

NOTICE OF INTENT

TO PREPARE A PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR WATERSHED RESILIENCE PROJECTS IN THE STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announces its intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for watershed resilience projects in the State of North Dakota. The notice is being published pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FEMA Instruction 108-1-1, DHS Instruction 023-01-001-01, and other applicable environmental laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and 11988 (Floodplain Management) because the proposed action has the potential to affect historic, cultural and archaeological resources; threatened and endangered species; floodplains; and wetlands.

The PEA will focus on a variety of comprehensive watershed resilience actions in North Dakota that result in the installation and/or redistribution of sediment, rock, wood debris and other materials within watersheds for the purpose of stream restoration and realignment, bank stabilization, or the reestablishment of appropriate hydraulic capacity of stream corridors, river channels and accompanying floodplains. Projects may be funded through FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Program for damages sustained during disaster events, through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs, as well as other FEMA grant programs. Other Federal agencies may adopt the PEA under their own authorities in accordance with the Unified Federal Review (UFR) process.

The PEA will address the purpose and need for the proposed action, project alternatives considered (including the No Action Alternative), affected environment, environmental consequences, and mitigation measures. The proposed action applies to the performance of comprehensive watershed resiliency actions such as stream restoration, bank stabilization and hydraulic capacity resiliency measures to restore watershed function when funded by a federal entity.

In accordance with FEMA and DHS Guidance, the PEA will identify, by project type, the potential adverse and beneficial effects associated with watershed resilience hazard mitigation projects. The review of subsequent site-specific grant applications may be streamlined by tiering from the PEA to reference summary details regarding project types, alternatives, and effects and to emphasize details specific to a proposed action. The PEA will allow FEMA to streamline their compliance responsibilities, focus site-specific reviews on a narrower scope and to eliminate repetitive discussions.

FEMA is accepting comments on the purpose and need, alternatives, and potential impacts from the public; local, state, and federal agencies; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties. FEMA will use these comments to define the scope of the NEPA analysis and inform their decision-making. Following this initial comment period, FEMA will prepare a draft PEA that will be made available for public review and comment at a future date.

Interested persons may provide comments or obtain more detailed information about the PEA by contacting the FEMA contact listed below. Comments must be in writing and received within 30 days of the publication of this notice. To provide comments on the scope of the PEA please contact Steve Hardegen at FEMA Region 8 by email at fema-r8ehp@fema.dhs.gov and include 'North Dakota Watershed Resilience PEA' in the subject line, or by U.S. Postal Service to Denver Federal Center, Building 710, Box 25267, Lakewood, Colorado 80225-0267 Attn: Steve Hardegen.