



**DRAFT FINAL**

# GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OUTREACH COMPONENT

REBUILD BY DESIGN MEADOWLANDS  
FLOOD PROTECTION PROJECT

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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CAG	Citizen Advisory Committee
CDBG-DR	Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery
CEP	Certified Environmental Professional
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COP	Citizen Outreach Plan
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EISO	Environmental Impact Statement Outreach
EJ	Environmental Justice
EO	Executive Order
ESC	Executive Steering Committee
GPI	Guidance for Public Involvement
HUD	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NJDCA	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
NJDEP	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOI	Notice of Intent
OSC	Outreach Subcommittee
RBD	Rebuild by Design
ROD	Record of Decision
SME	Subject Matter Expert
USC	U.S. Code

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), on behalf of the State of New Jersey through its Department of Community Affairs (NJDCOA), as the recipient of United States (US) Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant funds and as the “Responsible Entity,” as that term is defined by HUD regulations at 24 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 58.2(a)(7)(i), intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Rebuild by Design (RBD) Meadowlands Flood Protection Project (the Proposed Project). In accordance with criteria in 40 CFR Part 1501.5(c), NJDCOA has designated NJDEP as the Lead Agency to prepare the EIS for the Proposed Project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA; 42 U.S. Code [USC] 4321 *et seq.*).

The EIS will analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed Project alternatives within the Boroughs of Little Ferry, Moonachie, Carlstadt, and Teterboro, and the Township of South Hackensack, all in Bergen County, New Jersey (the Project Area). The Project Area has the following approximate boundaries: the Hackensack River to the east; Paterson Plank Road to the south; State Route 17 to the west; and Interstate 80 and the northern boundary of the Borough of Little Ferry to the north. **Figure 1** displays an aerial view of the Project Area.

This Guidance for Public Involvement (GPI) augments the NJDEP Citizen Outreach Plan (COP) for the Proposed Project, and is a separable, stand-alone document. The GPI provides guidance on public involvement that could be conducted in relation to the Proposed Project’s NEPA process<sup>1</sup>. Additional public involvement, as described in the COP, will occur throughout the life of the overall Proposed Project. *This project-specific NEPA process will extend for approximately 19 months, from about June 2016 through approximately December 31, 2017.*

<sup>1</sup> Any changes to this GPI that may occur throughout the NEPA process would not be considered a material change to the overall COP. Changes to the GPI could occur, for example, should stakeholder needs or circumstances change throughout the NEPA process.



**Figure 1. Rebuild by Design Meadowlands Flood Protection Project Area**



## 1.1 Proposed Project Background

Hurricane Sandy significantly impacted the Project Area, highlighting existing deficiencies in the Project Area's resiliency and ability to adequately protect vulnerable populations and critical infrastructure from flooding during major storm events. These impacts included extensive inland flooding due to major tidal surges, with significant damage to residential and commercial properties; impacts to critical health care facilities; and the failure of critical power, transportation, and water and sewer infrastructure.

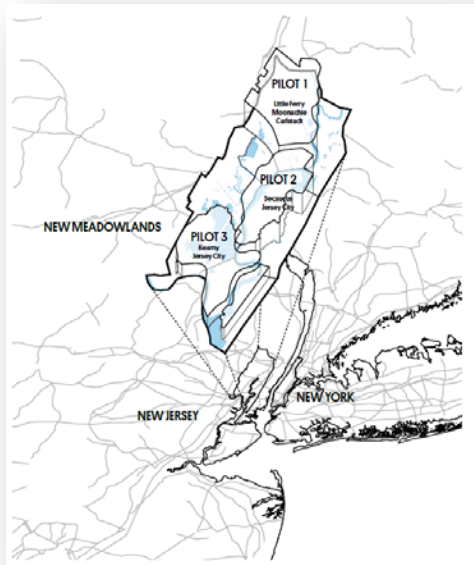
The Proposed Project was developed and selected as a winning concept through HUD's and the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force's RBD competition. The RBD competition promoted the development of innovative resilience projects in the Sandy-affected region. The Proposed Project is a component of a regional concept proposal for the New Jersey Meadowlands (the Meadowlands Program Area; see **Figure 2**) that aims to reduce flooding risks and potentially provide ancillary benefits.

As originally proposed during the RBD competition, the concept envisioned creating a system of natural areas, berms, and additional wetlands to reduce flooding risks. The original concept also articulated an integrated vision for protecting, connecting, and growing the Meadowlands, as a critical asset, to both the rest of New Jersey and the metropolitan area of New York. By integrating transportation, ecology, and development, the awarded concept sought to transform the Meadowlands basin to address a wide spectrum of risks, while providing potential civic amenities and creating opportunities for new redevelopment.

HUD awarded \$150 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds to the State of New Jersey for the Proposed Project, specifically for the "Phase 1 Pilot Area." The Phase 1 Pilot Area is now referred to as the RBD Meadowlands Flood Protection Project Area, as shown in **Figure 1**.

The RBD award-winning concept took a multi-faceted approach intended to address flooding from both major storm surges and high tides, as well as from heavy rainfall events, with several potential ancillary benefits. The concept's comprehensive approach to resilience consisted of three integrated components: *Protect*, *Connect*, and *Grow*.

1. *Protect*: Provide flood protection through a combination of hard infrastructure (such as bulkheads or floodwalls) and soft landscaping features (such as berms and/or levees) that act as barriers during exceptionally high tide and/or storm surge events. Complement the flood control structures with freshwater basins and expanded Meadowlands wetlands to increase flood storage capacity. A proposed Meadowpark, envisioned as a natural reserve and expansion of the existing marsh, would provide additional flood protection and connection of surrounding developments to the Meadowlands through its views and recreational offerings.
2. *Connect*: Increase connectivity in and between Meadowlands' towns with a "Meadowband" (multi-use levee) that would include a new local street, recreational facilities and access, and a Bus Rapid Transit line that would provide improved connectivity and access within the Project Area, much in the same way 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue frame Central Park in New York City.
3. *Grow*: Through improved flood control, an ancillary benefit of re-zoning and up-zoning newly protected areas could become real. Through re-zoning, the local development pattern could transform from lower density, suburban-type development to a denser, better planned, multi-functional, and multi-level mixed use of offices, warehousing, retail, and residential development.



**Figure 2. Meadowlands Program Area**

**Source:** RBD Design Competition, New Meadowlands (2015).

**Note:** This NEPA analysis focuses on the area labeled as “Pilot #1,” which is the Project Area of the EIS. All three Pilot Areas are shown here to depict the complete scope of the overall original Meadowlands Program Area concept.





## 1.2 Proposed Project Evolution

Based on the amount of CDBG-DR funding (i.e., \$150M) provided by HUD for the “Phase 1 Pilot Area,” now referred to as the Project Area, NJDEP has determined that the Proposed Project, in application, will focus primarily on reducing flood risk within the Project Area (i.e., the “Protect” component of the “Protect, Connect, Grow” concept). Potential ancillary “Connect” and “Grow” components of the winning concept, while not funded specifically at this point, could be logical and reasonable future outcomes following implementation of the critical “Protect” function as additional funding is identified, secured, and made available. It is reasonable to conclude that once the Project Area enjoys increased flood protection, additional transportation, ecological, and redevelopment improvements could occur.

As such, the EIS will focus on the Phase 1 Pilot Area, or Project Area, as shown in **Figure 1**. The potential future phases of the original RBD award-winning concept, if reasonably foreseeable, and the potential for additional future improvements in the Project Area would be evaluated in the EIS’ cumulative impacts analysis, as appropriate.

## 1.3 Basis for National Environmental Policy Act Analysis

Because HUD, a Federal agency, is funding the Proposed Project, and because the Proposed Project is considered a “major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment,” the Proposed Project must comply with the requirements of NEPA, and an EIS must be prepared. CDBG-DR funding requires compliance with NEPA as stated in HUD’s regulations outlined in [24 CFR Part 58 \(Environmental Review Procedures for Entities Assuming HUD Environmental Responsibilities\)](#). The Proposed Project is also subject to the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA Regulations at [40 CFR Parts 1500-1508](#). HUD has further outlined the Proposed Project’s environmental review requirements in a *Federal Register* (FR) notice published on October 16, 2014 ([79 FR 62182](#)).

In accordance with 42 USC 5304(g) and HUD’s regulations at 24 CFR Part 58, HUD has provided for assumption of its NEPA authority by the State of New Jersey through the NJDCA, with NJDCA delegating NEPA Lead Agency responsibility to NJDEP for the administration of the Proposed Project, including its environmental review and preparation of the EIS. With NJDEP serving as the Lead Agency, the EIS will be prepared in accordance with NEPA, CEQ regulations found at 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508, and HUD regulations found at 24 CFR Part 58.

## 1.4 Environmental Impact Statement Content

The EIS will consist of the following content, written in plain language with appropriate graphics, so that decision-makers and the public can readily understand the analysis (as required per 40 CFR Part 1502):

- A discussion of the Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project. The Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Project is to provide flood protection in the Project Area.
- An alternatives analysis of potential options for increasing flood protection in the Project Area.
- A detailed social, economic, and environmental analysis of three build alternatives that are reasonable and feasible for satisfying the purpose of and need for the Proposed Project, as well as the No Action Alternative (as required per 40 CFR Part 1502.14(d)).
- A program of public participation and interagency coordination throughout development of the EIS.

## 1.5 Public Outreach

It is vital that those who are interested in, potentially affected by, and/or have regulatory jurisdiction over this Proposed Project (i.e., residents and other stakeholders and interested parties, including regulatory agencies) have an opportunity to share their concerns and provide input into the EIS and the overall NEPA process.

The NJDEP COP includes transparent and inclusive outreach to community groups that serve vulnerable and underserved populations, including racial and ethnic minority populations, persons with limited English proficiency, and persons with disabilities, as well as other citizens, residents, business owners, regulatory agencies, and local, State, and Federal government officials. This GPI includes by reference those important outreach elements (see “**Vulnerable Populations**” section of the NJDEP COP for more information).

This GPI details the public involvement and outreach efforts that may be conducted during Proposed Project’s NEPA process, including ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of these efforts (see **Section 5.0**). The GPI identifies stakeholders, sets forth measurable objectives, and defines strategies that may be used to engage stakeholders and the general public throughout the NEPA process. It also describes how success may be measured against completion of these objectives.

## 2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT PROCESS

The EIS process is conducted in accordance with the requirements of NEPA. NEPA is a procedural act aimed at ensuring that, for Federal actions having potential to result in significant environmental effects, information on potential environmental impacts is made available to the public and public officials before decisions are made and actions are undertaken.

Public participation is a requirement of the NEPA process. In addition to engaging with the public, NEPA requires that there be thorough and complete documentation of participation by all involved government agencies and other interested parties in the process.

Originally signed into law by President Nixon on January 1, 1970, NEPA has been amended, regulations have been promulgated by the President’s CEQ and other Federal agencies, and various EIS “best practices” literature have been published. Regulations and best practices cover many technical issues, as well as public participation efforts. All best practices identify that it is important to have an objective, open, and transparent public participation program. This means the following:

- The Federal action under environmental review cannot be perceived as a foregone conclusion.
- All reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Project, including no action, need to be considered.
- All direct, indirect, and cumulative social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Federal action, both adverse and beneficial, must be identified and analyzed.
- Proactive, early, and continuous efforts need to be made to involve a broad spectrum of the public in this process. This includes Project Area residents and business owners, as well as a wide range of stakeholders and groups who may be affected by impacts of the Proposed Project.

Throughout the NEPA process, the public participation effort focuses on gathering input and dispersing information about the following key areas addressed in the EIS:

- The **Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Project**.
- The potential **Range of Reasonable Alternative Actions**, including not implementing the action.
- **Methodologies** that may be used to assess impacts on various resources. This typically includes using models to estimate impacts on resources such as traffic conditions, air quality, and noise, as well as reviewing baseline information and analyzing anticipated changes caused by the Proposed Project, including considered Alternatives, to assess impacts on environmental resources, socioeconomics, cultural resources, and hazardous materials/wastes.
- Potential **Impacts** associated with implementing the considered alternatives, as well as **Mitigation Measures** that could be used to avoid, minimize, reduce, or compensate for anticipated impacts.

While public outreach is integral throughout the entire NEPA process, beginning with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in the *Federal Register*, there are two distinct points in the NEPA process where public participation is most heavily focused: (1) **Scoping** and (2) **Release of the Draft EIS**.

However, it is valuable to engage the public during the intervening period after scoping and prior to the release of the Draft EIS (via publication of a Notice of Availability [NOA] in the *Federal Register*), and doing so is encouraged as a good practice under NEPA. Each of these stages is discussed further below; an overview of the EIS process is provided in **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3. Overview of the NEPA Process**

- **Scoping.** Scoping occurs early in the environmental review process and is meant to focus the NEPA analysis on specific alternatives, issues, concerns, and methods of analysis. During scoping, the plan for how the environmental review (in this case, the EIS) is going to be conducted is issued in draft form. A Draft Public Scoping Document, or Draft Scope of Work to prepare an EIS, is prepared and made available to facilitate public review and focus early public input in a meaningful way. The public and all relevant agencies are invited to offer comments on this Draft Public Scoping Document, both orally at the publicized scoping meeting and via written submittal of comments during the 30-day formal scoping process. The Draft Public Scoping Document outlines, to the extent known at this early stage in the planning process, the Proposed Project Actions, potential alternatives, and a description of areas of potential impact to be analyzed in the EIS, as well as proposed methodologies to assess impacts.
- **Release of the Draft EIS (via publication of a NOA).** When the environmental analysis is nearing completion, the Draft EIS is released for public and agency review. Review comments can be provided orally at publicized hearings and via written submittals during the Draft EIS 45-day review period.
- **Release of the Final EIS (via publication of a NOA).** Following completion of the comment period, a Final EIS is prepared, which responds to substantive comments on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is made available for public and agency review for a 30-day review period.



The Scoping, Draft EIS, and Final EIS review stages are formally announced via notifications in the *Federal Register* and advertisements in local newspapers. The publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register* formally initiates the NEPA process, represents the beginning of the public scoping process as outlined in 40 CFR Part 1501.07, and announces the public scoping meeting date and location. The 30-day public scoping period is further announced by the issuance of a notice in local newspapers and on the Proposed Project website.

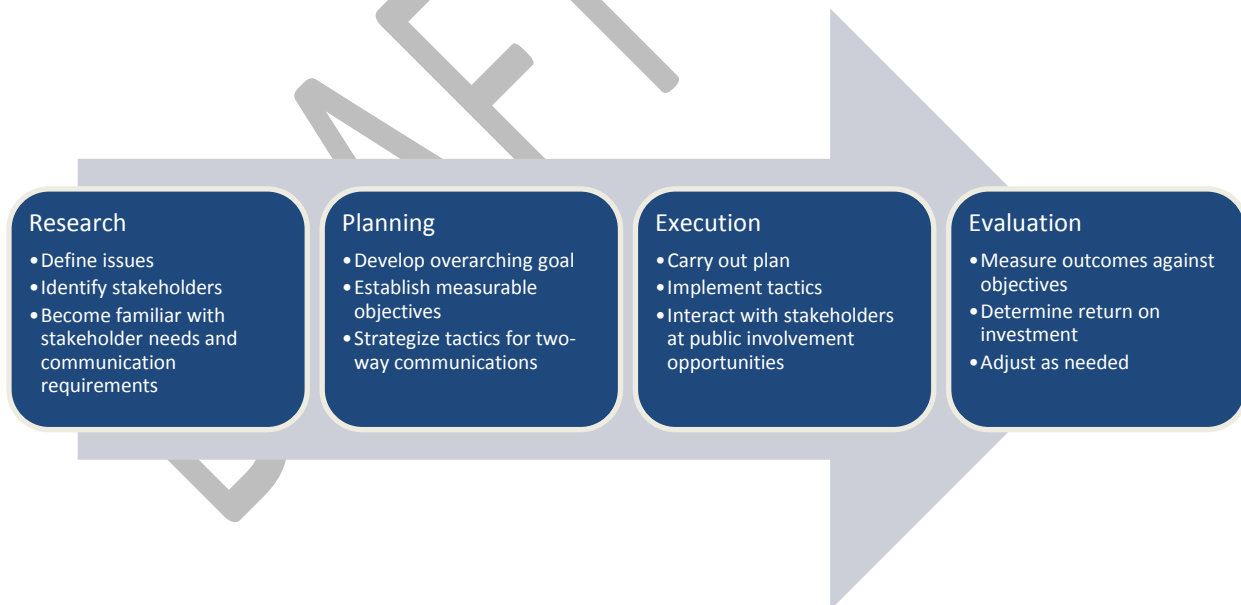
A NOA is published in the *Federal Register* announcing the release of the Draft EIS to the public for review and comment. The NOA initiates the 45-day public comment period on the Draft EIS, announces public hearing dates and locations, and identifies how comments on the EIS may be submitted. All public meetings will be scheduled in or near the Project Area at convenient locations and times, as described in this GPI.

Other public participation techniques are used during the NEPA process to gather and disperse important information. *Federal Register* notices announcing the scoping meeting, Draft EIS public hearing, Final EIS release, and formal comment periods can be supplemented by media releases, newspaper advertisements, flyers, newsletters, website announcements, and other public notifications. Following scoping, the public and agencies can be provided with opportunities to offer input into the alternatives development and analysis steps through such means as public open houses and advisory or other committees. Information about the status of the NEPA process can be dispersed through newsletters and a Proposed Project website.

In general, public outreach efforts associated with the NEPA process are tailored based on the demographics of the involved public; the nature, scope, and breadth of the Federal Proposed Project; and the potential for specific significant environmental impacts and related public concerns and controversy.

### 3.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The public involvement effort for this EIS will be carried out in line with a proven four-step process, *Research, Planning, Execution, and Evaluation*, as illustrated in **Figure 4**.



**Figure 4. Four-Step Process for Public Involvement**

### 3.1 Stakeholders

This GPI establishes the guidelines for project-specific outreach activities to engage stakeholders during the NEPA process, in line with objectives set forth within the NJDEP COP. For this Proposed Project, stakeholders include, but are not limited to, the following:

- NJDEP
- HUD
- Affected government agencies
- Executive Steering Committee (ESC)
- Outreach Subcommittee (OSC)
- Citizen Advisory Group (CAG)
- Project Area residents
- Local businesses and associations
- General public

A complete list of stakeholders, as known at this time, is presented in Appendix A of the NJDEP COP.

### 3.2 Objectives

The overarching goal of the NEPA public involvement effort is to engage a diverse group of public and agency participants to provide timely information and solicit relevant input throughout the environmental review process. To accomplish this, the following objectives will be pursued:

- Establish ongoing, inclusive, and meaningful two-way communication between HUD/NJDEP and stakeholders, agencies, and the general public by having regular meetings and informative data exchanges throughout the NEPA process.
- Educate the public about the environmental review (NEPA) process and the roles of government, stakeholders, and the general public in this process through the development of clear, concise, and cogent messaging to be woven into all written and verbal Proposed Project communications.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of outreach and public involvement activities on a continual basis to refine the GPI, as necessary, and utilize the most effective public outreach techniques throughout the process (see **Section 5.0**).

### 3.3 Environmental Justice Considerations

Throughout this NEPA process, the GPI seeks to meaningfully engage the public, including minority, low-income, and traditionally under-represented and under-served populations in the environmental review process. The following principles will be adopted to support involvement of all populations, including vulnerable or “environmental justice” (EJ) populations, affected by the Proposed Project:

- Documents, meeting notices, and information provided at meetings will be concise, understandable, and readily accessible to the public. Documents, meeting notices, and information provided at public meetings will also be provided in Spanish and Korean, upon prior request, for targeted public audiences and stakeholders (see **“Vulnerable Populations”** section of the NJDEP COP).
- Informational material will be made available through a variety of outlets, including newspapers, direct mailings, and the NJDEP Proposed Project website.

- To the extent possible, public events will be scheduled at convenient, accessible locations at attendee-friendly times to encourage maximum attendance.
- Various community leaders and groups will be contacted to increase public participation of constituent communities.

This approach will fully comply with the 2004 Executive Order (EO) 12898 (*Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*), and the 2009 State of New Jersey EO #131 concerning EJ. These EOs underscore the importance of protecting human health and environment of all citizens within the United States and the State of New Jersey, respectively. They direct Federal and State agencies to ensure that minority and low-income populations are afforded fair treatment and meaningful involvement in decision-making. Under State of New Jersey EO #131, State agencies are tasked with addressing environmental and environmental health concerns and called upon to serve or address issues through a multi-agency advisory task force. NJDEP administers the State's EJ Program. All public outreach activities conducted throughout the EIS process will fully comply with the spirit of EO 12898 and EO #131, and ensure NEPA-related activities are open and responsive to any EJ concerns.

#### 4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

The goal of this project-specific GPI is to conduct early and continuing outreach that is timely, broadly disseminated, and responsive to the specific needs of the stakeholders associated with this Proposed Project and Project Area. The GPI is structured and will be executed through a phased approach consistent with the Proposed Project's NEPA phases, and in accordance with the public engagement requirements for EISs found in 40 CFR 1506.6 (*NEPA Requirements for Public Involvement*) and 24 CFR Part 58. The early and often coordination and the input from stakeholder groups will influence the development of three Build Alternatives subjected to complete analysis within the EIS, as well as the recommendation of a Preferred Alternative. A key goal of the GPI's stakeholder and public outreach process is to gain an understanding of the community and its needs and concerns about the proposed flood risk reduction system.

##### 4.1 Branding and Outreach Approach

To provide a foundation for the meetings, workshops, notices, and other outreach efforts described in **Section 4.2**, the following branding and outreach tactics will be implemented at the beginning of the execution phase to maximize the opportunity for successful two-way communications with stakeholders.

- **Project Branding.** To assist the public in identifying project-related materials that will be produced and disseminated during this NEPA process, a banner and readily recognizable "look and feel" may be established at the onset of the NEPA process and used on project materials, including meeting announcements, posters, handouts, PowerPoints, and online. Likewise, clear, concise, and cogent key messages will be developed for use in written and verbal communications to ensure project team members are accurately conveying consistent information.
- **Project Website and E-mail.** The NJDEP is committed to keeping the public informed of progress on the development and implementation of the RBD projects. Accordingly, the NJDEP has established a website for the RBD Meadowlands Flood Protection Project at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov). The NJDEP has also established an email address at [rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov](mailto:rbd-meadowlands@dep.nj.gov) for the public to ask questions and submit comments. The Proposed Project website will have outreach material and notifications regarding regional CAG and public meetings in English, as well as Spanish, Korean, and other languages, if and as requested and deemed appropriate. The Proposed Project website also will include information on the NEPA process, Proposed Project activities and progress, public participation opportunities, and Proposed Project contact information. Documents posted on the Proposed Project website will be downloadable (in .pdf format when possible) for information and/or review.



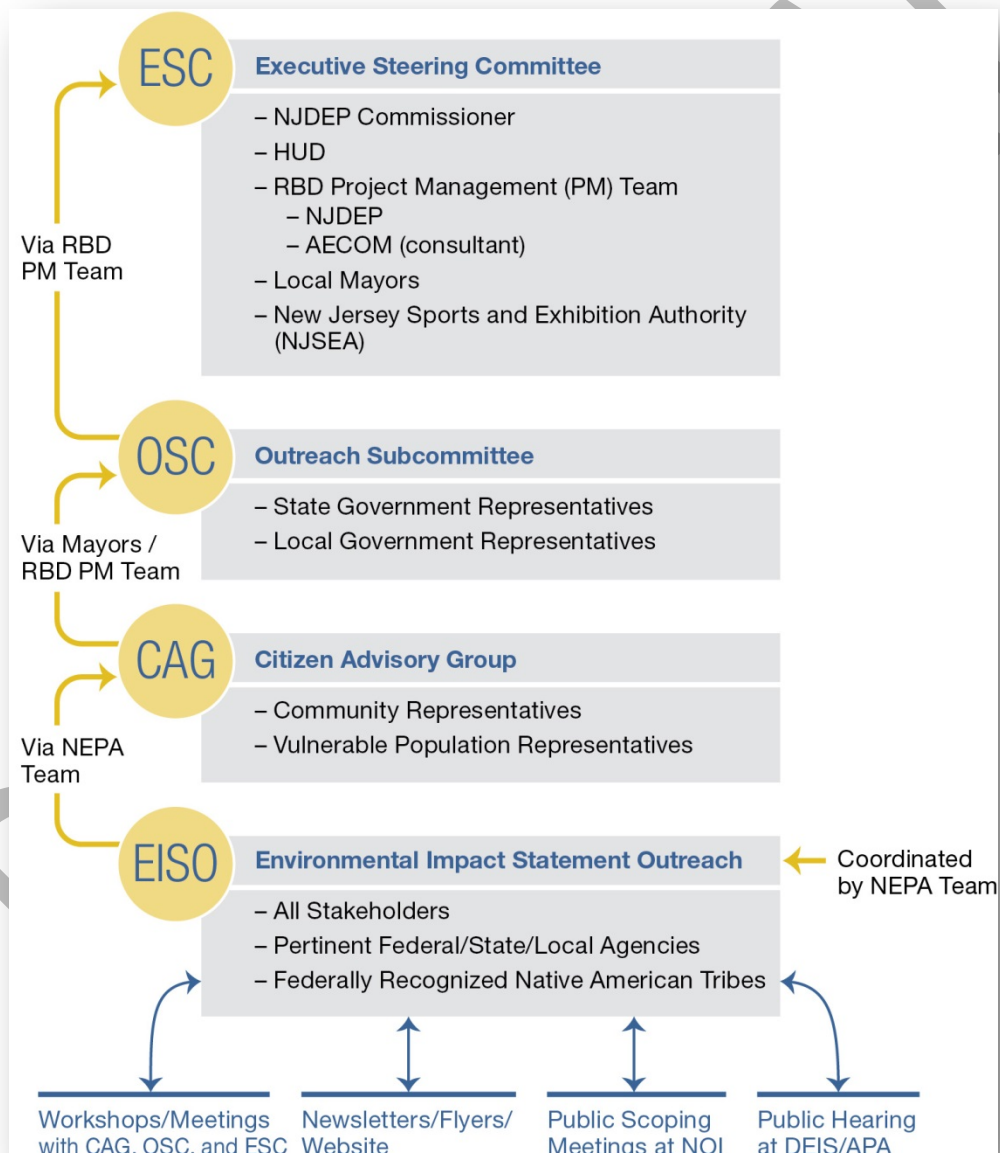
- **NJDEP Project Mailing List and Listserv.** A mailing list could be developed for the purpose of publicizing public meeting opportunities, Proposed Project website updates, and for keeping interested parties apprised of developments throughout the NEPA process. The list would be comprised of area residents, businesses, civic associations, community groups, schools, health care facilities, and the like. The list of known and invited stakeholders, including members of the ESC, OSC, and CAG (see **Figure 5**), and the overall initial mailing list, is presented within Appendix A of the NJDEP COP. This mailing list will be updated regularly throughout the process as additional interested parties are identified, such as via the various public meetings that will be held. The Proposed Project Listserv would serve the same purpose as the mailing list. Interested parties may sign up to receive Listserv emails through the Proposed Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov).
- **Updates/Newsletters.** Updates will be produced and posted on the Proposed Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov) to educate the public about the EIS process, provide information on the NEPA analysis as it progresses, announce public participation opportunities, and provide study contact information. These updates will be written in straightforward language and graphics will be used to assist in communicating the appropriate information. The NEPA monthly updates will begin at the publication of the NOI and announce the public scoping meeting; the NEPA monthly updates will terminate upon signature of the Record of Decision (ROD). Monthly updates will be distributed to the individuals who have signed up for Project Listserv email notifications through the Proposed Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov).
- **Meeting Announcements.** Meeting flyers will be used to publicize public meetings. These flyers will be emailed to the listserv mailing list, distributed in bulk to libraries and community centers, posted on the Proposed Project website, and published in local newspapers. Meeting flyers will be made available in English, Spanish, and Korean. The NJDEP may send announcements to each local Mayor's office and local Chamber of Commerce for posting on municipal websites.
- **Media Relations.** Press releases and/or press advisories may be issued by the NJDEP in advance of public meetings and to announce the availability of Proposed Project materials. It is anticipated that there will be press releases to announce the Public Scoping Meeting, the availability of the Draft EIS and the conduct of the Public Hearing, and the availability of the Final EIS. The NJDEP also may conduct a Public Meeting on the Final EIS. Per HUD regulations and at a minimum, the NJDEP will post a public notice in the local media at least 15 days prior to the date of both the Public Scoping Meeting and the Draft EIS Public Hearing. NJDEP will be responsible for coordinating all media engagements and follow-up. Local publications being considered include the *Star Ledger*, *The Record*, *The Herald*, *Latinos Unidos de Nueva Jersey*, and *Korea Central Daily News*; these publications directly reach the communities involved.
- **Social Media.** To further public outreach efforts during the NEPA process, the NJDEP may use social media (e.g., the NJDEP Facebook portal). These media could be used to publicize meetings and drive traffic to the Proposed Project website.
- **Meeting Materials.** Relevant and concise handouts, posters, and other streamlined data will be available as appropriate at all public meetings for attendees. Public meeting presentations will be available as handouts, as appropriate, and on the Proposed Project website for review by those unable to attend meetings.

#### 4.2 Public Involvement Activities

Public involvement activities associated with this NEPA process will be coordinated and originated by the Environmental Impact Statement Outreach (EISO) Team, led and coordinated by the Project NEPA Team. The EISO includes all stakeholders, agencies, and Tribes interested in this NEPA process (see **Figure 5**).

The EISO will coordinate closely through and with the CAG, as shown in **Figure 5**. It will be important for the CAG to meet at important milestones, detailed below; conduct the necessary public outreach; keep affected communities apprised; and ensure meaningful public input into each phase of the Proposed Project as it moves forward. The CAG may choose to meet more frequently as determined by its members.

AECOM, as the Prime Contractor employed to assist NJDEP/HUD in preparing the EIS and conducting the NEPA public involvement process, has assigned Mr. Brian W. Boose, Certified Environmental Professional (CEP), as our senior NEPA subject matter expert (SME) for this Proposed Project. Mr. Boose will be integrally involved in all aspects of this NEPA process and will lead the NEPA Team. Mr. Boose, or a senior member of the NEPA Team, will be present at each of the CAG meetings as the liaison between the NEPA analysis and the CAG, as well as the OSC and the ESC as shown in **Figure 5**.



**Figure 5. NEPA Public Outreach and Engagement Organization**

#### 4.2.1 Project-Specific Public Involvement Events

These NEPA-related public outreach efforts, led and coordinated by the NEPA Team, will include the following specific milestone components, listed in temporal order:

1. **Public Scoping Meeting and Comment Period** – The Public Scoping Meeting will occur at least 15 days after publication of the NOI and be based on data provided in the Draft Public Scoping Document. The 30-day public comment period will be defined in the NOI, and will begin with publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register*.
2. **Regular (Milestone) CAG Workgroup Meetings** – These meetings will occur at key milestones along the NEPA pathway and include CAG members and NEPA Team representatives. In support of the NEPA process, these meetings will begin at, or prior to, publication of the NOI, and terminate upon signature of the ROD<sup>2</sup>. CAG meetings generally will occur more frequently at the beginning of the NEPA process, and coincide with major NEPA milestones.
3. **Public Hearing on the Draft EIS** – The Draft EIS Public Hearing will occur within 45 days following publication of the NOA of the Draft EIS and the NOI to Request Release of Funds. This Public Hearing may also serve as the hearing required for Action Plan Amendment 12 (*Substantial Amendment for the Third Allocation of CDBG-DR Funds: RBD*). Action Plan Amendment 12 can be accessed via <http://www.renewjerseystronger.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/APA-12-RBD-Amendment-4-22-15.pdf>.
4. **Public Meeting on the Final EIS** (*optional, still to be determined*) – Within 30 days following publication of the NOA of the Final EIS in the *Federal Register*, the NJDEP may hold a public meeting to review the Final EIS. This meeting is optional. The value and need for this meeting will be determined by the NJDEP as this NEPA process moves forward.

#### 4.2.2 Goals and Purposes of Project-Specific Public Involvement Events

The goals and purposes of each milestone event are summarized as follows. **Table 1** provides more detail with regard to each of these public involvement milestone events. These events follow the NEPA process overview schematic provided in **Figure 3**.

- **Pre-Scoping CAG Kick-Off Meeting.** The NJDEP will hold the first CAG Workgroup Meeting prior to publication of the NOI to introduce the Proposed Project to members of the CAG. This meeting will be held within the Project Area. At this meeting, NJDEP and the Project Team will provide a broad overview of the Proposed Project, its proposed execution, and associated public involvement activities, as described in this GPI. While not required under NEPA, the NJDEP wishes to conduct this informational meeting to launch this process.
- **Publish NOI.** The NOI formally initiates the NEPA process, represents the beginning of the public scoping process as outlined in 40 CFR Part 1501.07, and announces the public scoping meeting date and location.

<sup>2</sup> Following signature of the ROD, CAG meetings will occur throughout the design process and into construction, as needed.



**Table 1. Key Public Outreach Milestones and Events Associated with the NEPA Process for the Proposed Project**

Activity	Participants	Key Pre-Cursor	Approximate Date (subject to change)	Physical Location (subject to change)	Method of Information Dissemination	Comments
Pre-Scoping Meeting/1 <sup>st</sup> CAG Meeting	All; CAG	N/A	March 23, 2016	Mr. Robert L. Craig Elementary School; 20 West Park Street; Moonachie, NJ 07074	✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Although not required, NJDEP wishes to provide early information
Pre-Scoping Meeting/2 <sup>nd</sup> CAG Meeting	All; CAG	1 <sup>st</sup> CAG Meeting	April 26, 2016	Little Ferry Borough Hall 215 Liberty Street Little Ferry, NJ 07643	✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Although not required, NJDEP wishes to provide early information
Pre-Scoping Meeting/CAG Meeting 2B	All; CAG	2 <sup>nd</sup> CAG Meeting	May 17, 2016	Carlstadt Municipal Building 500 Madison Street Carlstadt, NJ 07072	✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Although not required, NJDEP wishes to provide early information
Publish NOI	NEPA Team	N/A	Early June 2016	N/A	✓ <i>Federal Register</i> ✓ Local Newspapers	Begins 30-day formal Scoping process
Public Scoping Meeting	All; Mailing List; NEPA Team	Publication of NOI	Late-June 2016	Mr. Robert L. Craig Elementary School; 20 West Park Street; Moonachie, NJ 07074	✓ <i>Federal Register</i> ✓ Local Newspapers ✓ Project Website ✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Conducted at least 15 days after publication of NOI
End of Public Scoping Period	N/A	N/A	July 2016	N/A	N/A	30-day duration. Public Comment Summary prepared, identifying all comments and responses posted on project website
Regular (Milestone) CAG Workgroup Meetings	NEPA Team; CAG	N/A	As Needed	Various locations within the Project Area	✓ Project Website ✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Will occur as needed from NOI through signing of the ROD
Monthly Updates/Newsletters	NEPA Team	N/A	Monthly	N/A	✓ Project Website ✓ Listserv/Mailing List	Will occur monthly from NOI through signing of the ROD
Publish NOA for Draft EIS	NEPA Team	N/A	February-March 2017	N/A	✓ <i>Federal Register</i> ✓ Local Newspapers ✓ Project Website	Begins 45-day formal Public Comment process
Public Hearing on Draft EIS	All; Mailing List	Publication of NOA	February-March 2017	Mr. Robert L. Craig Elementary School; 20 West Park Street; Moonachie, NJ 07074	✓ <i>Federal Register</i> ✓ Local Newspapers ✓ Project Website ✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Conducted at least 15 days following publication of the NOA
End of Public Comment Period	N/A	N/A	March 2017	N/A	N/A	45-day duration. Public Comment Summary prepared, identifying all comments and responses posted on project website
Publish NOA for Final EIS	NEPA Team	N/A	September 2017	N/A	✓ <i>Federal Register</i> ✓ Local Newspapers ✓ Project Website	Begins 30-day formal Public Review process
Public Meeting on Final EIS (Optional)	All; Mailing List	Publication of NOA	September 2017	Mr. Robert L. Craig Elementary School; 20 West Park Street; Moonachie, NJ 07074	✓ <i>Federal Register</i> ✓ Local Newspapers ✓ Project Website ✓ ESC, OSC, and CAG	Conducted 15 days following publication of the NOA. This meeting is <i>optional</i> .

- **Public Scoping Meeting.** Provides opportunities for the public to obtain information on the Proposed Project, including ability to obtain a copy of the Draft Public Scoping Document, and provide comments and input. Meeting participants may make statements orally, which will be transcribed by a stenographer, or submit comments in writing either at the meeting or subsequently by mail or e-mail during the scoping period. Meeting announcements will be mailed to the listserv mailing list (see **Section 4.1**), posted at libraries and community centers, announced through media press releases, and posted on the Proposed Project website. Upon request by a prescribed date (prior to the public scoping meeting), Spanish, Korean, or other translators and/or assistance to individuals with hearing or sight impairment will be provided at meetings as requested. The public scoping meeting will take place in a convenient location and time; the facility will be fully accessible to those with disabilities. The public scoping meeting will be videotaped, and the video will be uploaded to the Proposed Project website, as well. A response to comment document will be prepared and posted on the Proposed Project website at [www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov](http://www.rbd-meadowlands.nj.gov). Per HUD regulations, a public notice will be posted in local newspapers at least 15 days prior to the date of the meeting.
- **Regular (Milestone) CAG Workgroup Meetings.** Provide an open forum for discussion and encourage interaction among key stakeholders representing a cross-section of organizations and interests. Each CAG meeting will be staffed by a senior member(s) of the NEPA Team to ensure current and accurate information is made available to the CAG members. The initial CAG Meetings will occur prior to the publication of the NOI as shown in **Table 1**. These meetings may occur as frequently as monthly, especially at the beginning of the NEPA process. The CAG Meetings will be focused around the following topics, in sequential order, as the NEPA process moves forward.
  - ✓ **Purpose and Need CAG Meeting.** The purpose of this meeting is to obtain input on the Proposed Project's Purpose and Need so that the planning of the Proposed Project can continue within the NEPA framework. Stakeholder participation and input during this phase of the Proposed Project is crucial, as it will facilitate the effective development of the remainder of the Proposed Project. During this meeting, the design team, including the NEPA Team, listened to and collected concept/alternative ideas provided by the various stakeholders and subsequently reviewed these ideas as part of the feasibility analysis. This meeting occurred on March 23, 2016, prior to publication of the NOI (see Table 1).
  - ✓ **Scoping/Data Gathering CAG Meeting.** The purpose of this meeting is to initiate the scoping process, which will frame the Proposed Project as it moves forward. The NEPA Team will promote stakeholder coordination over the life of the Proposed Project, and identify important issues among participants. The scoping/data gathering meeting was conducted in two parts. The goals of the first meeting were to obtain input on local flooding issues/concerns, and provide an overview of the current project status with regard to data gathering efforts and the alternatives development. The goals of the second scoping/data gathering meeting were to review the *Pre-Public* Draft Public Scoping Document content to facilitate CAG's review and input into the development of the Draft Public Scoping Document, provide a summary of the input obtained from the CAG during the first scoping meeting, and to discuss the upcoming Public Scoping Meeting. A *Pre-Public* Draft Public Scoping Document was made available at this latter meeting to CAG Members. These meetings occurred on April 26 and May 17, 2016, respectively, prior to the publication of the NOI.
  - ✓ **Screening Criteria/Metrics CAG Meeting.** This meeting is meant to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to gather information about, and contribute to, the development of criteria to be used during the alternatives screening process. The goal of this meeting is to obtain public input on what constraint and opportunity criteria (i.e., construction cost, specific environmental impacts or benefits, property values, etc.) will be included in the alternatives screening matrix, as well as

what metrics will be utilized for each constraint criterion. The NEPA Team will be on hand to explain what each metric means and provide advice as to how it should be incorporated within the screening matrix. Various display materials may be used as part of the meeting, including but not limited to display boards and PowerPoint presentations. At the conclusion of this meeting, the input provided will be utilized to help frame the alternatives screening matrix. This meeting will occur in July 2016.

- ✓ **Alternatives Screening CAG Workshop.** Building upon the previous meetings, a workshop will be held to present a detailed review and screening of the alternatives developed to date. The alternatives screening matrix will be developed with input from the CAG and other stakeholder groups informed by the NEPA Team and will be used to evaluate each alternative on its impacts to the many resources within the Project Area. This process will allow for the elimination of alternatives that do not meet the Proposed Project's Purpose and Need; these alternatives will be included within the Draft EIS in the "Alternatives Considered but Dismissed from Further Analysis" section. The three alternatives that are ranked the highest will be advanced as the Proposed Project's Build Alternatives; these will be analyzed in depth within the Draft EIS, as well as the No Action Alternative. This meeting will occur in August 2016.
- ✓ **Alternatives Analysis CAG Workshop.** This meeting will present a review of the three Build Alternatives advanced for further analysis. An alternatives analysis matrix will be developed; this matrix will be more nuanced than the alternatives screening matrix in comparing the key areas of environmental, social, and economic impacts. The information gathered in the data gap surveys will inform the meeting participants on the impacts of each alternative. As with the alternatives screening workshop, the NEPA Team will develop a preliminary matrix for this meeting. NEPA Team SMEs will explain how each alternative was ranked. The stakeholders will provide input as to whether they feel the ranking should be adjusted. The ultimate goal of this process will enable and inform the selection of the Preferred Alternative. This meeting will occur in September 2016.
- ✓ **Subsequent CAG Meetings.** These meetings will occur as necessary and appropriate throughout the remainder the NEPA process, and will coincide with key analytical and procedural milestones, as broadly outlined in **Table 1**. These meetings will occur from approximately October 2016 through December 2017, as appropriate.
- ✓ **Potential Additional Meetings (Optional).** If, during the conduct of the NEPA process, it becomes apparent that a wider community workshop is appropriate, the NJDEP will consider hosting a broader community meeting. Such a meeting would be publicized through the listserv mailing list and on the Proposed Project website.
- **Monthly Updates.** Concise, informative, and readily understandable updates (approximately 2 pages each) concerning the Proposed Project, the NEPA process, ongoing events and issues, upcoming events, and similar information will be posted on the Proposed Project website.
- **Publish NOA for Draft EIS.** Formally announces the availability of the Draft EIS and begins the 45-day public review and comment period of the Draft EIS.
- **Public Hearing on Draft EIS.** Provides opportunities for the public to obtain additional information on the Draft EIS, obtain a copy of the Draft EIS (directly or via access at a local repository), and provide comments on the Draft EIS. This meeting will likely be conducted in a manner similar to the Public Scoping Meeting.
- **Publish NOA for Final EIS.** Formally announces the availability of the Final EIS and begins the public review and comment period of the Final EIS.



- **Public Meeting on Final EIS (Optional).** If held, this optional meeting will provide opportunities for the public to obtain additional information on the Final EIS, obtain a copy of the Final EIS, and provide comments on the Final EIS. This meeting will likely be conducted in a manner similar to the Public Scoping Meeting.

## 5.0 EVALUATION OF THE GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Ongoing evaluation of the GPI is important to the EIS process. The purpose of carrying out the GPI review is to:

- Obtain valuable input that can make the public participation process more effective, as well as increase the likelihood of its successful completion.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are appropriately engaged in the process.

Examples of critical questions to be considered by the NEPA Team to assess the GPI throughout this process include:

- Are minority, low-income, and traditionally under-represented and under-served groups appropriately involved and engaged in the NEPA process?
- Are public input and comments pertinent and substantive, showing understanding of the NEPA process and Proposed Project information disseminated to the public?
- How many hits does the Proposed Project website receive on a monthly basis?
- Are social media posts being shared?

These questions may be answered by:

- Distributing evaluation forms at all meetings for participants to measure the value of the outreach activities, as well as for members of the public to offer specific comments and input for improvement.
- Conducting online surveys (i.e., SurveyMonkey platform or equivalent) and/or providing methods for feedback on the Proposed Project website.
- Reviewing the content of issues and concerns raised to judge the value of the overall outreach effort.
- Utilizing web analytics and social media metrics to assess traction received from Tweets and Facebook posts.

The results of this ongoing evaluation will be discussed with the NJDEP and the ESC, with the intent of making mid-course refinements to the GPI, if and as appropriate. This GPI will then be updated, as needed.

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