

February 7, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Joe Barger
NEPA Coordinator

Subject: Categorical Exclusion
Record of Environmental Consideration

Project Title: Expansion of National Weather Center Facilities

Location: University of Oklahoma
120 David L. Boran Blvd.
Norman, OK 73072-7303

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated implementing regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) require that all major actions by federal agencies be reviewed with respect to the environmental consequences on the human environment. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is providing a congressionally directed funding grant for the Expansion of National Weather Center Facilities at the University of Oklahoma, in Norman, Oklahoma. Consequently, NEPA and the associated implementing regulations apply to this project.

This memorandum provides a Record of Environmental Consideration and summarizes the determination that the Expansion of National Weather Center Facilities at the University of Oklahoma has been found to be categorically excluded from any further environmental review under NEPA.

Description of the Action

This project includes the renovation of 15,000 to 35,000 square feet of the existing National Weather Center building located on the campus of the University of Oklahoma. The existing building encompasses five floors and 244,000 square feet of space. The variation in the amount of space to be renovated is due to program needs and the available budget for this occupied

building. The renovated space will be used for research and office space. The space will be renovated, reprogrammed, and restacked to create more collaborative ventures between the College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Cooperative Institute for Severe and High-Impact Weather Research and Operations, and various other departments within the National Weather Center.

This project will be accomplished in accordance with all applicable state and federal environmental and safety regulations. All applicable regulatory permitting will be obtained.

Specific Considerations of this Action and any Extraordinary Circumstances

- Existing Site

The site is on the University of Oklahoma Research Campus in Norman, Oklahoma. This project is for an interior renovation of a building - no additional roads, buildings, or impervious areas will be constructed.

- Endangered Species and Critical Habitats

This project will solely impact the interior of the National Weather Center facility. No endangered species or habitats will be impacted.

- Wetlands, Flooding Potential and Resilience

The site is located outside of any 100- and 500-year FEMA flood hazard areas. No flooding impacts are expected. The cost of the renovation is less than 50% of the replacement cost for the building.

- Stormwater

This project will solely impact the interior of the existing National Weather Center. No impacts to stormwater are expected.

- Building Staffing/Utilities

Staffing and student populations are not expected to increase significantly due to the renovation project.

Local roadways have capacity for a temporary increase in traffic during construction and for the ongoing increase in traffic expected for staff and students.

- Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse Gas emissions are not expected to increase or decrease significantly due to the renovation project. Energy consumption for the building is expected to be largely

unchanged. All University purchased electricity is from renewable sources (wind power) through an agreement with the local utility, Oklahoma Gas and Electric.

- Hazardous Materials

Any hazardous materials (i.e., asbestos, lead based paint, PCBs) that might be encountered during this renovation will be properly removed and disposed in accordance with state and federal regulations.

- Historic/Cultural Significance

This project will solely impact the interior of the National Weather Center. No impacts are expected to any historic properties. The National Weather Center Building was completed in 2006.

- Environmental Justice

Due to the nature of the project, no disproportional adverse human health or environmental impacts to overburdened or underserved communities, including minority, Tribal, or low-income populations are expected.

Effects of the Action

No significant adverse impacts on the environment are expected from this action.

Categorical Exclusion

The activities associated with this project fall within the criteria of the following Department of Commerce Categorical Exclusion (CATEX):

A-1 Minor renovations and additions to buildings, roads, airfields, grounds, equipment, and other facilities that do not result in a change in the functional use of the real property (e.g. realigning interior spaces of an existing building, adding a small storage shed to an existing building, retrofitting for energy conservation, or installing a small antenna on an already existing antenna tower that does not cause the total height to exceed 200 feet and where the FCC would not require an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement for the installation). This CE does not apply in instances where the project must be submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) for review and NCPC determines that it does not have an applicable Categorical Exclusion.

This project is considered a minor renovation of a building that does not change the functional use of the real property. The project does not require review by the NCPC.

The proposed activity: Expansion of the National Weather Center Facilities at the University of Oklahoma is categorically excluded from the need for further environmental review under NEPA. Any changes to the above project will require additional NEPA review.

Joe Barger
NIST NEPA Coordinator

2/7/2025

Date

Robert C. Vaughn
NIST Chief Facilities Management Officer

Date