Administration



PBS FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT DESK GUIDE

COMPANION TO GSA ORDER PBS 1095.8A

PBS OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING

November 2023

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1. SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

The previous version of this Public Building Service (PBS) Desk Guide for Floodplain Management (September 2019) was compelled by Executive Order (E.O.) 13807 (August 15, 2017) which revoked E.O. 13690 (January 30, 2015), thereby leaving E.O. 11988 (May 24, 1977) as the primary source of direction on floodplain management for Federal agencies. The purpose of this revision is to provide updated floodplain management guidance in accordance with E.O. 13690 as reinstated by E.O. 14030 (May 20, 2021), Climate-Related Financial Risk. This revision and policy are being maintained by the PBS Office of Architecture and Engineering.

This revised Floodplain Management Desk Guide continues to require the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) to evaluate potential impacts of any actions taken in a floodplain, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts associated with the occupancy, modification, or development in floodplains. The significant revisions to GSA's floodplain management compliance requirements, established through the Floodplain Management Order (PBS 1095.8A) and this Desk Guide, are summarized in the table below. GSA formerly evaluated potential impacts of all actions using the same floodplain standard and decision-making process. This revised Desk Guide creates three new subsets of actions:

- Federally Funded Projects;
- Specific Actions and Certain Disposal Actions; and
- Actions.

The following table describes the three subsets of actions – Federally Funded Projects, Specific Actions, and Actions – and the associated floodplain standard and decision-making process that must be applied to each. Reference the noted sections of the Desk Guide for details.

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Table 1.0 – Summary of The Three Subsets of Actions		
Federally Funded Projects	Specific Actions and Certain Disposal Actions	Actions
See Section 4; Appendix A	See Section 6; Appendix B	See Section 5; Appendix A
Activity Description		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New construction and lease construction. • Site acquisition tied with improvements. • Substantial improvements where the cost of improvements or the cost to repair the damage equals or exceeds either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 30% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities within the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain; or ○ 50% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities outside the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. • Repair and alteration project where tracked cumulative costs from repetitive flood damage equal or exceed either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 30% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities within the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain; or ○ 50% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities outside the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Automatic Categorical Exclusions (CATEX), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lease actions (extensions, renewals, or succeeding leases). ○ Small projects (repair and alteration projects below the prospectus threshold). ○ Operations and maintenance. • Certain Disposal Actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other actions (not Federally Funded Projects or Specific Actions).
Floodplain Determination		
Use a new higher flood risk standard to determine the elevation and corresponding horizontal extent of the floodplain. The Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) floodplain determination approaches are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Informed Science Approach (where data is available); Freeboard Value Approach (1-percent-annual-chance flood¹ elevation plus 2 feet, or 3 feet for critical actions); or 0.2-Percent-annual-chance Flood² Approach. 	Use the existing standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain & elevation; or • 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain & elevation for critical actions. 	Use the existing standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain & elevation; or • 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain & elevation for critical actions.
Floodplain Decision-making Process		
8-Steps	4-Steps	8-Steps

¹ The 1% annual chance flood, formerly known as the 100-year flood.

² The 0.2% annual chance flood, formerly known as the 500-year flood.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Floodplain Management Desk Guide is to provide updated floodplain management guidance, in accordance with Executive Order (E.O.) 13690, *Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input* (January 30, 2015) as reinstated by Executive Order 14030, *Climate-Related Financial Risk* (May 20, 2021). This Desk Guide provides procedures and guidance to implement GSA Order PBS 1095.8A, *Floodplain Management*. This Desk Guide applies to structures and facilities under GSA jurisdiction, custody, or control, including structures and facilities that have been delegated to other federal agencies by the Administrator of General Services, and structures and facilities leased by GSA.

3. BACKGROUND ON FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT POLICY

Flooding can severely damage federally owned and leased structures and facilities, resulting in costs and impacts to agency mission and continuity of operations. Floodplain compliance is a component of responsible property management that can reduce the risk of property loss and protect federal agency resources. E.O. 11988, *Floodplain Management* (May 24, 1977) and E.O. 13690 require federal agencies to take action to reduce the risk of flood loss and to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and the direct or indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative.

The Office of Facilities Management (OFM) developed the Floodplain Management Order and companion Desk Guide, implemented on December 22, 2016. On August 15, 2017, E.O. 13690 was revoked by E.O. 13807 “Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects.” As a result, PBS canceled the December 22, 2016, Desk Guide and The Office of Portfolio Management and Customer Engagement (PMCE) issued a revised order and Desk Guide in September of 2019 (PBS 1095.8 Floodplain Management Order and the Floodplain Management Desk Guide).

The PBS Order 1095.8 and Desk Guide of 2019 do not comply with the requirements of E.O. 13690 as reinstated by E.O. 14030. In order to comply with E.O. 14030, PBS issued Floodplain Management Order 1095.8A and this companion Desk Guide on November 30, 2023.

E.O. 13690 amends E.O. 11988 to improve the Nation’s resilience to flooding and to better prepare for the impacts of climate change. E.O. 13690 directs Federal agencies to amend existing regulations and procedures to be consistent with the FFRMS, to address current and future flood risk, and to ensure that projects funded with taxpayer dollars last as long as intended. The FFRMS is a resilience standard, to increase resilience against flooding and to help preserve the natural value of floodplains. E.O. 13690 requires Federal agencies to incorporate the FFRMS to expand management from the current base flood elevation to a higher vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain for Federally Funded Projects.

3.1 DISTINCTION BETWEEN ACTIONS AND FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

E.O. 13690 introduced the term ‘Federally Funded Projects.’ The Federal Guidelines for Implementing E.O. 11988 and E.O. 13690 define Federally funded projects as actions where Federal funds are used for new construction, substantial improvement, or to address substantial damage to structures and facilities. The Guidelines make a distinction between ‘Actions,’ ‘Federally Funded Projects’ and ‘Specific

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Actions and Certain Disposal Actions’ and the floodplain standard that must be applied for each. Accordingly, this Desk Guide applies distinct definitions and requirements for GSA Actions and Federally Funded Projects. This Desk Guide further describes the new requirements and approaches, in the FFRMS, that apply to Federally Funded Projects.

3.1.1 ACTIONS

Actions are any of the following federal activities: acquiring, managing, and disposing of federal lands and structures and facilities; providing federally undertaken, financed, or assisted construction and improvements; and conducting federal activities and programs affecting land use, including but not limited to water and related land resources planning, regulating, and licensing activities. For all Actions that are not Federally Funded Projects, as defined in this Desk Guide, the floodplain must be established by one of the following approaches:

- a) 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain for non-critical actions; or
- b) 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain for critical actions.

3.1.2 SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND CERTAIN DISPOSAL ACTIONS

A shortened floodplain decision-making process may be applied to Specific Actions, listed in Appendix J, and Certain Disposal Actions, further described in Section 6, which GSA has determined will likely have insignificant developmental impacts on floodplains. The floodplain for Specific Actions and Certain Disposal Actions is determined by using the:

- a) 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain for non-critical actions; or
- b) 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain for critical actions.

3.1.3 FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

For Federally Funded Projects, the floodplain must be determined by using one of the FFRMS approaches described further below. GSA Federally Funded Projects include:

- a) New construction and lease construction, including additions and annexes to existing structures or facilities, and reconstruction (total replacement) of existing structures and facilities following damage caused by fire, flood or other hazard.
- b) Substantial improvements in GSA-controlled federally owned and leased space including renovations, modernizations, rehabilitation, and repair and alteration projects of which the cost of improvements or the cost to repair the damage equals or exceeds either:
 - i. 30% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities within the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain;³ or
 - ii. 50% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities outside the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

³ Generally, where the existing grade or lowest adjacent grade (pre-construction or pre-damage disturbance) touching the structure or facility is below the base flood elevation (BFE).

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- c) Site (or land) acquisition when tied with improvements or investments.
- d) Repair and alteration projects in response to a natural disaster (flood damage), where a structure or facility has had repetitive flood damage and where the cumulative costs of flood repairs (including mission and related impacts) equal or exceed⁴ either:
 - i. 30% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities within the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain;⁵ or
 - ii. 50% of the functional replacement value of the building and site amenities outside the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

3.2 FEDERAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STANDARD

The FFRMS, established through E.O. 13690, requires Federally Funded Projects to:

- 1) Increase resilience against flooding and to help preserve the natural and beneficial value of floodplains. E.O. 13690 requires federal agencies to incorporate the FFRMS to expand management from the current base flood elevation to a higher vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain for Federally Funded Projects.
- 2) Address current and future flood risks. The FFRMS describes approaches to determine the level to which a structure or facility must be resilient. This may include using structural or nonstructural methods to reduce or prevent damage; elevating a structure; or, where appropriate, designing it to adapt to, withstand, and rapidly recover from a flood event.

3.3 FFRMS FLOODPLAIN

The term 'FFRMS floodplain' refers to the higher vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain, described in the FFRMS. GSA must use one of the following new approaches to determine the FFRMS floodplain for Federally Funded Projects.

3.3.1 CLIMATE-INFORMED SCIENCE APPROACH (CISA)

Use best available actionable hydrologic, hydraulic, topographic, and engineering data and methods informed by projected climate-related science to determine the flood elevation and corresponding floodplain in a manner appropriate to policy, practices, criticality, and consequences. For critical actions, the floodplain elevations can be adjusted to be higher to account for the increased consequences associated with flood damage.

3.3.2 FREEBOARD VALUE APPROACH (FVA)

Use the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) that is also known as the 1-percent-annual-chance flood elevation (determined by using the best available data) plus:

- a) An additional 2 feet for non-critical actions; or

⁴ To be assessed in consultation with the Office of Portfolio Management and Customer Engagement.

⁵ Generally, where the existing grade or lowest adjacent grade (pre-construction or pre-damage disturbance) touching the structure or facility is below the BFE.

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- b) An additional 3 feet for critical actions.

3.3.3 0.2-PERCENT-ANNUAL-CHANCE FLOOD APPROACH (0.2PFA)

Use the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation. This approach may be used for either non-critical or critical actions. In the event only the BFE is available and is deemed current (within the last 15 years) then the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation can be established at the BFE plus an additional 3 feet. For critical action, the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation shall not be established lower than the BFE plus an additional 3 feet. The 0.2PFA should not be used in coastal floodplains.⁶

3.4 CRITICAL ACTIONS

Federal agencies must use higher standards when it determines its action to be critical. This Desk Guide explains how to determine whether an action is 'critical', as well as the applicable higher standards.

Nature-based Approaches

Federal agencies, where possible, must use natural systems, ecosystem processes, and natural features and nature-based approaches in the development of alternatives for a proposed action.

3.5 EXCEPTIONS

The Guidelines for Implementing Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, and Executive Order 13690, Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input, of October 8, 2015 (Implementing Guidelines) describe a new exception for actions that are considered to be in the interest of national security.

3.6 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Consideration should be given to both residents and the people who use the affected area, including communities with environmental justice concerns, in determining whether any group of people would bear a disproportionate burden of environmental or health harms and risks as a result of the proposed action.

4. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

Where GSA has determined that the action is a Federally Funded Project, the following 8-Step process must be followed to document compliance with E.O. 11988 as amended by E.O. 13690. Refer to Appendix A, 8-Step Decision-making Process for Actions and Federally Funded Projects.

The requirements outlined in this decision-making process should be coordinated with NEPA studies, and the 8-Step process should be conducted as part of the NEPA review process. Impacts to floodplains should be discussed in the NEPA analysis as a separate resource or included with other affected resources such as hydrologic or water quality issues. The public notification and public involvement requirements should also be combined. Any identified floodplain mitigation should be incorporated into the final NEPA document. The Regional NEPA Program Manager is responsible for overall compliance in coordination with regional project staff.

⁶ In most cases, the established 0.2-percent-annual-chance mapping and elevation is based on the stillwater elevation of coastal flooding and does not include the effects of wave action.

4.1 STEP 1 - DETERMINE IF THE PROPOSED FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECT IS IN A FFRMS FLOODPLAIN

First, determine if the proposed Federally Funded Project is a critical action. The critical action determination is made by the federal customer agency. Refer to Appendix C, Sample Critical Action Determination Letter. The critical action determination must be considered when establishing the floodplain through the CISA or FVA approaches, as described below.

- 1) In accordance with the Implementing Guidelines, CISA is the preferred approach to establish the FFRMS floodplain for Federally Funded Projects. The order of preference to establish the vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain is as follows:
 - i. **CISA.** The elevation and flood hazard area that result from using a climate-informed science approach must use the best-available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods that integrate current and future changes in flooding (including pluvial, fluvial, riverine, and coastal) based on climate science.⁷ This approach will also include an emphasis on whether the action is a critical action as one of the factors to be considered when conducting the analysis. For critical actions, the flood elevations can be adjusted to be higher to account for the increased consequences associated with flood damage.

Where data is available to conduct CISA, this methodology is strongly recommended for projects such as those that have an intended service life over 30 years, house mission critical/dependent functions, and/or are historic/cultural assets. Local planning officials should be contacted to determine if data is available to support the CISA as well as to align GSA's actions with local plans to adapt to changing climate conditions and avoid maladaptation.

As this is a new approach to establish the FFRMS floodplain, many localities may not have this information readily available in actionable form. While this is a preferred methodology, it is not mandatory.

- ii. **FVA.** The elevation and corresponding horizontal flood hazard area that result from using the freeboard value, reached by adding:
 - a) an additional 2 feet to the BFE for non-critical actions; or
 - b) an additional 3 feet to the BFE for critical actions.

Refer to Section 5.1,1) to determine the BFE and the associate floodplain extent.

- iii. **0.2PFPA.** Use the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation. This approach may be used for either non-critical or critical actions.

Refer to Section 5.1,1 to determine the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation and the associate floodplain extent. In the event only the BFE is available and is deemed current

⁷ GSA follows the guidance, methodologies, and hydrology/hydraulic tools of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), and the [Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program](#) (DOD, EPA, and DOE).

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(within the last 15 years), then the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation can be established at the BFE plus an additional 3 feet. For a critical action, the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation shall not be established lower than the BFE plus an additional 3 feet. The 0.2PFA should not be used in coastal floodplains.

- 2) If the proposed project is in a coastal state, GSA may need to comply with higher State or local standards if the standards are approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as enforceable policies of State coastal management programs pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA). Section 307 of the CZMA gives coastal states (including the Great Lakes and U.S. territories) authority to review certain actions that may affect a State's coastal uses or resources.
- 3) If the proposed project is located within a FFRMS floodplain but a practicable alternative exists, as identified through an internal review, that places the proposed project outside of a FFRMS floodplain, then that practicable alternative should normally be selected. If the proposed project is located in the FFRMS floodplain,⁸ then GSA must proceed with the 8-Step decision-making process to identify practicable alternatives.
- 4) If the proposed project is located outside of the FFRMS floodplain, but may stimulate floodplain development, then proceed to Step 4. Conversely, if the proposed project is located outside of the FFRMS floodplain and the project will not stimulate development in a floodplain, then such an action requires no further analysis and may be implemented.

4.2 STEP 2 - INVOLVE PUBLIC IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (PUBLIC REVIEW)

Notify the public by publishing in the local newspaper or posting on a community bulletin board for 15 calendar days, dating the notice at posting and at removal. Electronic communication with stakeholders via social media, use of websites to send and receive project information with stakeholders, and virtual public meetings can increase outreach to affected communities. If completing an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Study (EIS), include floodplain notice during scoping announcement or Draft EA/EIS public comment period. Refer to Appendix F, Sample Public Notice for Federally Funded Projects.

4.3 STEP 3 - IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES TO LOCATING IN THE FFRMS FLOODPLAIN

GSA should use input from public comments and internal discussions to determine practicable alternatives. Where possible, develop practicable alternatives using nature-based approaches. Practicable alternatives are those that are available to GSA and capable of being implemented within existing constraints such as cost, existing technology, and logistics, considering pertinent natural (topography, habitat, hazards, etc.), social (aesthetics, historic and cultural values, land use patterns, etc.), economic (cost of space, construction, services, relocation, etc.), and legal (deeds, leases, Congressional authorization, etc.) factors. GSA should consult with the federal customer agency to determine what is practicable for a given project considering impacts to schedule, budget and environment.

⁸ Generally, where the existing grade or lowest adjacent grade (pre-construction or pre-damage disturbance) touching the structure or facility is below the FFRMS flood elevation.

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Identify and evaluate practicable alternatives, including, when possible:

- 1) Alternative actions outside of the FFRMS floodplain. For alternatives located outside of the FFRMS floodplain that may stimulate floodplain development, GSA should proceed with the decision-making process to identify these impacts and to minimize ensuing harm to the floodplain if the action is taken as proposed.
- 2) Alternative actions which would perform the intended function but would minimize harm to or within the FFRMS floodplain. GSA should proceed with the decision-making process to identify impacts if the alternative actions are in the FFRMS floodplain.
- 3) Alternative of taking “no action” and not proceeding with the project.

4.4 STEP 4 - IDENTIFY ADVERSE AND BENEFICIAL IMPACTS

Identify adverse and beneficial impacts, including stimulating floodplain development, which may result from the project. Analyze the following factors:

- 1) Natural environment (water resources, hydrology, topography, habitat, climate change);
- 2) Social concerns (visual quality/aesthetics, historic and cultural values, land use patterns);
- 3) Economic aspects (costs of construction, transportation and relocation, natural features and ecosystem processes);
- 4) Legal considerations (deeds, leases); and
- 5) The potential to disproportionately affect a disadvantaged community or other community with environmental justice concerns.

This should be included as part of any NEPA analysis.

4.5 STEP 5 - MITIGATE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Minimize the impacts identified, including the restoration and preservation of the beneficial values served by floodplains and wetlands. The PBS Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service (P100) establishes design standards and criteria for new buildings, repairs and alterations, modernizations, lease construction buildings with government option to purchase, and work in historic structures for PBS. The P100 should be referenced for flood-resistant design and construction standards for any action where P100 compliance is applicable.

The building and site amenities must be brought up to floodplain management standards which incorporate the expected flood risk over the intended service life of the federal asset.

For building and site amenities which are not in a special flood hazard area, GSA recognizes the change in intensity, duration, frequency and geographic distribution of extreme precipitation and follows the P100 Facilities Standard regarding Flood Resistant Design and Construction and due diligence in site analysis.

4.6 STEP 6 - RE-EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

Use any new information obtained from earlier steps to determine if the proposed project is still practicable. If new construction is to be located in a FFRMS floodplain, apply accepted floodproofing and other measures. To achieve flood protection, wherever practicable, elevate the structures above the flood level rather than fill in land.

4.7 STEP 7 - ANNOUNCE AND EXPLAIN DECISION TO THE PUBLIC (NOTICE)

Notify the public by publishing in the local newspaper or posting on a community bulletin board for 15 calendar days, dating the notice at posting and at removal. Electronic communication with stakeholders via social media, use of websites to send and receive project information with stakeholders, and virtual public meetings can increase outreach to affected communities. If completing an EA or EIS, include the floodplain notice during the Final EA/EIS public comment period.

- 1) If an EA/EIS was completed, floodplain compliance should be included in the FONSI/ROD. Signatures/concurrences for FONSI/RODs should be in accordance with the most recent GSA PBS Delegations of Authority Manual.
- 2) If an EA/EIS was not completed, a Justification for No Practicable Alternatives and Floodplain Memorandum for the record must be approved and saved to the project file. The Justification for No Practicable Alternatives outlines the process GSA uses to identify and evaluate sites and why these sites are not practicable. The Regional NEPA Program Manager supports the project team (for example, Realty Specialist or Project Manager) with preparing the Justification for No Practicable Alternatives. GSA must request concurrence from the customer agency when preparing the Justification for No Practicable Alternatives. The Floodplain Memorandum is prepared by the Regional NEPA Program Manager and is approved by the Regional Commissioner. Refer to Appendix E, Sample Justification for No Practicable Alternatives, and Appendix D, Sample Floodplain Memorandum.

If a FFRMS floodplain site is the only practicable alternative, document the analysis with a FFRMS floodplain map and narrative, leading to this conclusion. In the documented analysis, include discussion on the consideration of evacuation routes and evacuation plans for the proposed Federally Funded Project.

4.8 STEP 8 - IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECT

Implement the proposed Federally Funded Project with appropriate mitigation measures and, during site visits, ensure that mitigation measures are fully implemented. Design and construction contracts should include any mitigation identified through this process.

Where applicable, GSA will construct Federal structures and facilities in accordance with ASCE 24 which FEMA deems to meet or exceed the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) unless the standards and criteria are demonstrably inappropriate for a given type of structure or facility. The standard for flood resistant design and construction in P100 is consistent with the construction standards in NFIP unless the community has adopted a higher standard, in which case GSA will determine whether following the community's standard is appropriate or is demonstrably inappropriate for the action.

5. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR ACTIONS

With the exception of a shortened decision-making process for Specific Actions, described in Section 6 below, the same 8-Step decision-making process outlined in Appendix A is required for proposed Actions. However, separate approaches must be used to determine the floodplain for Actions and Federally Funded Projects. The requirements in this decision-making process should be coordinated with NEPA studies and conducted as part of the NEPA review process, where possible.

5.1 STEP 1 - DETERMINE IF THE PROPOSED ACTION IS IN A FLOODPLAIN

First, determine if the proposed Action is a critical action. The critical action determination is made by the federal customer agency. Refer to Appendix C. If the Action is not a critical action, then use the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. If the action is a critical action, then use the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

- 1) To determine if the proposed Action is located in a floodplain, the data sources that may be used include:
 - a) The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Map Service Center (MSC) allows a user to view and download preliminary, effective and historic Flood Insurance Study (FIS), Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), and other data.⁹
 - b) The Multi-Asset Planning (MAP) Tool is a GSA platform that allows users to visualize geographic data and perform basic spatial analyses, combining information about the PBS inventory with third-party data such as FEMA floodplains.
 - c) FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) Viewer.¹⁰
 - d) GSA may use any flood hazard related mapping that is readily available and is from a reputable, professional source. This can include, but is not limited to: FEMA mapping, local jurisdictional mapping (such as a State Flood Tool website), the USGS's elevation tool, other federal agencies (NOAA, USACE, USDA, USDOT...etc.), as well as proprietary services such as Flood Insights.
 - e) GSA could have its own flood mapping and/or hazard assessment conducted by a professional engineer. Floodplains in many rural or developed areas may not have been studied in detail or may have outdated flood hazard studies that are more than 15 years old. Flood hazard data obtained from independent sources must meet the criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) mapping standards.¹¹
- 2) If the proposed Action is located within a floodplain but a practicable alternative exists, as identified through an internal review, that places the proposed Action outside of a floodplain, then that practicable alternative should normally be selected. If the proposed Action is located

⁹ [FEMA Map Service Center](#)

¹⁰ [FEMA NFHL Viewer](#)

¹¹ [FEMA Guidelines & Standards](#)

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in the floodplain,¹² as described below, then GSA must proceed with the 8-Step decision-making process to identify practicable alternatives.

- a) 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain for Non-critical Actions. The minimum standard for non-critical actions is the 1-percent-annual-chance flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain (1-percent-annual-chance floodplain). If an Action is located in a 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain, proceed to Step 2.
 - b) 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain for Critical Actions. The minimum standard for critical actions is the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain. If a critical action is located in a 1- or 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain, proceed to Step 2.
- 3) If the proposed Action is located outside of the floodplain, but may stimulate development in a floodplain, then proceed to Step 4. Conversely, if the proposed Action is located outside of the floodplain and the Action will not stimulate development in a floodplain, then such an Action requires no further analysis and may be implemented.

5.2 STEP 2 - INVOLVE PUBLIC IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (PUBLIC REVIEW)

Notify the public by publishing in the local newspaper or posting on a community bulletin board for 15 calendar days, dating the notice at posting and at removal. Electronic communication with stakeholders via social media, use of websites to send and receive project information with stakeholders, and virtual public meetings can increase outreach to affected communities. If completing an EA or EIS, include floodplain notice during scoping announcement or Draft EA/EIS public comment period. Refer to Appendix F, Sample Public Notice for Federally Funded Projects.

5.3 STEP 3 - IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES TO LOCATING IN THE FLOODPLAIN

GSA should use input from public comments and internal discussions to determine practicable alternatives. Where possible, develop alternatives using nature-based approaches. Practicable alternatives are those that are available to GSA and capable of being implemented within existing constraints such as cost, existing technology, and logistics, considering pertinent natural (topography, habitat, hazards, etc.), social (aesthetics, historic and cultural values, land use patterns, etc.), economic (cost of space, construction, services, relocation, etc.), and legal (deeds, leases, etc.) factors. GSA should consult with the federal customer agency to determine what is practicable for a given project considering impacts to schedule, budget and environment. Identify and evaluate practicable alternatives, including, when possible:

- 1) Alternative actions outside of the floodplain. For alternatives located outside of the floodplain that may stimulate floodplain development, GSA should proceed with the decision-making process to identify these impacts and to minimize ensuing harm to the floodplain if the Action is taken as proposed.

¹² Generally, where the existing grade or lowest adjacent grade (pre-construction or pre-damage disturbance) touching the structure or facility is below the flood elevation.

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- 2) Alternative actions which would perform the intended function but would minimize harm to or within the floodplain. GSA should proceed with the decision-making process to identify impacts if the alternative actions are in the floodplain.
- 3) Alternative of taking “no action.”

5.4 STEP 4 - IDENTIFY ADVERSE AND BENEFICIAL IMPACTS

Identify adverse and beneficial impacts, including stimulating floodplain development, which may result from the project. Analyze the following factors:

- 1) Natural environment (water resources, hydrology, topography, habitat, climate change);
- 2) Social concerns (visual quality/aesthetics, historic and cultural values, land use patterns);
- 3) Economic aspects (costs of construction, transportation and relocation, natural features and ecosystem processes);
- 4) Legal considerations (deeds, leases); and
- 5) The potential to disproportionately affect a disadvantaged community or other community with environmental justice concerns.

This should be included as part of any NEPA analysis.

5.5 STEP 5 - MITIGATE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Minimize the impacts identified, including the restoration and preservation of the beneficial values served by floodplains and wetlands. The PBS Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service (P100) establishes design standards and criteria for new buildings, repairs and alterations, modernizations, lease construction buildings with government option to purchase, and work in historic structures for PBS. The P100 should be referenced for flood-resistant design and construction standards for any action where P100 compliance is applicable.

The building and site amenities must be brought up to floodplain management standards which incorporate the expected flood risk over the intended service life of the federal asset.

For building and site amenities which are not in a special flood hazard area, GSA recognizes the change in intensity, duration, frequency and geographic distribution of extreme precipitation and follows the P100 Facilities Standard regarding Flood Resistant Design and Construction and due diligence in site analysis.

5.6 STEP 6 - RE-EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES

Use any new information obtained from earlier steps to determine if the proposed Action is still practicable.

5.7 STEP 7 - ANNOUNCE AND EXPLAIN DECISION TO THE PUBLIC (NOTICE)

Notify the public by publishing in the local newspaper or posting on a community bulletin board for 15 calendar days, dating the notice at posting and at removal. Electronic communication with stakeholders

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via social media, use of websites to send and receive project information with stakeholders, and virtual public meetings can increase outreach to affected communities. If completing an EA or EIS, include the floodplain notice during the Final EA/EIS public comment period.

- 1) If an EA/EIS was completed, floodplain compliance should be included in the FONSI/ROD. Signatures/concurrences for FONSI/RODs should be in accordance with the most recent GSA PBS Delegations of Authority Manual.
- 2) If an EA/EIS was not completed, a Justification for No Practicable Alternatives and Floodplain Memorandum for the record must be approved and saved to the project file. The Justification for No Practicable Alternatives outlines the process GSA uses to identify and evaluate sites and why these sites are not practicable. The Regional NEPA Program Manager supports the project team (for example, Realty Specialist or Project Manager) with preparing the Justification for No Practicable Alternatives. GSA must request concurrence from the customer agency when preparing the Justification for No Practicable Alternatives. The Floodplain Memorandum is prepared by the Regional NEPA Program Manager and is approved by the Regional Commissioner. Refer to Appendix E, Sample Justification for No Practicable Alternatives, and Appendix D, Sample Floodplain Memorandum.

If a floodplain site is the only practicable alternative, document the analysis with a floodplain map and narrative, leading to this conclusion. In the documented analysis, include discussion on the consideration of evacuation routes and evacuation plans for the proposed Action.

5.8 STEP 8 - IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED ACTION

Implement the proposed Action with appropriate mitigation and ensure mitigation measures are fully implemented.

Where applicable, GSA will construct Federal structures and facilities consistent with the intent of the standards and criteria promulgated under the NFIP unless the standards and criteria are demonstrably inappropriate for a given type of structure or facility. The standard for flood resistant design and construction in P100 is consistent with the construction standards in NFIP unless the community has adopted a higher standard, in which case GSA will determine whether following the community's standard is appropriate or is demonstrably inappropriate for the action.

6. SHORTENED DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND CERTAIN DISPOSAL ACTIONS

GSA's PBS NEPA Desk Guide identifies certain actions that are eligible for treatment as automatic CATEXs. These actions, as a matter of NEPA, are those that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment. As a matter of floodplain analysis (as described in the Implementing Guidelines), GSA has determined that these same actions will likely have insignificant developmental impacts on floodplains. As noted in the Guidelines for Implementing Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, and Executive Order 13690, Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input, actions of insignificant impact or actions of a short duration may allow for an altered or shortened decision-making process. Automatic CATEX actions are similarly minor in nature and are not expected to cause development within a floodplain.

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The majority of real property disposal actions (Certain Disposal Actions) taken by GSA can follow the 4-Step process since typically there is no practicable alternative to the disposal of property that has been determined surplus to the mission needs of the Federal Government and future uses are subject to applicable Federal, State and local floodplain requirements. However, where GSA is directly conveying property with a requirement for a specific use or improvement upon conveyance, analysis under the 8-Step process may be required.

The 4-Step decision-making process described in this section and Appendix B should be used, at minimum, to document compliance with E.O. 11988 as amended by E.O. 13690 Specific Actions and Certain Disposal Actions. This process should be conducted as part of any NEPA analysis and results documented in subsequent NEPA documents. Project staff is responsible for consulting Regional NEPA Program Managers to determine compliance.

While GSA defines a shortened decision-making process for Specific Actions and Certain Disposal Actions, it is GSA's goal to avoid the floodplain wherever practicable for all actions.

6.1 STEP 1 - DETERMINE IF THE 4-STEP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS APPLIES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

The 4-Step floodplain decision-making process may be applied to Specific Actions or Certain Disposal Actions as defined above.

6.2 STEP 2 - DETERMINE IF THE PROPOSED SPECIFIC ACTION OR CERTAIN DISPOSAL ACTION IS IN A FLOODPLAIN

First, determine if the proposed Specific Action is a critical action. This determination is made by the federal customer agency in coordination with GSA. Refer to Appendix C.

Determine if the proposed Specific Action or Certain Disposal Action is located in a floodplain. If the Specific Action is not critical, use the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. If the Specific Action is critical, use the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

- 1) If the proposed Specific Action or Certain Disposal Action is located in a floodplain,¹³ further analysis is required.
 - a) 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain for Non-critical Actions. The minimum standard for non-critical actions is the 1-percent-annual-chance flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain. If a Specific Action or Certain Disposal Action is located in a 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain, identify and evaluate practicable alternatives as part of Step 3.
 - b) 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain for Critical Actions. The minimum standard for critical actions is the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain. If a critical action is located in a 1-percent- or 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain, identify and evaluate practicable alternatives as part of Step 3.

¹³ Generally, where the existing grade or lowest adjacent grade (pre-construction or pre-damage disturbance) touching the structure or facility is below the flood elevation.

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- 2) If the proposed Specific Action or Certain Disposal Action is located outside of a floodplain, then such an action requires no further analysis and may be implemented as part of Step 4.

6.3 STEP 3 - IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES TO LOCATING IN THE FLOODPLAIN

Practicable alternatives are those that are available to GSA and capable of being implemented within existing constraints such as cost, existing technology, and logistics, considering pertinent natural (topography, habitat, hazards, etc.), social (aesthetics, historic and cultural values, land use patterns, etc.), economic (cost of space, construction, services, relocation, etc.), and legal (deeds, leases, etc.) factors. GSA should consult with the federal customer agency to determine what is practicable for a given project considering impacts to schedule, budget and environment.

Having determined that a proposed Specific Action is located in a floodplain, identify and evaluate practicable alternatives to locating in a floodplain. Alternatives to be evaluated include:

- a) Carrying out the proposed Specific Action at a location outside the floodplain (alternative sites);
- b) Other means which accomplish the same purpose as the proposed Specific Action (alternative actions); and
- c) No action.

If a floodplain site is the only practicable alternative, document the analysis with a floodplain map and narrative, leading to this conclusion. In the documented analysis, include discussion on the consideration of evacuation routes and evacuation plans for the proposed Specific Action. The Specific Action or Certain Disposal Action may be implemented as part of Step 4. A Justification for No Practicable Alternatives and Floodplain Memorandum must be approved and saved to the project file.

6.4 STEP 4 - IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED SPECIFIC ACTION OR CERTAIN DISPOSAL ACTION

With the conclusion of this process, the proposed Specific Action or Certain Disposal Action can be implemented. Implementation should be done in accordance with all applicable policies and procedures, including the incorporation of any mitigation or minimization should it be required. Information on the compliance process should be included in the permanent project file and as applicable noted in the Automatic Categorical Exclusion – NEPA Memo to File).

7. EXCEPTIONS

In an emergency, such as life-threatening natural or human-caused disasters, activities essential to saving lives and protecting property and public health and safety, or in the interest of national security, the processes outlined above may not be appropriate to follow. The GSA Administrator may allow exceptions to GSA actions described in this section, or as further delegated in the GSA Delegation of Authorities Manual.

Regional NEPA Program Managers shall be consulted as soon as feasible, to help determine immediate actions necessary to secure lives and safety of citizens or to protect valuable resources.

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Exceptions to the 8-Step decision-making process for Federally Funded Projects and Actions may be allowed, and a shortened decision-making process as described in Section 6 may be followed, where:

- 1) It is in the interest of national security;
- 2) The agency action is an emergency action;
- 3) Application to a federal facility or structure is demonstrably inappropriate; or
- 4) The agency action is a mission-critical requirement related to a national security interest or emergency action.

These exceptions may apply to actions involving federal real property as well as actions taking place in facilities or structures that are not federally owned.

This Desk Guide defines GSA actions that meet the “emergency action or national security” definition to be:

- 1) Acquisition of land, easements, or space within an existing structure, either by purchase or lease, which is related to or in support of a national security interest or emergency action.
- 2) Repair and alteration projects related to a national security interest or emergency action, such as emergency structural stabilization work.

Nothing in E.O. 11988 as amended by E.O. 13690 or in this Desk Guide shall apply to assistance provided for emergency work essential to save lives and protect property and public health and safety, performed pursuant to Sections 403 and 502 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 (42 U.S.C. 5170b and 5192).

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 OFFICE OF THE PBS COMMISSIONER

The PBS Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have the authority to determine whether actions in or affecting floodplains are the only practicable alternatives and approve such actions when the actions affect GSA programs. The PBS Commissioners may further delegate this authority in accordance with applicable GSA Delegation Policy.

8.2 OFFICE OF FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Responsible for informing appropriate staff of GSA’s floodplain responsibilities, as outlined in this desk guide.

8.3 OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING

The Chief Architect is responsible for the program office that maintains and updates this floodplain policy, advises other PBS Heads of Service or Staff Offices and Regional Commissioners on how to address floodplain compliance requirements, and represents GSA in interagency coordination on matters related to floodplain management (e.g., Federal Interagency Floodplain Management Task Force). The Chief Architect is responsible for updating policies and procedures within that Office’s

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program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff (such as Project Engineers, Project Managers, and Project Management staff) of GSA's floodplain responsibilities, as outlined in this policy. They are responsible for ensuring that all proposed capital and small projects comply with this standard and have clear maps and diagrams at the conceptual project stage.

Project Engineers, Project Managers, and Project Management staff are responsible for:

- 1) Ensuring that practicable alternatives that avoid the floodplain are identified and evaluated in consultation with the Regional NEPA Program Manager.
- 2) Notifying the Regional NEPA Program Manager when a project is in or may affect a floodplain and request floodplain determinations for all sites under consideration at the earliest stage possible.
- 3) Ensuring the action is limited or otherwise designed to minimize impacts, if there is no practicable alternative to locating the action in or affecting the floodplain.
- 4) Ensuring implementation of all mitigation measures and other commitments resulting from floodplain compliance processes outlined in this desk guide for actions under their authority.

8.4 OFFICE OF PROJECT DELIVERY

The Assistant Commissioner for Project Delivery is responsible for updating policies and procedures within that Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff (such as Project Engineers, Project Managers, and Project Management staff) of GSA's floodplain responsibilities, as outlined in this policy. They are responsible for ensuring that all proposed capital and small projects comply with this standard and have clear maps and diagrams at the conceptual project stage.

Project Engineers, Project Managers, and Project Management staff are responsible for:

- 1) Ensuring that practicable alternatives that avoid the floodplain are identified and evaluated in consultation with the Regional NEPA Program Manager.
- 2) Notifying the Regional NEPA Program Manager when a project is in or may affect a floodplain and request floodplain determinations for all sites under consideration at the earliest stage possible.
- 3) Ensuring the action is limited or otherwise designed to minimize impacts, if there is no practicable alternative to locating the action in or affecting the floodplain.
- 4) Ensuring implementation of all mitigation measures and other commitments resulting from floodplain compliance processes outlined in this desk guide for actions under their authority.
- 5) Preparing the Critical Action Determination and Justification for No Practicable Alternatives documentation in coordination with the Regional NEPA Program Manager.

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8.5 OFFICE OF LEASING

The Assistant Commissioner for Leasing is responsible for updating policies and procedures within the Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff (such as Leasing Specialists and Realty Specialists) of GSA's floodplain responsibilities, as outlined in this desk guide.

Leasing Specialists, Realty Specialists, and/or Lease Contracting Officers are responsible for:

- 1) Ensuring the Request for Lease Proposal (RLP) first considers properties outside of the floodplain.
- 2) Ensuring that practicable alternatives that avoid the floodplain are identified and evaluated in consultation with the Regional NEPA Program Manager.
- 3) Notifying the Regional NEPA Program Manager when a project is in or may affect a floodplain and request a floodplain determination from the Regional NEPA Program Manager for all sites under consideration at the earliest stage possible (e.g., market survey).
- 4) Ensuring the action is limited or otherwise designed to minimize impacts if there is no practicable alternative to locating the action in or affecting the floodplain.
- 5) Preparing the Critical Action Determination and Justification for No Practicable Alternatives documentation in coordination with the Regional NEPA Program Manager.

8.6 OFFICE OF PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

The Assistant Commissioner for Real Property Asset Management is responsible for updating policies and procedures within the Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff of GSA's floodplain responsibilities, as outlined in this desk guide.

Asset Managers, with assistance from the Regional NEPA Program Managers, are responsible for:

- 1) Accounting for floodplain impacts in Capital Investment and Leasing Program (CILP) Call submissions and the CILP floodplain considerations as part of the environmental review.
- 2) Updating the Asset Business Plans.
- 3) Engaging with the Regional NEPA Program Managers to fulfill the specific requirements for proposed actions in a floodplain.
- 4) Tracking substantial improvement costs in accordance with the 30% or 50% functional replacement value threshold described in Section 3.1.3.
- 5) Tracking repair and alteration costs where cumulative costs occur from repetitive flood damages in accordance with the 30% or 50% functional replacement value threshold described in Section 3.1.3.
- 6) Recommending resiliency/floodproofing improvements be identified and budgeted, as appropriate.

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8.7 OFFICE OF REAL PROPERTY DISPOSITION

The Assistant Commissioner for Real Property Disposition is responsible for updating policies and procedures within the Office's program area of responsibility and for informing appropriate staff of GSA's floodplain responsibilities, as outlined in this desk guide.

8.8 OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

The Office of the General Counsel reviews GSA programs and projects for legal sufficiency and to ascertain whether the proposed action complies with E.O. 11988 as amended by E.O. 13690. Regional Counsel must be informed of any proposed actions in or affecting a floodplain early in the process in order to provide meaningful legal review.

8.9 REGIONAL PBS COMMISSIONERS

Regional Commissioners determine whether actions in or affecting floodplains are the only practicable alternative and approve such actions, accepting/acknowledging the risks, when the actions affect GSA programs. They have the authority to review projects, under their jurisdiction, and approve actions that have been determined to be the only practicable alternatives through signed documentation (Justification for No Practicable Alternatives and Floodplain Memorandum). Regional Commissioners are responsible for coordinating with their regional business line leadership on the approval and documentation of such actions.

8.10 REGIONAL NEPA PROGRAM MANAGERS

Regional NEPA Program Managers¹⁴ are responsible for:

- 1) Floodplain determinations for all federally owned and leased properties.
- 2) Coordinating and collaborating with project teams to assist in determining and documenting practicable alternatives (including Justification for No Practicable Alternatives).
- 3) Ensuring floodplain impacts are identified for projects, alternatives that avoid the floodplain are identified and evaluated (including the alternative of not proceeding with the action), and the floodplain compliance process is initiated as early as possible.
- 4) Preparing floodplain compliance documentation, such as the Floodplain Memorandum.
- 5) Coordinating floodplain compliance with the NEPA process, and documenting the compliance in any NEPA document (i.e., EA, EIS, FONSI, and ROD).
- 6) Identifying and monitoring any minimization and mitigation requirements determined through compliance.
- 7) Supporting Asset Managers as enumerated under Section 7(e) of this Floodplain Desk Guide.

¹⁴ The Regional NEPA Program Manager may designate authority to the Regional NEPA Specialist to fulfill the duties listed in this subsection.

8.11 OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT-WIDE POLICY, OFFICE OF FEDERAL HIGH-PERFORMANCE GREEN BUILDINGS (OGP, OFHPGB)

OFHPGB is responsible for advising PBS in how to integrate the latest relevant Technical or Engineering and Construction bulletins (USACE), Hydraulic Engineering Circulars (USDOT), Regional Sea Level Scenarios for Coastal Risk Management (SERDP, USACE, NOAA, U.S. Navy) or other climate science informed documents for Federally Funded Projects.

9. DEFINITIONS

- a. **0.2-Percent-annual-chance Floodplain Approach (0.2PFA).** The area subject to flooding by the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood (also known as the 500-year flood).
- b. **Action.** Any action or activity including: (1) acquiring, managing, or disposing of federal lands, structures, or facilities; (2) providing federally undertaken, financed, or assisted construction and improvements; or (3) conducting federal activities and programs affecting land use.
- c. **Base flood.** A flood that has a 1-percent-annual-chance of occurring in any given year (also formerly known as the 100-year flood).
- d. **Base flood elevation (BFE).** The elevation to which floodwater is anticipated to rise during the base flood (also known as 1-percent-annual-chance flood). Typically published in the FEMA FIS and FIRM.
- e. **Base floodplain.** An area that has a 1-percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year (also known as 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain).
- f. **Categorical Exclusions (CATEX).** A category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by a Federal agency and for which, therefore, neither an Environmental Assessment nor an Environmental Impact Statement is required.
- g. **Climate-Informed Science Approach (CISA).** The elevation and flood hazard area that result from using a climate-informed science approach that uses the best available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods that integrate current and future changes in flooding based on climate science.
- h. **Critical Action.** Any activity or action for which even a slight chance of flooding would be too great. The minimum floodplain of concern for critical actions is the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain (also known as the critical action floodplain). Examples of critical actions include, but are not limited to: storage of irreplaceable records; storage of volatile, toxic, or water-reactive materials; construction or operation of hospitals and schools; construction and operation of utilities and emergency services that would be inoperative if flooded; storage of national strategic and critical materials; acquisition of health facilities for client agencies; child care facilities; and public benefit conveyances for schools, prisons, and some other institutional uses.
- i. **Federally Funded Project.** Actions where federal funds are used for new construction, substantial improvement, site (or land) acquisition when tied with improvements, or investments to address substantial flood damage (natural disaster) to structures and facilities. GSA uses a cost-based

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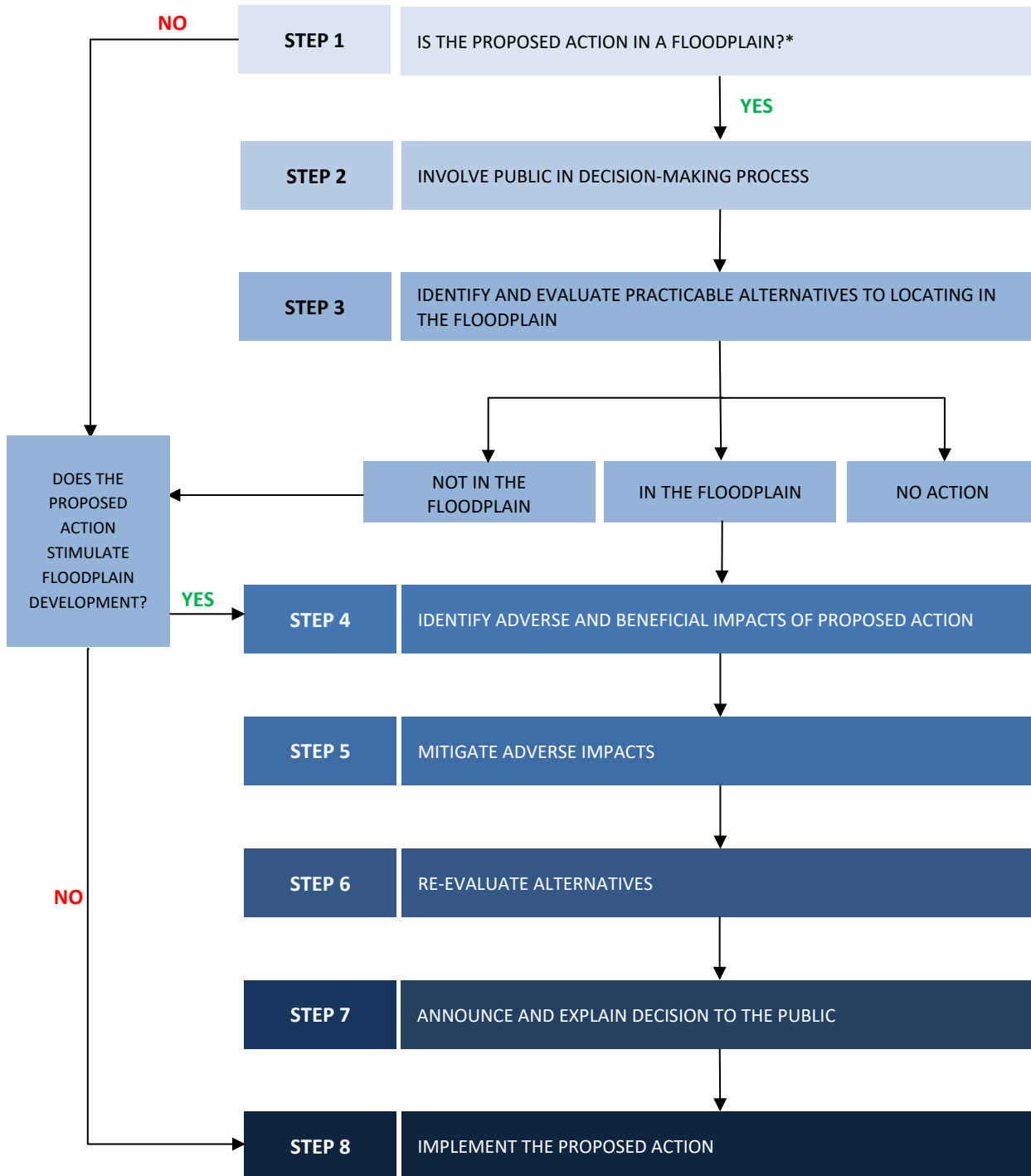
threshold for substantial improvements and a cumulative cost threshold for substantial flood damage. The thresholds are described in Section 3.1.3.

- j. **Federal Flood Risk Management Standard floodplain (FFRMS).** The area subject to flooding as determined by one of the following approaches: Climate Informed Science Approach (CISA); Freeboard Value Approach (FVA); 0.2-Percent-annual-chance Flood Approach (0.2PFA); or the elevation and flood hazard area that results from using any other method identified in an update to the FFRMS.
- k. **Floodplain.** A lowland and relatively flat area adjoining inland and coastal waters including tsunami and seiche inundation zones and flood-prone areas of offshore islands. The floodplain can be a base floodplain or a critical action floodplain. A floodplain may be, but is not necessarily, a wetland area. The floodplain as documented on the maps will consist of the floodway containing the stream channel and two adjacent flood fringes that if completely encroached upon will result in a surcharge of 1 foot added to the flood elevation for existing conditions.
- l. **Freeboard Value Approach (FVA).** The elevation and flood hazard area that result from using the freeboard value, reached by adding an additional 2 feet to the BFE for non-critical actions and from adding an additional 3 feet to the BFE for critical actions.
- m. **Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA).** An official amendment, by letter, to an effective NFIP map. A LOMA establishes a property's location in relation to the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).
- n. **Letter of Map Revision (LOMR).** A Letter of Map Revision is FEMA's modification to an effective Flood Insurance Rate Map, or Flood Boundary and Floodway Map, or both.
- o. **National Security.** A collective term that encompasses both national defense and foreign relations of the United States. Specifically, national security is a condition that is provided by either (a) a military or defense advantage over any foreign nation or group of nations; (b) a favorable foreign relations position; or (c) a defense posture capable of successfully resisting hostile or destructive action from within or without, overt or covert.
- p. **Natural and Beneficial Values of Floodplains.** Features or resources that provide environmental and societal benefits. These values include, but are not limited to, storing and conveying floodwaters, maintaining water quality, providing habitats and enhancing biodiversity, creating rich soils for agriculture, and providing open space for recreation and environmental education.
- q. **Natural Features.** Characteristics of a particular environment (e.g., barrier islands, sand dunes, wetlands) that are created by physical, geological, biological and chemical processes and exist in dynamic equilibrium. Natural features are self-sustaining parts of the landscape that require little or no maintenance to continue providing their ecosystem services (functions).
- r. **Nature-based Approaches.** Features (sometimes referred to as “green infrastructure”) designed to mimic natural processes and provide specific services such as reducing flood risks and/or improving water quality. Nature-based approaches are created by human design (in concert with and to accommodate natural processes) and generally, but not always, must be maintained in order to reliably provide the intended level of service.

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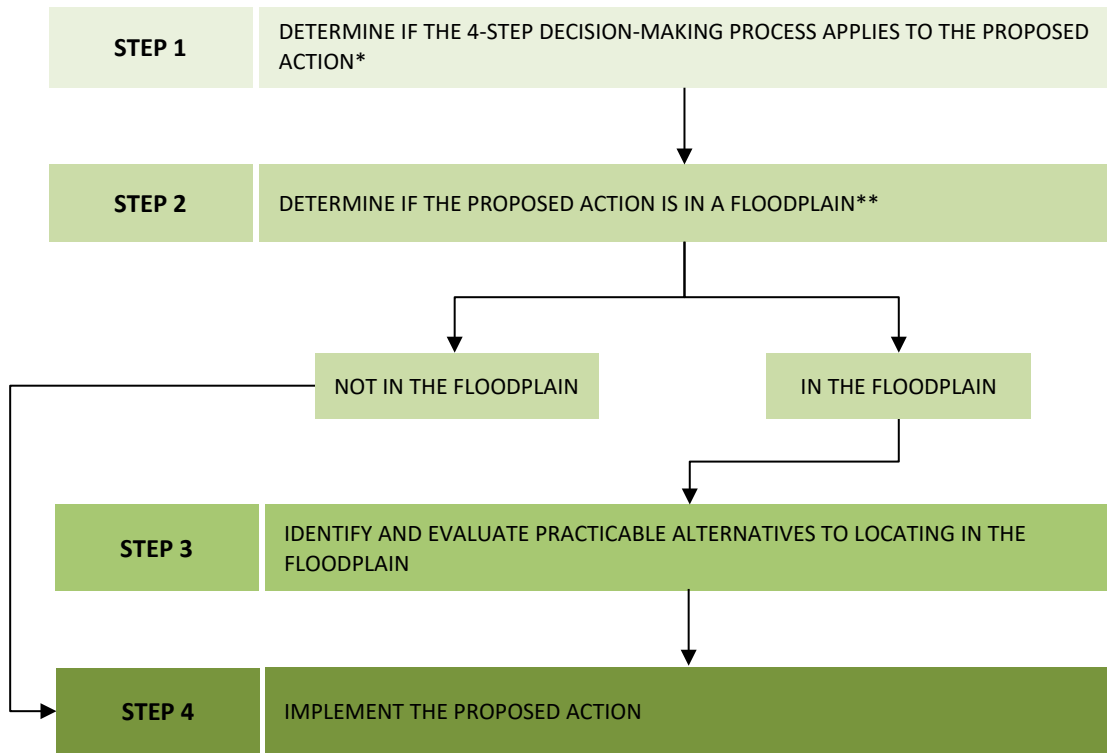
- s. **New Construction.** Construction associated with new structures and facilities including lease construction, reconstruction (total replacement) of existing structures and facilities following damage caused by fire, flood or other hazard, and additions and annexes to existing structures or facilities.
- t. **Practicable Alternatives.** A practicable alternative is context specific and would be available to GSA and capable of being implemented within existing constraints and consideration of factors such as: technology; logistics; environment (topography, habitat, hazards); social factors (aesthetics, historic and cultural values, land use patterns); economic factors (cost of space, construction, services, relocation), and legal requirements (deeds, leases).
- u. **Preserve.** With reference to a floodplain, “preserve” means to prevent modification of the natural environment or to maintain its flood control function.
- v. **Resilience.** The ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand and rapidly recover from disruption due to emergencies.
- w. **Restore.** With reference to a floodplain, “restore” means to re-establish a condition, setting, or environment in which the natural functions of the floodplain can operate.
- x. **Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).** A FEMA SFHA is the area that will be inundated by the flood event having a 1-percent-annual-chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1-percent-annual-chance flood is also referred to as the base flood and formerly known as the 100-year flood.
- y. **Substantial Improvement.** Any renovations, modernizations, rehabilitations, and repair and alteration projects of GSA-controlled federally owned and leased space of which the cost of improvements or the cost to repair the damage equals or exceeds thresholds described in Section 3.1.3.

APPENDIX A. 8-STEP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR ACTIONS AND FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS



*For Federally Funded Projects, use the CISA, FVA (BFE + 2 feet for non-critical actions and BFE + 3 feet for critical actions), or 0.2PFA.

APPENDIX B. 4-STEP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND CERTAIN DISPOSAL ACTIONS



*This 4-Step decision-making process may be applied to Specific Actions and Certain Disposal Actions

**For critical actions, use the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain. For non-critical actions, use the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

APPENDIX C. SAMPLE CRITICAL ACTION DETERMINATION LETTER

[This is only a guide. It is recommended that you seek assistance from Regional Counsel in drafting the appropriate notices and disclosures]

Date:

To: [insert customer agency]

Subject:Floodplain Compliance Regarding Your Proposed Action

Dear [insert customer POC]:

The area of your proposed facility in [City, State], is adjacent to a floodplain. The delineated floodplain area is defined as follows: [insert image and/or text]

The use of your proposed facility, as described to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is as follows: [insert description of required space]

The Government must consider alternative locations or mitigation methods if a potential property for purchase or lease is located in [modify the following floodplains per the appropriate action]: (1) a 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain; or (2) a 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain and is a “critical action.” The enclosure provides a definition of “critical actions.” This classification may impact the geographic location of your proposed agency facility or affect the conditions of your occupancy.

Based on the enclosed definition, does your agency consider the proposed use of the facility a “critical action”? If so, GSA will analyze the use as a critical action, as required by E.O. 11988, E.O. 13690, and the GSA Floodplain Management Policy.

Please use the enclosed form to designate whether or not your agency considers its proposed use to be a critical action, sign in the space provided, and return to me [by email, fax, or mail] no later than [month/day/year].

If you have any questions, please contact me at [phone number, email address].

Sincerely,

Name, Title¹⁵
U.S. General Services Administration

Enclosure

¹⁵ The Lease Contracting Officer, the Leasing Specialist or Project Manager may sign for leasing actions.

Enclosure to Sample Critical Action Determination Letter

Based on the definition of critical actions below, please have your agency's national or regional facilities representative or other designated official indicate their selection and sign in the space provided.

A **critical action** is any activity for which even a slight chance of flooding would be too great.

Examples of actions that may be critical actions include, but are not limited to:

- Storage of national strategic and critical material
- Storage of irreplaceable records
- Acquisition of health facilities for client agencies
- Child care facilities
- Public benefit conveyances for schools, prisons, and some other institutional uses
- Site acquisition and construction of new courthouses
- Storage of volatile, toxic, or water-reactive materials
- Construction or operation of hospitals and schools
- Construction or operation of utilities and emergency services that would be inoperative if flooded

Additional considerations for critical actions include:

- If flooded, would the proposed action create an added dimension or consequence to the hazard?
 - Is the action a structure or facility producing or storing highly volatile, toxic, radioactive, or water-reactive materials?
- If the action involves structures or facilities such as hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, and schools, would occupants of these structures or facilities be sufficiently mobile and have available transport capability to avoid loss of life and injury given the flood warning lead times available?
 - Would emergency services functions be delayed or unavailable as a result of the location of the action?
 - Are there routes to and from the location of the action that would be inaccessible during a flood and hinder evacuation?
 - Would the location of the action result in unacceptable hazards to human safety, health, and welfare of the occupants?
- Would essential or irreplaceable resources, utilities, or other functions be damaged beyond repair, destroyed, or otherwise made unavailable?
 - Would utilities, critical equipment, systems, networks, or functions be damaged beyond repair or destroyed?
 - Would physical or electronic records without backups or copies be destroyed or made unavailable as a result of where these items are located in a structure or facility?
 - Would national laboratory research activities or items of significant value to research communities be damaged or destroyed as a result?
 - Would items or structures or facilities of substantial cultural significance be damaged, destroyed, or otherwise harmed?

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- Would the damage or disruption from a local flooding event lead to regional or national catastrophic impacts (e.g., a port being closed for a period following a storm event, which has an impact on transportation of goods nationally)?
- Would damage or disruption to a given facility or infrastructure component have potential for cascading damage or disruption to other facilities and infrastructure classes, some of which may already be stressed by flood conditions (e.g., electricity outage due to substation damage resulting in wastewater treatment facility shutdown or gasoline pump outage)?

On behalf of [insert customer agency name]:

___ This agency DOES consider its proposed use (as described above and based on the definition) to be a Critical Action and cannot be located in the critical action floodplain which is the [list the applicable floodplain approach for this action].

___ This agency DOES NOT consider its proposed use (as described above and based on the definition) to be a Critical Action and can be located the critical action floodplain which is the [list the applicable floodplain approach for this action].

_____ Date _____
Signature
Name and Title

APPENDIX D. SAMPLE FLOODPLAIN MEMORANDUM¹⁶

[This is only a guide. It is recommended that you seek assistance from Regional Counsel in drafting the appropriate notices and disclosures]

Federal Agency
Lease Renewal, Project No. XXX####
ABC Building
123 State Street, Little Town, Small State, USA

The Federal Agency is currently located in 7,559 ANSI/BOMA square feet of space (8,693 rentable) in Little Town, Small State, which is in the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. The current lease expires June 2, 2012, and contains a 5-year renewal option, which GSA would like to exercise.

In accordance with Executive Order (E.O.) 11988 (Floodplain Management) as amended by E.O. 13690 (Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input), and the GSA Floodplain Management Policy, GSA is required to review the project for practicable alternatives to locating in the floodplain.

After researching the market, GSA concluded there are no alternative sites in the Welch area that meet the Federal Agency’s requirements. GSA has therefore determined there are no practicable alternatives to locating in the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. A Justification for No Practicable Alternatives has been prepared and is attached to this memorandum.

GSA has determined there would be no impacts to the floodplain as a result of the proposed lease renewal. Furthermore, a lease renewal at this location will not encourage further development in the floodplain. Accordingly, it is recommended that GSA complete the floodplain compliance, as outlined in the GSA Floodplain Management Policy, and implement the proposed action.

RECOMMENDED:

_____ Date _____
Regional Director (for office where floodplain program resides)

APPROVED:

_____ Date _____
PBS Regional Commissioner

Enclosure

¹⁶ The Regional Office may add additional levels of concurrence.

APPENDIX E. SAMPLE JUSTIFICATION FOR NO PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES¹⁷

[This is only a guide. It is recommended that you seek assistance from Regional Counsel in drafting the appropriate notices and disclosures]

U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Justification for No Practicable Alternatives
(GSA Project No. XXX####), ABC Building
123 State Street, Little Town, Small State, USA

1. Project Background and Agency Mission.

[Answer the following questions:

- Who is the agency?
- Where are they currently located?
- What is the action?
- What is the agency mission?
- Are there special space requirements to consider?]

The Federal Agency is currently located in 2000 ANSI/BOMA Occupant Area (ABOA) square feet of office and related space at 850 North Main Street, Little Town, Small State, under GSA Lease No. GS-XXB-XXXX; a 10-year succeeding lease awarded in 2006. Federal Agency is currently in year 2 of the 5-year firm term of the lease, which does not expire until July 2011.

Federal Agency has submitted their formal request for space and accompanying special requirements package to GSA indicating a need for approximately 4,425 ABOA square feet of space. Federal Agency's requirements for the space include: lab, conference room and library.

2. Delineated Area.

[Define the delineated area used for the procurement.]

The above information was used to construct the delineated area.

Point of Beginning: Intersection of I-78 and route 22. Follow I-78 southwest to route 66. Follow route 66 southeast to route 22. Follow route 22 north to I-78.

The delineated area for the Federal Agency new lease procurement was forwarded to Region X, Portfolio Management Division, along with the addresses of the three properties identified for site visits during the market survey. The environmental planning team of the Regional Office advised that 2 of the 3 properties identified for a site visit during the market survey were within the 1-percent-annual-chance

¹⁷ For leases, this is prepared before award and should be formatted by the Regional Office so that it is specific to the action, with appropriate signatories and levels of concurrence. This example provides appropriate levels of concurrence for a new lease.

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floodplain. Specifically, 123 American Way and 567 American Way were in the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

The delineated area for this procurement includes areas affected by the 1- and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain. As previously stated, it is essential to the mission of the Federal Agency to be located within the delineated area identified for this procurement.

By expanding the delineated area, the Government would jeopardize the effectiveness of the Federal Agency in executing their mission by limiting access to major highways and roadways, thus adversely affecting response times.

Executive Order (E.O.) 11988, as amended by E.O. 13690, requires GSA to evaluate the potential effects of any actions GSA may take in a floodplain and ensure that the Government's plans consider flood hazards and floodplain management needs. Unless there is 'no practicable alternative', GSA must only seek space outside the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain, or outside the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain for 'critical actions' (i.e., those for which even a slight change of flooding would be too great).

3. Market Survey Results.

[Insert information regarding results of the Market Survey. Be as detailed and specific as possible for those sites not meeting space requirements.]

In order to maximize competition for the Federal Agency's space requirements, several steps were taken to find as many potential buildings as possible:

- Properties were surveyed online using LoopNet, a commercial real estate listing website.
- An advertisement was posted on SAM.gov website on May 20, 2009.
- Broker traveled to Little Town, Small State, and located three buildings that could potentially meet Federal Agency's needs.

In response to these efforts, three properties were determined to be potentially capable of meeting the Government's requirements. On June 10, 2009, a physical market survey was conducted, which included the following three properties within the delineated area in Little Town, Small State.

1. 3800 Sierra Street
2. 123 American Way
3. 567 American Way

3800 Sierra Street is not in a 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain but did not meet the space requirements outlined above. 123 American Way and 567 American Way are both in the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain. 567 American Way also did not meet the agency's space requirements outline above.

4. Evaluation of Identified Alternatives.

[Insert narrative detailing the specific aspects of the sites which satisfy the needs of the government.]

Based on the research conducted to date which identified only one building potentially meeting the Government's needs for this procurement, it is unlikely that further research or another market survey would yield additional results more favorable for competition.

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5. Conclusion.

Based on the location analysis conducted by the Federal Agency, it is in Federal Agency's best interest to be located in Little Town, Small State, in order to accomplish their mission. Little Town is located in a heavily populated area of Federal Agency's jurisdiction. Additionally, this location is at the juncture of two major highways which will allow easy access for employees and visitors.

123 American Way is the only practicable alternative within the delineated area. Much of Little Town is located in a 1- or 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain. Efforts were made throughout the procurement to obtain all possible options for Federal Agency's requirement. However, there is only one option that will be able to fulfill the requirement, 123 American Way, which is located in the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain.

Prepared by:

_____ Date _____

Leasing Specialist

Concurrence:

_____ Date _____

Lease Contracting Officer

Concurrence:

_____ Date _____

Regional Leasing Director

Concurrence:

_____ Date _____

Customer Agency Representative [official authorized to commit the agency]

APPENDIX F. SAMPLE PUBLIC NOTICE FOR FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

[This is only a guide. It is recommended that you seek assistance from Regional Counsel in drafting the appropriate notices and disclosures]

Notification is hereby given to the public of the U.S. General Service Administration's (GSA) intent to [describe the proposed action].

For example: providing additional courthouse space in Little City, Small Town. The existing Federal Courthouse is within the Central Business Area (CBA), and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register).

The location of the project makes it susceptible to flooding at or above the 1-percent-annual-chance flood level. Under Executive Order (E.O.) 11988 (Floodplain Management) and E.O. 13690 (Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input), GSA is required to review the project for possible alternative solutions to the proposed action. Alternatives considered included [describe alternatives].

In the description, include:

- why the proposed action may be located within the floodplain;
- whether the action conforms to applicable State or local floodplain standards;
- why NFIP criteria are demonstrably inappropriate for the proposed action;
- how the activity will be designed or modified to minimize harm to or within the floodplain; and
- how the action affects natural or beneficial floodplain values.

Here is a sample description: GSA considered locating the new facility outside the 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain. However, this action would split the operation of the courts, thus reducing the court's efficiency and causing unnecessary duplication of effort and expense. GSA next considered abandoning the existing courthouse and relocating the entire facility to a larger site that would accommodate the complete operation. It was found that the alternative would remove the facility from the CBA. Additionally, because the existing courthouse is on the National Register, the action would not support the intent of E.O. 13006 which directs the Federal Government to utilize and maintain, wherever operationally appropriate and economically prudent, historic properties and districts, especially those located in our central cities. E.O. 13006, further directs federal agencies to give first consideration to historic properties within historic districts when locating federal facilities. If no such property is suitable, then federal agencies must consider other developed or undeveloped sites within historic districts. Finally, GSA considered taking no action but the need for additional courthouse space in Little Town had been clearly demonstrated.

Agencies that have been contacted for input into the analysis of this project include [insert list of agencies; for example, USACE, FEMA Regional office, State, County, or City offices].

Public comment is invited on any of the alternatives listed or other possible alternatives. Comments about this project must be submitted in writing to [point of contact name, title] at the address above within 15 calendar days of this notice.

APPENDIX G. SAMPLE LANGUAGE FOR DISPOSAL ACTIONS

In many instances, in order to completely protect the Government’s interest, some type of notice and disclosure should be included in Notice of Availability, the Invitation for Bids (IFB) and conveyance and assignment documents. Below is an example of a clause that could be used. This is only a guide. It is recommended that you seek assistance from Regional Counsel in drafting the appropriate notices and disclosures.

SAMPLE NOTICE FOR NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY, IFB AND DEED

The property is located in the 1-percent-annual-chance floodplain and is subject to any and all Federal, State, and local laws, rules, and ordinances governing land use in floodplain areas.

APPENDIX H. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. When should floodplain compliance occur?

Compliance with E.O. 11988 and E.O. 13690 should start early in the project’s planning process before decisions have been made. Floodplain determinations should be made for realty actions as soon as the market survey stage. Floodplain sites should not be considered further if sites outside of the floodplain are identified as reasonable alternatives. Project Managers or project staff should coordinate with the Regional NEPA Program Manager during the project planning phases. Where possible, floodplain compliance should occur as part of the NEPA compliance process.

2. How do GSA customer agencies determine if an action is a “critical action”?

GSA customer agencies determine if their actions are critical or not, but GSA staff should work with the client agency to ensure that their decisions are reasonable. The client agency should provide GSA with a written justification (signed by a senior representative with authority for approving decisions for the agency) of whether an action is or is not a “critical action”, including information about whether similar agency requests for space were also “critical actions”. Refer to Appendix C.

3. Is floodplain compliance necessary if the proposed action must occur in a location that is entirely within a floodplain?

Yes. There are circumstances when the delineated area is a community’s entire Central Business District (CBD) which is situated in a floodplain and the agency’s mission requires that the delineated area not be changed. While there may not be a practicable alternative to locating in the floodplain, there are flood protection techniques that can be taken and areas within the floodplain that are lower risk (flood resilience measures). GSA also has the option of conducting a “general area review” or a “class action review.” The Regional NEPA Program Manager must work with the appropriate FEMA regional office for guidance on developing a general area review or a class action review.

4. What factors should I consider in the decision-making process if the proposed action is located adjacent to a floodplain that may impact a federal agency’s mission (such as access, egress, or continuity of operations)?

If a proposed action is located outside of a floodplain, but is adjacent to a floodplain that may impact a federal agency’s mission, then such an action may require further analysis in the evaluation of practicable alternatives. The term ‘adjacent’ is intended to mean when federal real property, where the proposed action will take place, shares a property line with a floodplain. In such cases, the Regional NEPA Program Manager may consider the following:

- Whether the property where the proposed action will take place will be completely unusable or inaccessible due to the presence of floodwater.
- Whether the presence of floodwater would greatly or unreasonably impinge on the use and enjoyment of the federal real property where the proposed action will take place.
- Whether the proposed action is a critical action.

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5. Is floodplain compliance necessary if the community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)?

Yes. Communities are eligible to participate in the NFIP if they agree to adopt minimum standards to manage flood hazard areas. However, community participation in the NFIP does not meet GSA's requirement to comply with E.O. 11988 and E.O. 13690 and cannot be substituted for floodplain compliance.

6. How should floodplain compliance be documented?

In general, floodplain compliance should be documented through the existing internal NEPA procedures and documents, whenever possible. For Federally Funded Projects, floodplain compliance should be integrated into the NEPA process and documented through the EA/EIS and FONSI/ROD. For Specific Actions, identified as automatic CATEXs, information on the compliance process should be included in the permanent project file and noted in the Automatic Categorical Exclusion – NEPA Memo to File (GSA Form 4002). As the Regional Commissioner is required to concur with all findings of no practicable alternatives, decision documents (Floodplain Memorandum; Justification for No Practicable Alternatives) must also be included in the project file.

7. Does disposal of federal real property require floodplain compliance?

Disposal of federal real property is an action that requires compliance with E.O. 11988, E.O. 13690, and the Federal Management Regulation (FMR). Also, this desk guide describes a shortened decision-making process for floodplain compliance for Certain Disposal Actions. Each Report of Excess must include detailed information about any known flood hazards or flooding of the property, and a listing of any citations for restrictions under federal, state, or local regulations. A Regional Office may decline to accept surplus real property for disposal until the holding agency has complied with E.O. 11988, E.O. 13690, and related guidance, or may condition its acceptance of property upon such compliance by the holding agency.

When property in a floodplain is proposed for lease, easement, right-of-way, or disposal to non-federal public or private parties, E.O. 11988 Section 3(d) directs federal agencies to:

- Reference the floodplain in the conveyance restrictions under identified federal, state or local floodplain regulations; and
- Attach other appropriate restrictions considered necessary to further the purposes of E.O. 11988, except where prohibited by law; or
- Withhold such properties from conveyance.

8. In cases of property disposal, should GSA inform potential buyers that the property is located in a floodplain?

Yes. All potential recipients of the property should be told that the property is in a floodplain and that there may be restrictions on the property. For example:

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- Identify in Notices of Availability and the Invitation for Bid (IFB) possible restrictions under federal, state and local floodplain regulations (restricted uses likely will be detailed in state floodplain regulations and local building codes and zoning ordinances). Attach to the IFB other appropriate restrictions that GSA has determined are necessary to further the purposes of E.O. 11988 and E.O. 13690.
- Include information about the floodplain in the assignment letter if the property is being disposed of as a public benefit conveyance.

Appendix G contains sample language that should be included in Notices of Availability and the IFB and the conveyance and assignment documents.

9. How should floodplain compliance be coordinated with other Executive Orders?

As a general rule, health, safety, and security issues always take precedence over issues relating to the conduct of business. Project Managers or project staff should coordinate with the Regional NEPA Program Manager during the project planning phases to discuss consideration of all Executive Orders.

10. If locations outside the floodplain are much more expensive, can excessively high cost make a location not practicable?

In some locations, restricting alternatives to areas outside a floodplain yet still within the CBA may severely restrict competition. 'Practicable alternatives' are those that are available to GSA and capable of being done within existing constraints such as cost. Project staff must coordinate with the customer agency, as well as the Regional NEPA Program Manager, to determine what defines the project parameters. For example, if offers for locations outside the floodplain greatly exceed the prospectus authorized by Congress or GSA's prospectus threshold, then the sites are not affordable and they are not practicable alternatives. Additionally, in cases where land donations or land exchanges are a possibility, other practicable alternatives should still be identified and considered.

11. How should GSA balance the 8-Step process with the Procurement Integrity Act?

The Procurement Integrity Act prohibits disclosure of source selection and contractor bid or proposal information. If violation of the Procurement Integrity Act is a concern, the public notice (Step 2) should discuss all proposed locations that are under consideration without defining a preferred alternative. Prior to issuing a final decision (Step 7 and Final EA/FONSI or Final EIS/ROD), GSA should obtain Final Proposal Revisions in accordance with the Procurement Integrity Act so that the decision can be announced simultaneously with contract award.

12. What do I do if the property owner disagrees with FEMA's floodplain determination?

If a landowner disagrees with FEMA's determination regarding floodplains, it is the landowner's responsibility to consult with FEMA to request a change to the floodplain determination (LOMA or LOMR). GSA should not participate in this process as it is the landowner's responsibility. In addition, the LOMA or LOMR, should account for the entire property that GSA is considering, not just part of it, such as just a building. If the LOMA or LOMR only account for the building, GSA must consider whether it's action is still impacting the floodplain due to adjacency. GSA should also consider any schedule impacts if a landowner does not have a LOMA or LOMR readily available.

13. Are there other recommended Flood Hazard to be considered?

Yes, consideration should be given to the impacts of dams that could be located upstream of a project site. Flooding can occur near dams in a variety of scenarios that are not necessarily related to a 1% or 0.2% annual chance storm event. Consideration should be given to the extent of a dam flood inundation, particularly for a Critical Action activity. Dam hazard information can be requested from the local State Dam Safety Agency and may require additional coordination with the dam operating entity. When available, relevant dam hazard information can also be found at the National Inventory of Dams (NID) website that is managed by USACE.

14. Should the floodplain elevation be used to verify floodplain inclusion or exclusion?

Yes, the floodplain elevation should be used to determine if the project is within or outside the applicable floodplain. In general, if the existing grade or lowest adjacent grade (pre-construction or pre-damage disturbance) touching the structure or facility is below the flood elevation, then it would be considered within the floodplain.

In situations where the floodplain elevation is not readily available or the existing data is deemed outdated (study more than 15 years old), then a flood hazard study (hydrologic and hydraulics analysis) should be conducted and certified by a professional engineer to determine the applicable floodplain(s) and elevation(s). The study must meet the criteria of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) mapping standards. In the event only the BFE is available and is deemed current, then the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood elevation can be established at the BFE plus an additional 3 feet. Refer to Section 5.1,1) for the various data sources to determine the 1- and 0.2-percent-annual-chance floodplain and elevation.

A [FFRMS Floodplain Determination Job Aide](#) is available to help with FFRMS floodplain determination. It is encouraged to utilize the companion Floodplain Determination Worksheet for planning and decision-making process. The Job Aid is only a resource to support federal agencies, therefore, the policies of GSA and this floodplain guide take precedence.

APPENDIX I. RELEVANT LAWS AND GUIDANCE

1. **Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA).** Section 307 of the CZMA gives coastal states (including the Great Lakes and U.S. territories) authority to review certain federal actions that may affect a State's coastal uses or resources.
2. **E.O. 11988, Floodplain Management, of May 24, 1977.** E.O. 11988 requires all federal agencies to avoid the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains if practicable alternatives are available. Federal agencies are also required to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. Federal agencies must take action to reduce the risk of flood loss, to minimize the impact of floods on human safety, health, and welfare, and to restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains whenever they: acquire (via purchase or lease), manage, and dispose of federal lands and facilities; provide federally undertaken, financed, or assisted construction and improvements; or conduct federal activities and programs affecting land use, including water and related land resources planning, regulation, and licensing activities. Federal agencies have worked since the issuance of E.O. 11988, in 1977, to develop processes to evaluate impacts of their actions on floodplains.
3. **E.O. 12072, Federal Space Management, of August 16, 1978.** E.O. 12072 requires all federal agencies to give first consideration to locating federal facilities in centralized community business areas and other areas of similar character, including those recommended by local officials, to use them to make downtowns attractive places to work, conserve existing resources, and encourage redevelopment.
4. **E.O. 13006, Locating Federal Facilities on Historic Properties in Our Nation's Central Cities, of May 21, 1996.** E.O. 13006 directs the Federal Government to utilize and maintain, wherever operationally appropriate and economically prudent, historic properties and districts, including especially those located in central business areas.
5. **E.O. 13690, Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input, of January 30, 2015.** E.O. 13690 requires Federal agencies to incorporate the FFRMS to expand management from the current base flood elevation to a higher vertical flood elevation and corresponding horizontal floodplain for Federally Funded Projects. E.O. 13690 amends E.O. 11988 to improve the Nation's resilience to flooding and to better prepare for the impacts of climate change. E.O. 13690 establishes the standard and sets forth a process for further solicitation and consideration of public input, including from Governors, mayors, and other stakeholders.
6. **Federal Advisory Committees Act (FACA).** The FACA (requires standards and uniform procedures for the establishment, operation, administration, and duration of advisory committees. FACA requires advisory committees to be advisory only; all matters under consideration are to be determined, in accordance with law, by the federal agency involved. Advisory committees also must be chartered by the federal agency. GSA must consider FACA requirements when participating in or coordinating public participation activities for federal agency decision-making.

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7. **Guidelines for Implementing Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, and Executive Order 13690, Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input.** The Implementing Guidelines, issued on October 8, 2015, provide broad guidance and a common point of reference for federal agencies to implement E.O. 11988 and E.O. 13690. The Implementing Guidelines incorporate the FFRMS and amendments to E.O. 11988.
8. **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).** NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions.
9. **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).** The NFIP was created to provide flood insurance and undertake a unified program for floodplain management and is administered by FEMA. FEMA is also responsible for creating and maintaining flood hazard maps, including FIRMs. The NFIP authorizes FEMA to develop comprehensive criteria designed to encourage, where necessary, the adoption of adequate State and local measures which, to the maximum extent feasible, will guide development away from flood hazard areas; and assist in reducing damage caused by flood. Communities that voluntarily participate in the NFIP must implement and enforce local ordinances that contain protective floodplain development standards to reduce flood risks. These measures typically take the form of ordinances and design controls that require developers and property owners to (a) avoid development in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA), and (b) protect those structures that must be constructed in SFHAs. Communities participating in the NFIP are listed in FEMA's "Community Status Book."
10. **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).** NHPA is the primary federal law governing the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States, and requires federal agencies to assess the effects of its actions on historic resources prior to implementation.
11. **GSA PBS National Environmental Policy (NEPA) Desk Guide, of October 1999.** The NEPA Desk Guide provides policies, requirements, checklists, and references to support GSA employees with applying NEPA requirements to federal actions, including leasing, acquiring, developing, managing, and disposing of real property.
12. **Procurement Integrity Act.** The Procurement Integrity Act prohibits disclosing or obtaining procurement-sensitive information, to include contractor bid or proposal information and source selection information.
13. **The Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA).** The CBRA encourages the conservation of storm-prone and dynamic coastal barriers by withdrawing the availability of federal funding and financial assistance within a designated set of units known as the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS). Federal financial assistance includes federal flood insurance as well as loans, grants, and other forms of federal assistance.

APPENDIX J. SPECIFIC ACTIONS

This list of automatic CATEXs is copied from GSA's NEPA Desk Guide Section 5.3, published 1999. While this list is provided for the convenience of the reader, refer to the latest NEPA Desk Guide for the most up-to-date list of automatic CATEXs when conducting floodplain compliance.

- (a) Outleases, licenses, and other arrangements for non-federal use of space in existing Federal office buildings, where such use is consistent with local planning and zoning, where Section 106 of the NHPA is complied with where applicable; and there is no evidence of community controversy or unresolved environmental issues.
- (b) Acquisition of space within an existing structure, either by purchase or lease, where no change in the general type of use and only minimal change from previous occupancy level is proposed (previous occupant need not have been a Federal tenant).
- (c) Relocation of employees into existing Federally controlled space, that does not involve a substantial change in the number of employees or motor vehicles.
- (d) Reductions in force or other personnel, administrative, or ministerial actions, including bargaining with employee unions and managing routine activities normally conducted to protect or maintain GSA-controlled properties (e.g., security and custodial services).
- (e) Lease extensions, renewals, or succeeding leases.
- (f) Outlease or license of government-controlled space, or sublease of government-leased space to a non-Federal tenant when the use will remain substantially the same.
- (g) Acquisition of land or easements that result in no immediate change in use and where subsequent compliance with NEPA and other applicable laws and regulations will take place as needed.
- (h) Site characterization studies and environmental monitoring, including siting, construction, operation, and dismantling or closing of characterization and monitoring devices. Such activities include, but are not limited to:
 - Site characterization and environmental monitoring activities under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA);
 - Geological, geophysical, geochemical, and engineering surveys and mapping, including the establishment of survey marks;
 - Installation and operation of field instruments, such as stream-gauging stations or flow-measuring devices, telemetry systems, geochemical monitoring tools, and geophysical exploration tools;
 - Drilling of wells or for sampling or monitoring of groundwater, well logging, and installation of water-level recording devices in wells;

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- Aquifer response testing;
 - Installation and operation of ambient air monitoring equipment;
 - Sampling and characterization of water, soil rock, or contaminants;
 - Sampling and characterization of water effluents, air emissions, or solid waste streams;
 - Sampling of flora or fauna;
 - Historic property identification and evaluation studies in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).
- (i) Administrative actions such as procurement of consultant services for appraisal or environmental analysis.
- (j) Repair and alteration projects involving, but not adversely affecting, properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, when there is no evidence of community controversy or other environmental issues. The process required by Section 106 of the NHPA must be followed; see ADM 1020.2.
- (k) Other repair and alteration projects where:
- No toxic or hazardous substances are involved with the project or exist in or on the property where the project takes place;
 - No properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are involved;
 - The building footprint or envelope will not be increased;
 - There is no evidence of community controversy; and
 - There is no evidence of other unresolved environmental issues.
- (l) Repairs and alterations or modernization conducted in accordance with applicable plans, such as Facility Master Plans, where such plans have been reviewed under NEPA and there is no evidence of community controversy or unresolved environmental issues. The process required by Section 106 of the NHPA must be followed; see ADM 1020.2.
- (m) Repair to or replacement in kind of equipment or components in GSA controlled facilities without change in location, e.g., HVAC, electrical distribution systems, windows, doors or roof where there is no evidence of unresolved environmental issues.
- (n) Facility maintenance, custodial, and groundskeeping activities not involving environmentally sensitive areas (such as eroded areas, wetlands, cultural sites, etc.), including window washing, lawn mowing, trash collecting, and snow removal.

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- (o) Procurement contracts for professional services and supplies not addressed elsewhere here.
- (p) Preparation of implementation guidance.
- (q) Studies that involve no commitment of resources other than manpower and funding.
- (r) Assisting Federal agencies in public utilities management (excluding communications), negotiating for public utility services on behalf of Federal agencies, and providing expert testimony before public utility regulatory bodies.
- (s) Federal real property utilization surveys in accordance with Executive Order 12348.
- (t) Real property inspections for compliance with deed restrictions.
- (u) Administrative action by GSA to remove clouds on titles.
- (v) Disposal of real property required by public law wherein Congress has specifically exempted the action from the requirements of NEPA.

APPENDIX K. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

0.2PFA	0.2-Percent-annual-chance Flood Approach
ABOA	ANSI/BOMA Occupant Area
ADM	Office of the Administrator
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
BFE	Base Flood Elevation
BOMA	Building Owners and Managers Association International
CATEX	Categorical Exclusions
CBA	Central Business Area
CBD	Central Business District
CBRA	Coastal Barrier Resources Act
CBRS	Coastal Barrier Resources System
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CILP	Capital Investment and Leasing Program
CISA	Climate-Informed Science Approach
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
EA	Environmental Assessment
E.O.	Executive Order
EIS	Environmental Impact Study
FACA	Federal Advisory Committees Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFRMS	Federal Flood Risk Management Standard
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FIS	Flood Insurance Study
FMR	Federal Management Regulation
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FVA	Freeboard Value Approach
GSA	General Services Administration
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
IFB	Invitation for Bids
LOMA	Letter of Map Amendment

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LOMR	Letter of Map Revision
MAP	Multi-Asset Planning
MSC	Map Service Center
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFHL	National Flood Hazard Layer
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NID	National Inventory of Dams
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OFHPGB	Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings
OFM	Office of Facilities Management
OGP	Office of Government-Wide Policy
P100	Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service
PBS	Public Buildings Service
PMCE	Office of Portfolio Management and Customer Engagement
POC	Point of Contact
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RLP	Request for Lease Proposal
ROD	Record of Decision
SERDP	Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Areas
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey