

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Indian Health Service, California Area Office
Youth Regional Treatment Center, Southern California

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Indian Health Service (IHS), California Area Office (CAO), proposes to fund the design, construction and operation of a Youth Regional Treatment Center (YRTC) in Riverside County, located 15 miles south of Hemet. The proposed facility will provide 24-hour treatment for youth, 12 to 17 years of age. This YRTC will consist of a 3575 square meter (38,500 square foot) facility on an eight hectare (20 acre) parcel which currently serves as a residence and former grain farm. The proposed development will also include improvement of Best Road between the proposed site and Sage Road. The proposed new YRTC will be designed to treat 96 American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth per year on a residential basis and will create 69 new staff positions. Five family suites are proposed as part of the facility to allow concurrent treatment of the youth's family members.

In 2001 when Tribal leaders voted to develop residential treatment services for AI/AN youth in California, to comply with the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, Public Law (PL) 94-437 (amended in 1992 by PL 102-573). The amendment states in Section 704 that the IHS/CAO shall construct and operate one YRTC in the north area of the state and another to serve the remainder of the state. Requirements in the law were based on results of a study conducted by the National Institutes of Mental Health which indicated that five percent of the adolescent AI/AN population in California showed substance use disorders. This amounts to 7,950 youth, based on the U. S. census 2000 data.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 USC 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508) for implementing NEPA, the DHHS General Administrative Manual, Part 30, and the IHS Environmental Review Manual.

Refer to the EA for a complete description of the proposed project and the affected environment. Since the treatment center exceeds 1,080 square meters, the project was not categorically excluded as defined in 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.4 and the IHS Federal Register notice of January 6, 1993. The IHS/CAO completed the EA in accordance with NEPA, to evaluate the environmental consequences of the proposed action. The EA includes a "no action" alternative. Considering the findings in the EA, comments from agencies, and the local community, the IHS/CAO has made a determination that the action will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment.

The Following Supports the Finding of No Significant Impact:

The primary long-term benefit of the proposed YRTC is that it would provide improved access to substance abuse treatment for the AI/AN youth of California. The implementation of this proposed action will contribute to improving the health and well being of the AI/AN youth by increasing their access to residential treatment services.

Construction of the YRTC would provide employment opportunities for community members.

The context and intensity of public comments were considered. Meetings with local stakeholders, property owners, county officials, and Tribal consultation, indicate widespread public support with no controversy.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

A field survey was conducted by an Environmental Engineering consultant who observed no federal or state listed species in the project vicinity. However, the site is located within federally designated critical habitat of the federally endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly and the federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher.

Discussions with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have indicated that impacts to the gnatcatcher could be avoided by setting aside the undisturbed land on the site as conservation area. If gnatcatcher activity is possible or likely within this area, the USFWS would require a survey be conducted for presence or utilization of the area by the gnatcatcher.

The IHS/CAO will assess the entire site to determine if there is suitable habitat for the butterfly. If there is no habitat, then a butterfly survey would not be required and there will be no effect on the YRTC project. If habitat is present, a survey would be conducted before completion of the design phase of the project. Survey results would be incorporated into design requirements of the project to protect the butterfly.

The proposed action and mitigation must be submitted to the Riverside County Environmental Programs Department (EPD) for acceptance. The EPD will forward the application to the Regional Conservation Authority, who, upon agreement with the proposal, will forward it to USFWS and California Department of Fish and Game for concurrence.

Human Safety

Consultation with directors of active IHS YRTCs in the country indicates that over the past 12 years, two patients have left a facility without permission or escort, and there have been no police actions or resident-related crimes in communities that have these facilities. This facility is a voluntary treatment center for youth whose parents or guardians consent to the treatment. The center will be secured 24/7 by staff and electronic surveillance. Patients are admitted if they are not violent criminals, are not likely to be dangerous, and have not been charged or convicted of violent crimes. Youth are not allowed to leave the site without an escort, and must adhere to a rigid, demanding schedule. If a youth decides to leave, arrangements will be made for them to return home. With almost 20 years of YRTC existence, this has rarely happened.

Air Quality

All construction activities will be required to follow Riverside County guidelines for minimizing impacts to air quality. During construction, personnel will be required to

comply with the Environmental Protection Agency, California Air Resources Board, and Riverside County regulations to minimize emissions.

Water Resources

Operation of the YRTC would require approximately 11,387 gallons of water/day, for consumptive use. Water storage for fire suppression will be provided in accordance with applicable codes. The YRTC would be served by existing wells on site to provide water for domestic use and for fire suppression. Existing wells have been inspected for water quality and meet federal and state standards for domestic water. The wells' capacity of 17,280 to 50,400 gallons per day is sufficient to meet the needs of the proposed facility, with construction of a water storage tank.

Prime and Unique Farmland

The soils on the project site have been mapped by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Approximately 1.5 acres has been classified as prime farmland. In accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act, federal agencies are required to assess the impact their project will have on farmland. The site was rated using form AD-1006, Farmland Conversion Impact Rating, which was submitted to the NRCS for review and concurrence.

Preliminary review of the AD-1006 form indicated that prime farmland may be converted permanently. This would have little impact on the neighboring farms and farm support services. The IHS will review the response from NRCS and approach site development with the goal of minimizing impact to prime farmland. Agricultural activities are anticipated to be retained, especially in the areas classified as prime farmland.

Noise

During construction of the YRTC, noise will be generated by heavy equipment and building construction activities. Construction will only take place during times that local ordinances allow.

Other Issues

Considering federal floodplain requirements, the IHS has determined that the proposed project is not a "critical facility," because there will be no residents incapable of self preservation at any time. Since the project is not a "critical facility" the site is not required to be outside of the 500-year floodplain. A floodplain study, included in the EA, determined the project site is outside the 100-year floodplain.

Public Review

The EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were posted on the IHS/CAO website and a Notice of Availability was mailed to pertinent individuals and agencies. The IHS/CAO made these documents available for a 30-day review period, December 3, 2010 to January 2, 2011. Copies of the documents were also available at the locations listed below. Copies of the documents were mailed directly to agencies with regulatory authority, to solicit comments.

The Indian Health Service took no administrative action on the above described project, prior to expiration of the comment period and review of all comments received.

Finding

After review of the EA and all agency and public comments, the IHS/CAO has determined the proposed project will have no significant and unmitigated environmental impacts, requiring the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. The FONSI is hereby approved without substantive changes from the Draft FONSI and will not be re-circulated for review, but will be available to any agency or individual upon request at: Edwin Fluette, IHS/CAO, 650 Capitol Mall, Suite 7-100, Sacramento, CA 95814.

Approved:

Date:

1/3/2011

Edwin Fluette, R.S.
Associate Area Director
OEHE, IHS/CAO

Locations where the draft EA was available for review:

Riverside County Planning Department
4080 Lemon Street
Riverside, CA 92501

City of Temecula Public Library
30600 Pauba Road
Temecula, CA 92546-6206

City of Hemet Public Library
300 East Latham Avenue
Hemet, CA 92543